The Meeting of the Board of Selectmen held on Tuesday, September 20, 2022, began at 5:30 p.m. Remote participation due to COVID-19.

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Members Present: Derek DeBarge, James Gennette, Antonio Goncalves, Manual Silva, and William Rosenblum.

First Order of Business: The Pledge of Allegiance

VISITATIONS:

5:35 p.m. – Mad Wings Inc. Liquor License Hearing

Moved by Mr. Rosenblum to open the Mad Wings Liquor License Hearing at 5:37 p.m., seconded by Mr. DeBarge. Vote 5-0. All in favor.

Mr. Cust explained that they will be serving fresh made wings and would like to add beer and wine as an option for their customers.

Mr. Goncalves asked if this was just a beer and wine license?

Mr. Cust confirmed that it is a beer and malt.

Mr. Goncalves asked how much seating in the restaurant there is?

Mr. Cust said there are 18 seats inside and 4 outside for a total of 22.

Mr. Gennette stated that he is happy to see East Street lighting up with all of the new businesses.

Mr. Cust stated that they will have things that no one else has like fresh nachos and chicken, handmade tenders.

Mr. Silva asked if they are…certified?

Mr. Cust stated that they are.

Mr. Goncalves asked if they will be TIP certified?

Mr. Cust stated that they are.

Mr. Rosenblum asked if there is another one in Chicopee?

Mr. Cust stated that they do have another store in Chicopee in the bar, but they want to come to Ludlow. He also asked if there is a way to have the dip in the sidewalk looked at?

Mr. Goncalves said to let the DPW know about it.

Moved by Mr. Rosenblum to approve the Mad Wings Liquor License, seconded by Mr. Gennette. Vote 5-0. All in favor.

Moved by Mr. Rosenblum to close the Mad Wing Inc. Liquor License at 5:42 p.m., seconded by Mr. Silva. Vote 5-0. All in favor.

6:00 p.m. – Visitation from School Committee to discuss FY24 budget calendar and assumptions

Mr. Harrington: So, just as a matter of housekeeping we need to open our meeting, if it's okay with you? I will call the School Committee meeting to order for the 20th of September. Everybody is here. We got Mr. Laing, Ms. Bowler, Mr. Saloio, Mr. Stratton. Usually, we do the Pledge of Allegiance, but you have already done that, so we'll call our meeting to order. We are good to go.

Mr. Goncalves: Alright great. So, we'll let you start and just for whoever it is watching out there, the eight people, this is something that we talked about when Chip became Chairman that it was time for the two Board to start spending a little bit more time together. It's a large portion of the Town's budget and we kind of had separated a little bit and it's better that we talk on a regular basis and get together like this

and maybe brain storm and bring everybody up to date. At the same time, it would be an opportunity for everyone here to meet our new Superintendent Mr. Tiano.

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TOWN OF LUDLOW

Mr. Harrington: Exactly. So, to your point, you know we did talk about this just getting together quarterly, talk about the budget. You know, last year the budget cycle was very challenging and we never really had much of a discussion. So, you know as chair to chair we talked about doing this process every once in a while. This being the first meeting, we will do another one you know at the end of this year and then again in the first and second quarter of next year. So, to that point we just want to talk a little bit about the budget, where we are. Dr. Tiano gave us, the whole School Committee, his proposal with how he is going to roll out the budget, which is going to be slightly different then what we have done in the past. In the past, we have always had a budget sub-committee of two members, two School Committee members and they sort of meet with the Superintendent privately or behind closed doors and then report back to the full committee. We are going to try something different, there is still going to be a sub-committee but Dr. Tiano is going to bring everything to the full committee. So, all five members will have the opportunity to participate and offer some input because in years past, there were times when the three other members of the School Committee wouldn't really hear the budget until it was presented for the first time. You know, so, it was, there would be a public hearing and there was questions and that would be great but quite frankly at that point, the budget was already set by the Superintendent. So, Dr. Tiano has utilized this process before in the past in a different Superintendent position he held and we discussed it and everyone on our Board thought it was a good idea. It's just open, it's transparent, it's going to be all done in public session. I mean there will be discussion between Dr. Tiano and our Business Manager that will be setting up along the principals but the discussion specifically about the budget will be done in open session. Dr. Tiano I'll turn it over to you for more detail if you'd like.

Dr. Tiano: Absolutely, Mr. Chairman, Select Board, thanks so much for having us. I'd like to thank Mr. Strange and…we meet on a monthly basis, both Kathy Demitrius, our Business Manager and myself just so that communication is continuous. So, you know we are grateful for your partnership as well. Mr. Strange has passed around, we had shared, Kathy and I had shared with the School Committee our proposed budget calendar and the dates, working with Mr. Strange the dates line up with you know what the due dates are. In some communities you know per charter, you have to be X amount of days away from town meeting and so that's one of the first things that I wanted. So, the deadlines that you folks have drafted, you'll see align with our draft and we will ask the School Committee to approve this budget timeline at our next meeting on the 27th. When I've utilized this process in the past it's been around transparency including as many people as we can in our budget. When I say including as many people, right down to you know our teachers and so as we have a meeting tomorrow with our administrators and having them more involved in the budget process so that when you look at a line item in Ludlow Public Schools, you'll be able to find the backup for that line item and what we are purchasing and that'll be on the website. So, you can go down here chronologically in bold I'd share this with the committee, these are at our school committee meetings that will be in public. One of the things first and foremost, asking for the committee to vote on this timeline number one, so we have our marching orders, I have my marching orders for administrative team. Number two, asking the committee to develop their budget priorities. So, that as we're building this budget we're making sure to have those in place as well as if we need to pare that back we still have those priorities set ahead of time and then you can work your way down here. My goal is to have a draft budget distributed to the school committee by January 5th and that's the superintendent's budget and throughout we will be updating the committee and working with; this timeline is not reflective of budget subcommittees that we have not set those times yes, but if you look from January 5th through our budget hearing on the 14th to our joint meeting on the 28th, the committee will have a draft of the superintendents budget from January 5th. If they approve it on the 14th that I believe is the due date that the town is looking for, then it becomes the school committees budget. So, the public and we will post it our proposed timeline on the website draft January 10th. So, the community has the ability to see into our budget and what it is; it's a need-based budget and so you know we can develop it from the bottom up and really take a hard look at each thing that we are putting forward. So, you'll be able to see that in process.

Mr. Silva: Mr. Chairman, just a question. You have the superintendent's budget on January 5th and then January 10th and then back to January 5th, is that a misprint? You have January 5th twice there?

Mr. Goncalves: Might be 15th?

Mr. Silva: Should that be 15th?

Talking over each other.

Dr. Tiano: Yeah, that should still be the 15th and that's just a placeholder for us to make sure that we put that legal,

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Mr. Silva: Yeah, I don't understand because you have two things on the same day.

Mr. Harrington: You know one of the challenges that we always deal with is that we don't really get the chapter seventy numbers until the Governor's house one budget comes out. That will typically happen right around the end of January. So, we're going to working, you know as Dr. Tiano said, they're going to be working doing priorities. Okay, were do we need to go because just like you guys a lot of the funds are not discretionary right, you've got union contracts. So, here's how much money you need to put into salaries and then here's how much money you have to put into transportation and then whatever's left over is sort of discretionary spending that you can do. So, we wait until we're, we are going to need to obviously wait until we really get a solid number until the Governor comes up with his or her house one budget and then we can build off of that because typically the house one budget is a conservative number you know and as time goes on we usually benefit, most towns will benefit from the higher number that comes out of chapter seventy. So, everything until we get that number in January it's going to be sort of, it's not assumptions but we're going to be, we're just working on priorities at that point and that's kind of how we've always done it in the past. So, we do have a challenge and then you know to as you guys know our special education costs is a huge part of public schools wherever you go. So, when you look at our budget you know that we have the ability to kind of move from line item to line item where as other town departments don't have that ability. We get that Dr. Tiano is bringing our Business Manager into a meeting once a month now to give us updates as to where those lines are going to be transferred, you know if we did have a student move in or a student move out, how that's going to impact the school district. So, that's going to be happening once a month for again, public meeting our Business Manager will fill us in as to where we stand wit that. So, right now it's challenging because we're closing out 2022, just started two thousand twenty, we're getting ready, we're in 2023,

Dr. Tiano: We're knee deep.

Mr. Harrington: and now this process gets us ready for 2024. So, we're really dealing with three fiscal years right now at this specific point. So, it's, school budgeting is very challenging as you guys know.

Mr. Goncalves: And it's 47% of the total budget, so that's a big number.

Dr. Tiano: Yes it is and that's why we want to make sure that not only you folks but the public sees where we're spending their money and that we're spending it wisely. In the idea around incorporating teachers' departments is with a tighter budget being built you should see less transfers next year and as we've transferred from TMS to our inhouse Business Manager, Kathy Demetrius, we're still working off of, I'm not going to say other people's numbers, but it still, we will have a tighter budget for next year.

Mr. Goncalves: And I know that as a Board you guys have addressed this, I think Mr. Rosenblum's got a question along that comment, so it would probably be a good segway for Bill to ask what's been bothering him.

Mr. Rosenblum: Thank you Mr. Chairman. I love your tie Dr. Tiano by the way.

Dr. Tiano: Oh, we're shopping at the same…

Mr. Rosenblum: What was it a soccer fundraiser, I can't remember. No, thank you. I worked a lot with me working in a municipality and working with MUNIS especially too and it's always baffled me and it's not just our school district, I know that many school districts, we don't know and I'm glad to hear about the public being in on this and our Board and the other thing of meeting with and I think I had mentioned it to you once before is about having an agenda item to sit there and say when you're doing line item transfers; where's is coming from, where's it going and what's it for? Because sometimes, it's just, we don't know, nobody knows and I've talked to many in other municipalities and even where I work, the COO doesn't understand school budgets. So, there's a lot of movement, but yeah, the whole thing about being able to see the line item transfers and where they're going. The other thing too is like when, it's good that with a tighter budget that you'll be to have less line item transfers, purchase order increases and things like that. Do you intend at the end of each fiscal year to be closing out all of your purchase orders because I know that sometimes that there's purchase orders that move from year to year in a school department. I think to your point of being tighter on the school budget and knowing what you're really going to need instead of someone saying we need 5%, and not knowing what the 5% is, is to be able to close those out and know what money's going back in at the end of the year too.

Dr. Tiano: When we are talking about our operating budget, for example, tuitions, you know if we have a student that who is in district placement, we basically know what that cost will be, so we'll encumber that money. So, we know that it's in and that may come in sometimes a little bit less. So, we'll close that out at the end of the year and our revolving accounts for example, transportation and so forth those can go from year to year. You know, those can turnover. So, in terms of ideally, you know Kathy right now is, she's closing out FY22 right now which is a cumbersome process. Then we'll have that ready and then the auditors will go through all of that, to make sure that we're tying that up tight. So, the goal is; this is what we're going to spend and this is how much money we've allocated for it. There shouldn't be major swings in terms of if we decide we're going with a textbook and then mid-year we're going to swap forces and go with something else, you know you shouldn't see those things, but there are some things that come up during the year that may require moving money from one line item to another.

Mr. Rosenblum: And I totally get it, is it I'm still at the back, we're just closing out twenty two now, twenty three is going and I'm already looking at twenty four because of looking at future expenses and stuff. So, I mean one hundred percent and obviously I think Kim downstairs was talking about your money coming in from the state, we still didn't even know until almost July. Right, so I know that that's fluid and it's always moving so. No, I'm just glad to hear the fact this could be more transparent because I mean obviously being as large as you know forty five, forty seven percent of the total town budget you know, not even us it's just more the towns people and be it the senior citizens who are strapped for what they're going to be having for taxes,

Dr. Tiano: Absolutely.

Mr. Rosenblum: and especially going forward, I've already made the comment to a couple of the board members it that especially this fiscal year coming into twenty-four, inflation, heating oil, the economy right now is that we're going to need to be tighter than ever. You know, we came out of COVID and we seem to be on the back side of it and we seem to be doing better, but also we need to be even more tight coming, moving forward. So, it's you know even looking at some of the things we propose and what other departments are going to come to us with. No, no it's great to hear that, I like where it's going, I do, personally. Thank you.

Mr. Harrington: I don't want to put Kathy on the spot, but she's hear I mean maybe you want to be able to give an example of what might be carried over that kind of…

Ms. Demetrius: Yeah, so thank you for having us. I did want to just kind of add a little bit that every year you are going to have some encumbrances at the end of the year which is actually July 15th is the last warrant that you can pay using FY22 funds. So, we do sometimes have purchase orders that are going to carry over into the next year. So, when Kim Collins rolls over the year those purchase orders roll over. We can't create something new, we can't add to those purchase orders, they are what they are. This year, so I can't really compare to any other year because I don't know the numbers from previous years, but this year we have quite a few that are based on, we ordered things a while ago and they have not come in. Supplies are really tough out there, so you know we have contracts signed and the person that's going to do that particular project is waiting for parts. So, we have stuff like that, but we have a list, it's been shared with Kim and that's something that we would do every year and I actually have somebody in my department that is, she actually went through the list for me to kind of see what's closed up, where we are at and we'll probably meet once I finish doing some other stuff with FY22 to kind of go over that and see where we are. But once June 30th hits that's it, whatever's out there can be paid on July 15th and then anything after that gets rolled over.

Dr. Tiano: But we're tracking it.

Ms. Demetrius: But it's being tracked and it can't be added to, it can only be I guess let's say we ordered a projector and we thought it would cost $3,000 and for some reason it cost $2,000, that $1,000 would go back to the town. We can't just do something else with it.

Mr. Rosenblum: Right, and supply chain is totally understandable now a days especially with what water fountains at one point this past year, a year ago or something in the high school when the water wasn't on at one point. During COVID and something had broke and they're waiting for the part or whatever for a long time.

Mr. Goncalves: So, along that line, once a month, are you folks going to be doing that during the meeting? Where they have let's say a baseline of any movement of over ten or twenty or thirty thousand moving it out of an encumbrance to a front line item that you know to spend.

Mr. Harrington: It's even if it's even five dollars I mean we get a list of everything.

Mr. Goncalves: Last year, you remember we met at the library when we found out we were going to lose many teachers, we were all scrambling trying to find money for the school department. Kathy was there and we're going through and you know there were a few purchase orders that we had been backlogged, we were able to find those. It just seemed like there was a ton of money in those next forty five days that moved like millions that had moved and we had no clue. I mean even Bill, I kind of leaned on him because he works with MUNIS, to give me an idea, just I think when it's that kind of money is hanging around and you're moving it in the eleventh hour, it would be good if maybe it was out there. Even if it's a little sheet at a meeting or something like that you know, number one. Number two, so we're past July 15th, what type of money did you have left over from last year?

Ms. Demetrius: I'm going to go off the top of my head and say it was $383,000. I don't know what's left right now, it's actually sitting in my inbox. We need to meet with actually the person that's out this week, but even if she wasn't, I am kind of on another project.

Mr. Goncalves: So, is that reimbursement that we weren't counting on or just that stuff that we didn't spend?

Ms. Demetrius: So, that's things that we created purchase orders for in 2022 to either purchase items or you know like a contract to service and they just weren't finished. I mean within the first warrant after that, tons of them, you know tons of the invoices went through. I just don't know the number of where we are right now.

Mr. Harrington: That's the encumbered number you're saying, so those funds are earmarked already?

Ms. Demetrius: Yes.

Mr. Harrington: So, that's not extra money.

Mr. Goncalves: Yeah, yeah, yeah. So, after July 15th where was there a little pot of gold that we had hanging there?

Ms. Demetrius: No, so there has to be an existing purchase order, it has to have a vendor and has to have a description of what we are buying. It would have had to have behind that a request from the department stating what we are getting, why we're getting it and then on top it the actual purchase order and then ninety nine percent of the time behind that is an actual quote whether it's a printout from WB Mason or a quote from a vendor that's going to do an actual you know contracted service. So, there's no, it's not a random amount in the sense of it's basically okay these are all our open purchase orders from FY22. I go through and work with the different administrators and make sure it's still going to happen. Like we had two with Apple and I'm like are these really still going to happen and they're like yeah they're really going to happen; they are on backorder.

Mr. Goncalves: I think, and I get that part,

Ms. Demetrius: Yes.

Mr. Goncalves: you know what I'm looking for,

Mr. Harrington: He's asking what was turned back over to the town?

Mr. Goncalves: what was turned back over?

Ms. Demetrius: Oh, I don't know that off the top of my head because, I believe it was a couple thousand. It could have possibly been more, but I believe it was right around a couple thousand.

Mr. Harrington: I believe at the last meeting we had this discussion, I think it was like five grand. So, is that what you're asking? What was turned back to the general fund?

Mr. Goncalves: Yeah.

Ms. Demetrius: I'm sorry I misunderstood. I can get that number, but…

Mr. Goncalves: I'm just curious because and again I think that's where the monthly, if we're moving large amounts of money because you guys are good, but are your really that good that you could estimate everything within five thousand dollars where oil and utilities shifted twenty to thirty percent and you know we're talking hundreds of thousands of dollars and to be that close. So, maybe during the course of the year just putting it out there a little bit more you know where it's going because and I'm not saying this, but somebody could very easily say sure I'm sure in the eleventh hour you guys came up with a million things to spend the money on so you wouldn't have to turn it back and that's been said plenty of times at different Boards.

Mr. Harrington: Right, I totally get that. So, one thing about utilities is that we work with the Lower Pioneer Valley Education Collaborative. We buy in bulk, so we do know what our number is going into the school year. We know what our number is going into next year. We've already locked in I believe our rate. Is that correct or are we still waiting to lock in?

Ms. Demetrius: Yes, I think a little bit of the unknown might have been Harris Brook because it's a big building as you know, lots of people.

Mr. Harrington: Because it's a new building. So, all seven communities get together and we purchase oil, we purchase electricity. I think we do it with Longmeadow and other towns as well too. So, there's somebody that works at Lower Pioneer Valley that is kind of the utility guru and he, I think it's a he, he will go through and actually lock in the rate and we are part of that lock in. So, we know what our oil price is going to be. We know what our electricity price is going to be. So, there is not fluctuation like you might see in your home or something like that.

Dr. Tiano: But to your point as we start our budgeting process in October of this year trying to predict what we are going to need in March of next year, anytime you budget, it is a projection and so try to come as close as we can obviously. The same way as the town. The same way as you do in your own homes.

Mr. Goncalves: We're not getting the old landfill? There's no,

Mr. Harrington: The solar?

Mr. Goncalves: Yeah.

Mr. Harrington: Yeah, you guys get that. So, the town of Ludlow when we did the power purchase agreement with Borrego, I think you're still contracted with Borrego, we buy it at I think point five cents a kilowatt hour something along those lines and I think the average price is around nine cents, so that four cents is the town savings. It should be around and Marc, maybe you know the answer to this; should be around $120,000 a year that the town is saving.

Mr. Strange: I'm not sure. In fact we were just going back and forth today about some of that, the solar credit stuff and we reached out to Eversource. I don't have an answer on that.

Mr. Goncalves: Does Borrego get the…?

Mr. Harrington: Borrego did, yeah because they own, there's ten thousand one panels up there. So, they own the panels, we own the property obviously and they need to apply those credits towards our municipal buildings. So, the high school, all the town buildings get it applied towards,

Mr. Strange: I think it's five buildings that get credited,

Ms. Demetrius: It's a percentage.

Mr. Strange: the school gets a percentage, town hall gets a percentage, I think the other town buildings get a percentage as well.

Mr. Harrington: yeah, I know we are getting the Energy Committee back together so, it would be good to check in n that pretty soon.

Mr. Goncalves: Any other questions?

Mr. Gennette: Mr. Chairman. Oh, sorry go ahead.

Mr. Rosenblum: I just want to, yeah it's just like a wrap up. I just want to say is that by no means is this something where me personally is like hammering you on any of this, but because it's refreshing to see that we're going in the right direction. It's, that's all that I could ask for and I think that you know we've had a lot of movement everywhere in town now and it seems to be all positive. So, I'm happy. I'm glad you're on board and welcome. I haven't had a chance to meet you yet.

Dr. Tiano: Thank you.

Talking over each other.

Mr. Rosenblum: Saturday, the first, but no in the same sense with MUNIS is that you know a lot of the departments in this town, we don't even use it in Town Hall that much. I mean with the purchase orders, so it's something that we can learn off of as well is offer your process too and so, you know we're not perfect, so, it's learning for us too but we just, I think it's good for everybody to know what's going on more and it might be out of the norm of how school departments work with their budgets but at least if we can be a little bit more transparent to the point where you are comfortable with it, but don't need to go way out there. I just and thank you and that's all.

Mr. Harrington: I think that is the point of this meeting really is to answer these questions.

Mr. Rosenblum: Yeah, that's exactly it because I think that we've all gotten to the point where we are sitting here is that we need to have these meetings with everyone we got away from a while and now we need to get back to get into them because we need to work together.

Mr. Goncalves: Thank you. Mr. Gennette.

Mr. Gennette: Yeah, you know I just got to say that you know this, the climate of this conversation already is how we're going to kind of work together to kind of move forward which is completely different than we had last year. We were obviously at each other a little bit. There was a lot of questions being asked, some answers we couldn't get. Some answers you guys couldn't get. It was just, we were kind of all over the place and it was very sticky because it was a lot of money and I think that stemmed from having that two person budget subcommittee. So, seeing that there is now the entire board is going to be able to handle that, it's a little better. I mean for me, if felt like you guys have your own school committee, we shouldn't be involved at all you know. So, I mean that's the problem as soon as we have to start questioning and getting into all this stuff it's like why are we in this spot? We felt, at least I felt that we were taken advantage of in that situation with the requests that came through. So, this already is a lot better than we had last year and I can't thank you guys enough for coming in and Mr. Tiano you know working from the ground up. I think it's a wonderful tactic when you are looking at budget starting at zero and growing. So, and we keep going at this rate we're going to be doing great. So, I just want to say thank you and I appreciate it. Thank you.

Mr. Goncalves: Mr. DeBarge?

Mr. DeBarge: I think you all covered it very well. To Marc's credit, Mr. Tiano I haven't met you yet but to your credit who doesn't love a calendar that tells you how we're going to communicate, what we're going to communicate and how we're going to get that out to the other departments. It's a great first step. That's all I'll say about it. I don't have any questions about it.

Mr. Rosenblum: This is great timeline for other departments to have as well.

Mr. Goncalves: So, I'm going to ask a couple of questions only because I've been hammered. You guys probably have to. What's up with the field out there? It just doesn't look like anybody's paying attention.

Mr. Harrington: The field next to Harris Brook?

Mr. Goncalves: Yeah, after the grass all started growing.

Mr. Harrington: So, Sarah do you want to, Sarah's on our Building Committee so I'll,

Mr. Goncalves: Do you want to put that in Dr. Tiano's contract that he has to cut the grass for you?

Dr. Tiano: I can do it on Saturday's.

Mr. Goncalves: Just use a rider.

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2022 DEC -7 P 4:25

Mr. Harrington: He lives in town, he's close he can do it.

Ms. Bowler: So, as you guys all know we have had a very dry, hot summer and anybody who's planted a lawn knows that seed does not take place in a very hot, dry environment. So, when they planted the seed; that area over there is not irrigated, we could not irrigate it because of it being so close to the river, Harris Brook, which is actually a river and we're set by certain standards that the state sets. They couldn't put irrigation. So, we don't have water, grass does not grow. So, they have actually replanted, reseeded it, they fixed the field. It continues to be a work in progress because it didn't take the first time. The fall is a better time to plant so they reseeded it or they're in the process of doing it again and we're hoping for a better outcome this season. It's, you know, it's a work in progress. Unfortunately, if it was like, if we had irrigation like the soccer field it be nice and green like the soccer field is. The soccer field is probably going to take two years to get nice and flourished and thick because it takes that long to get a nice turf built. But unfortunately, you know they use it. They use that area, to my understanding. So, when you have kids running on it, it's not going to grow. So, and which is you know the complaints that I've been getting is that they're not allowing the kids to be on the grass. So, you know unfortunately, you're damned if you do, damned if you don't. So, we talk about it almost every building committee and they continue to what they, you know they're asked to do, but they've been there the last couple of days I've been dropping off and I see them working on everything and the fields. So, I'm hoping that it continues, and we'll continue to bring it up as a committee. I will, I have kids in that school, I want them to have a nice area to play at. So, it's not something that will be ignored.

Mr. Goncalves: Perfect. Magic question number three, traffic? Have you tried different routing? Wrap around the building somehow, it's brutal.

Dr. Tiano: We're going to take a look at that. Nikki Reed, the principal has been working on that in terms of getting the folks out of there as quickly as possible, but I pulled in, I've been working out of the high school this week. I pulled in at about two twenty and people are lining up to pick up their children at three and that's obviously difficult. Tough expectation that we would have,

Mr. Goncalves: It happens, it happened at St. Johns, you see them, they're wrapped around all the way back up to East Street almost on Hubbard right past the church and the school in the front. I mean,

Mr. Rosenblum: What's capacity been on the buses because I know that,

Talking over each other.

Mr. Rosenblum: and I mean whatever. I understand that over the last few years everyone's got mom and dad to drop off and pickup and you know you get a lot of cars. I mean I remember going to the first day at Baird because I dropped off and it was and pick up oh my God they were back towards across Sportsman's Road backed up.

Mr. Goncalves: What about a surcharge for people that drop their kids off, you know that have a bus available?

Mr. Rosenblum: I was actually saying and there should be a credit for someone to put them on the bus.

Ms. Bowler: I think you have to understand that there are reasons why people who drop, like personally I drop my, I have to pick up my kid up and drop my kid off because by the time the bus gets to her bus stop at the end of the day, she's going to miss her dance class.

Mr. Goncalves: Yeah.

Ms. Bowler: We had five buses short last week because the driver's being out with COVID. So, there's reasons why you know people are going to be delayed. You can't be surcharging because we are required,

Mr. Goncalves: I was kidding.

Ms. Bowler: Oh, okay because I'm expecting a bunch of emails now.

Dr. Tiano: But also, too with COVID as we transition back, a lot of parents didn't feel comfortable putting their children on the bus and that became part of their habit as they've changed their work lives

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2022 DEC -7 P 1:25
TOWN OF LOWELL

and so forth. No, it's something that if I'm in my office and I see in the morning, in the afternoon you know will take a look at that to see what we can do to relieve that. There's six hundred plus kids in that building, you know it's a good size building but you know, we recognize that's a,

Mr. Harrington: We're legally bound to provide transportation up until sixth grade is it?

Ms. Bowler: Through middle school.

Mr. Harrington: up through middle school is it, high school we don't necessarily have to, am I saying this correctly?

Dr. Tiano: Yes, and we're re required to provide transportation over a mile,

Mr. Harrington: One point five,

Ms. Demetrius: Two.

Mr. Goncalves: The entire system?

Ms. Bowler: We do one point five miles I thought.

Ms. Demetrius: Hello. So, legally we are required to supply transportation for two miles and over and I believe it's up to sixth grade. But I mean logically you would never want to split up you know a middle school. Say oh we're going to bus the sixth graders but not the seventh and eighth, but legally that's what it is. We as a district as far as I know going way, way back have always decided instead of the two miles to do one point five. So, anybody that lives less than one point five from home to school has the option to pay for a seat on the bus and we transport the whole, like all grades. We don't distinguish between you know high school or not.

Mr. Harrington: Yeah, we have that discussion a lot. It is challenging. Plus they're, you know redoing Fuller Street right now. So, there's construction vehicles over there, it's challenging.

Mr. Goncalves: Why did that take so long; it didn't get done before school started just out of curiosity.

Mr. Harrington: With the road?

Mr. Goncalves: Yeah.

Mr. Harrington: You got to ask the DPW, I'm on the school committee. I don't know the answer to that one.

Mr. Rosenblum: And you don't want that one.

Mr. Goncalves: Yeah, and then the final question, the big one.

Mr. Harrington: I though the other one was the big one?

Mr. Goncalves: What's up with the meters or lack of?

Mr. Harrington: Are you talking about the,

Mr. Goncalves: The electricity, the charging, yeah. I legitimately had like ten people wanted to know if they could go plug their cars in overnight because it appeared that there was no charge for it.

Mr. Harrington: It's not an appearance, that's exactly what it is unfortunately you know. So, we had this discussion in our meetings as well too. Mr. Saloio, you brought it up again last week. So, as you now as a new school, state project, you have to have, it's a green building, everything's green. So, that came as part of the project. So, there is two, is it just two charging stations I think that we have there?

Ms. Bowler: Three.

Mr. Harrington: Oh, there's one in the back by your office as well too.

Dr. Tiano: Yes, yes.

Mr. Harrington: So, there is a total of three. We were initially told by a member of the building committee who was on the school committee that they're only going to be operational during school hours. We were like oh, I get it. Okay, so if you are a teacher with an electric car, great, good for you, you get free access to it. Well, that never happened. Now they're just on all the time. So, we don't have to, we're not obligated to keep these things on. So, we've had a discussion about when the custodians leave at the end of the night, they can just flip the breaker and it shuts it off at the end of the day. So, that's kind of where we're going with that right now because listen, I'm in that area all the time because I live over there; there's always a car parked there plugged in. I mean whoever, they're smart you know, they plug it in, they go for their walk and their car is charged and the Town of Ludlow just paid for it. To Mr. Laing's point the other day we don't know what the, we don't have a meter. He's an electrician so this is his wheelhouse.

Mr. Laing: We don't know how much it does cost for that car to charge; you know. There are ways to figure it out.

Mr. Goncalves: A five-hundred-mile car is about nineteen dollars per full charge. But is there a way to make money with that even, just wondering.

Mr. Rosenblum: You could keep it open and pump quarters in.

Mr. Goncalves: It's electricity, not a parking meter.

Mr. Rosenblum: I know, it's pretty much.

Mr. Goncalves: I just wonder if there's a third part out there that would take that on and pay us a certain amount of money? Have that available.

Mr. Harrington: I don't know, let's ask Kathy.

Mr. Goncalves: I should have just asked Kathy.

Ms. Demetrius: So, I believe it has been discussed. The intent was not to do that, it was to have it open during the school hours and potentially for events. So, open house it would be open and then at night and weekends it would be off. So, Chris LeBlanc who is the architect on the project; I asked him to look into it and he's still looking into that for me. What is would cost to A get a meter on there and see you know what this is costing us and B to see if it is something that can go on there that would charge.

Mr. Goncalves: Except that has the potential to be a fifty, with the three of them, fifty six, fifty seven dollars and hour of electricity. Those things will pop out.

Ms. Demetrius: And I will have to double check as well because we have to have them there for part of the project, so I'm not a hundred percent sure if you can or can't charge. I'd have to double check with Mr. LeBlanc.

Mr. Goncalves: Again, it's more for the viewing public because I know several people asked that question. So, at least this way now we're not guessing.

Ms. Demetrius: Yeah.

Mr. Harrington: Yeah.

Mr. Goncalves: We're still guessing but at least we're not guessing, we're aware of it, right? Yeah, this has been great. The whole budget thing compared to last year is fantastic. We, it was late by the time we got around to it. I think the idea of you know, we're like five percent, if we got three, we would be thrilled. We're getting a percent and a half, it's better than nothing and we still to this day don't know why we needed that money. So, I think having a line, these line items coming through, really discussing the increases, decreases and knowing it's much easier for us to try to help you guys get what you need.

Mr. Harrington: Absolutely.

Mr. Goncalves: So, these kumbaya moments are great.

Mr. Harrington: Yeah, they're important to do that. So, one more point on, when we are talking about energy and things like that, Harris Brook is built to have solar on the roof. It was rated for that, all the conduit is run through the lines down into the power room. So, that's one question we can have when we get the energy committee back together is that you know do we put panels up there. I don't see why not, you know, it's a flat roof, it's made for it, but that's really going to be more of a Board of Selectmen thing because even though it's a school building, you guys still oversee the buildings in town. So, that's going to be the Board of Selectmen working with the energy committee and Marc and other people. So, that's something to keep in mind. We can start making some money off that roof in the near future.

Mr. Goncalves: Yeah, and there's companies that do that out there. They lease roofs, big roofs. That's great.

Mr. Harrington: Yes and the last point that I'll make regarding budget, is just keep in mind that, I know when we had our meeting at the library a while ago, a student who comes into the district and they're from special education, we are responsible for them until the age of twenty two or is it twenty four?

Dr. Tiano: Twenty-two.

Mr. Harrington: Twenty-two years old. So, a student that comes to Ludlow or any public school, you're on the hook as a district, as you should be you know, to provide educational services until their twenty two years old. So, that includes, he mentioned before, tuitions. So, if we don't have a program in town; whether it's hearing or visually impaired, we send them out to a program and there's a tuition cost to that. So, that drives a lot of our unanticipated costs if you have a student that moves in that needs these services we're on the hook. We have to provide these services and sometimes those tuitions can be very expensive you know. There are students that are in the hundreds of thousands of dollars.

Mr. Goncalves: Plus moving the parents around you know.

Mr. Harrington: Right and transportation costs you know we found that it's actually,

Mr. Gennette: So, when do we know that?

Mr. Harrington: When do we know what?

Mr. Gennette: So, is there a date that they say okay so this is who we have that needs special education and they're going to get sent to Ludlow, they're going to get sent to wherever, you know and then we know.

Mr. Goncalves: For the existing people I would imagine,

Mr. Gennette: Or is it like they just kind of just throw them at you randomly as they come up?

Ms. Bowler: When they move into town.

Dr. Tiano: Nobody is throwing people at us. I mean folks that move into town. So, when they move in you know, it's obviously on their timeline.

Mr. Gennette: Oh, so the families are deciding which communities they are going to move to.

Dr. Tiano: Sure.

Mr. Harrington: Absolutely.

Mr. Gennette: Alright, so this isn't something that the state is saying we have special needs,

Dr. Tiano: No, no.

Mr. Goncalves: School choice.

Mr. Harrington: Yeah, if we draw the name out of hat for a school choice person who need special education, then we pay for that.

Mr. Goncalves: And not to be mean but we can't say we're not going to accept it?

Ms. Bowler: No.

Mr. Harrington: No, it's a lottery. Sue literally pulls the names out of hat.

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2021 DEC -7 P 1:25
TOWN OF LUDLOW

Mr. Gennette: So, I guess my point is when's that, when is that lottery?

Dr. Tiano: So, just a couple of things.

Mr. Gennette: Sure.

Dr. Tiano: First, for school choice that is by the end of the school year and I believe right up until the new year. So, we'll know, the school committee votes on the number of seats that are available, folks apply, and those students move in. Varying levels of students with special needs that, as you folks know. So, I just want to say any student with an IEP, costs us hundreds of thousands of dollars. We do know from our existing students, students going from grade eight to grade nine, we have that number and as students move in, should they move in, we have that in terms of budgeting for the following fiscal year. Students that move in after April still are paid for by the previous district, but we own them come as soon as we turn over the fiscal calendar and school year. Sometimes districts will budget for one or two of those tuitions just as a holding place just in case we have a move in. If your budget is so tight, it doesn't allow for any flexibility then you're already at a deficit and sometimes students move out as well. So, in terms of people choosing to move to a new community that's a revolving door.

Mr. Gennette: Okay.

Ms. Bowler: And you may have a student in district who is doing fine in a classroom setting and then all of a sudden, say an autistic child, and their behaviors or needs get so great that they, we try to keep with the least restrictive environment but they're getting to a point where they can't be in that least restrictive environment. So, they need to go to the next level and just that cost of going to an out of district placement for the next level is so astronomical in difference compared to being in a classroom setting. So, I mean some of our kids within district right now this year alone could have that change made. We just don't know what's going to happen. It's just when the teams decides at a team meeting that the next step is needed, it happens.

Mr. Goncalves: And I don't want anybody to think that I'm not sensitive to the needs when I asked that question before but I know of circumstances where, maybe it's changed where somebody wanted to go to Pathfinder and get into an electrical class and there wasn't' any room and you know if four people wanted to get in, I don't think they're going to run out and hire another teacher just for those four kids. So, you know does it get to a point where here and now all of sudden if we get one more student, now we've got for another eighty thousand dollars because of that one student that doesn't need that much attention but because the numbers warrant it. Is there a way as a town that we could say look you know this is what we're going to have for room and that's it.

Ms. Bowler: It's a legal document and we have to follow it…it's a legal document and we have to follow it by state law or they can,

Mr. Goncalves: Right and I'm not saying so much for the people that live here as much as the school choice coming in.

Mr. Harrington: We can't say no.

Dr. Tiano: No, they become our students and you know we receive the chapter seventy money you know that comes along with it as well. They're our kids.

Mr. Goncalves: Which is five thousand, six thousand a kid?

Mr. Harrington: There is an adjustment made for special education students.

Dr. Tiano: There is.

Mr. Harrington: I think in the cherry sheets,

Dr. Tiano: I'm not sure specifically.

Ms. Demetrius: Yes, there is an adjustment that is made for…

Mr. Harrington: But, when our special education director comes in and we sort of joke about this all of the time, when she shows up it's for a request because we just had a new student that was diagnosed with a certain disability and the state mandates, they're kind of unfunded mandates, you have to provide it. So, we have to get a paraprofessional. There's a lot of one-on-one paraprofessionals. So, you might have a classroom with a lead teacher, a regular education teacher and there might be two paraprofessionals in there for one or two or three students. So, you might walk in there and say my God there's three teachers in here. Well, special education law requires that those students get their paraprofessionals.

Mr. DeBarge: So, if your community is very good at special education,

Mr. Harrington: We are.

Mr. DeBarge: which, we are as you guys say then you would attract more people in town right because we provide that. So, how of that, it's hundreds of thousands of dollars per student, how much of that exactly dollar for dollar is from the state?

Dr. Tiano: So, just so we're clear, students who have a disability, who are eligible for an IEP, which is an individualized education plan, our mandate, our mission, our passion is to keep them in the least restrictive meaning within the classroom. Depending on the disabilities and so forth that may be some type of pull out. If the child would require services that we can no longer provide and as you mentioned that our district has done a great job at developing programs within our schools so that you know we were not hit with that price tag. We want to keep them in Ludlow and so then we're a member of the L.P. Collaborative and that is, it's an extension of our public schools. It's a public school and that's where we could have a student whose needs are being met outside of our district at a lower cost than a private place. So, it's you know there is progression of least restrictive. When we're talking about a student who could cost you a hundred thousand, two hundred thousand dollars, that's a child with significant needs that you may need to get medical attention and so forth that we would care for the same way as we care for any kid. But, there's no predicting of who's moving in and so forth and sometimes it's uncomfortable too because we're singling out a population of our students right now and we're having that conversation, but this is a fiscal conversation and it naturally comes about.

Mr. Goncalves: Do we have an idea of what it costs us for people who don't live in Ludlow to come to our schools and use our special ed program? Have we ever looked at that?

Dr. Tiano: Well, they come to school through school choice okay.

Mr. Goncalves: Yeah, but I just wonder how many of those are special education students?

Mr. Harrington: How many of those are special education students? Yeah, I don't know if we have that. I think it's a range, they could be a 504 plan, which is very mild.

Mr. Goncalves: Only because it makes a great argument that if it's disproportional maybe you can go to the state board or we can put pressure on our legislators to say look you know we're getting whacked here versus Wilbraham, Longmeadow, the Orchard, Chicopee. It's kind of unfair to our taxpayers, is there a way that we can look to get some help?

Dr. Tiano: We could take a look at that.

Mr. Rosenblum: Yeah, wasn't the formula just redone a couple of years ago with the chapter seventy?

Mr. Harrington: It was and actually,

Mr. Rosenblum: It was archaic since like the nineties.

Mr. Harrington: I was very archaic and unfortunately a town like Ludlow kind of fell in the cracks because we're not a high, high need community like Springfield, Holyoke you know Chicopee or something like that, but we're also not a wealthy community. So, the wealthy communities, the Wellesley's, and the Longmeadow's, they kind of, their tax base, they can do it and Chicopee and Springfield, they're going to get a really good percentage from chapter seventy. Ludlow, Palmer, places like that, that are middle-class, blue-collar towns, our increase was like seventy thousand dollars overall for the whole thing. So, we kind of fell in this little warp.

Mr. Gennette: Does being a city change that versus a town?

Mr. Harrington: No, I think it's just really comes down to your demographics you know your need and not demographics in the sense of special education versus regular education. It's financial,

2022 DEC -7 P 1:25
TOWN OF LUDLOW

Mr. Goncalves: Average income per household.

Mr. Laing: I think right now that we're at the point where it's fifty five percent the town pays toward education and forty five percent the state pays. If I'm correct.

Mr. Rosenblum: That was the reversed like years ago in the opposite way.

Mr. Laing: Chicopee right now it's seventy percent from the state. Springfield is ninety percent and Holyoke is to a hundred percent. So, the people that live in those cities, their tax base doesn't pay for education. The actual state pays for it. The opposite here, you know.

Mr. DeBarge: For any parent that wants to bring their child to any school, whether it be Catholic, vocational or anything doesn't get anything for that.

Mr. Goncalves: No.

Mr. Laing: They do. Don't they get a tax credit if you were to,

Mr. Goncalves: No.

Mr. Laing: You don't. They used to.

Mr. Harrington: For private school? No, I don't think so.

Mr. Laing: Really. So, you don't get a,

Mr. Harrington: Are you talking about a voucher?

Mr. DeBarge: Yeah.

Mr. Harrinton: I'm not aware of anything.

Mr. DeBarge: Well, I'm just saying it seems like a flawed system to me if the municipality that has you know the budget doesn't fluctuate that much, our large budget yet you know this expenditure and I agree with the expenditure don't get me wrong. It just seems to me that a little more help from the state would be better for municipalities like us and then someone like me, I took my son out of our high school and brought him to Pope Francis but I don't get anything. I mean I'm still paying what I'm paying here. It just seems like a flawed system to me.

Mr. Harrington: That's a much larger discussion at some point.

Mr. DeBarge: Yeah.

Mr. Goncalves: It's scary to think that if St. John's closed tomorrow and you get two hundred and some odd kids into the system what happens, you know. Over night.

Mr. DeBarge: Yeah, that's a good point.

Mr. Rosenblum: To your point though the middle-class community is getting burdened more than anyone else.

Mr. Harrington: Yeah, it falls on the taxpayer more.

Mr. Goncalves: Alright, that's a different conversation.

Mr. Harrington: And I just brought that up just to kind of give you an idea of complexities.

Mr. Goncalves: Kathy, yes.

Ms. Demetrius: One last comment hopefully, on the St. John students; so, through our grants we do provide them if they have students that need services, they are provided services. So, if they did close down tomorrow, yes, we would have two hundred and something children coming our way you know,

Mr. Goncalves: A three-million-dollar bill,

Ms. Demetrius: we already know those who need services and maybe a little bit ahead of the game on that.

Mr. Goncalves: I'm saying just in general. At the fifteen, sixteen thousand a student that it costs, it would be a lot of money.

Mr. Harrington: And like I said, the only reason that I bring that up is to really just to kind of explain the complexities and really that's what the superintendent and business manager, you can get a specialized degree just in school management, school business management. Right? I mean it's very difficult and challenging and those are the types of complexities we deal with. I think it's important we throw everything on the table so you guys can understand where we're coming from when we have these discussions on our side.

Mr. Gennette: I understand it this year certainly more than I did last year. So, I do appreciate the explanations.

Mr. Goncalves: Alright, anybody else?

Mr. Harrington: Anybody from our board? You guys have any questions? We've got our student representative. We want you guys to meet Matt. He's our student representative.

Mr. Gennette: Thanks for coming.

Mr. Harrington: He's an excellent addition to our committee. He not only represents the students at the high school but all students in the district. So, any issues and he brought up some pretty interesting issues last week and he'll continue to do that. It's good to have a fighter for the students on the board.

Mr. Goncalves: A voice at that level. Absolutely. Alright, guys thank you very much.

Mr. Harrington: I make a motion to adjourn the school committee meeting. Motion made and seconded. Any discussion, hearing none. All in favor. All right, thank you.

Mr. Goncalves: Yeah, this type of thing is nice, to talk about it, we're not guessing anymore and I think virtually every board at least a couple times of year should be in here.

Mr. Gennette: It's nice to have that conversation with them and clear the air and I love hearing that they're going to be more transparent. Especially for the community and we can see what's going on.

CORRESPONDENCE

156. Celebrate Ludlow Donations – Luso Federal Credit Union $10,000.00, Westfield Bank $500.00, PV Financial Group $500.00, Grant Total: $11,000.00.

Moved by Mr. Silva to accept the donations as read by the Chairman and send a letter of thanks, seconded by Mr. Rosenblum. Vote 5-0. All in favor.

157. Letter from residents on lower Kirkland Avenue complaining about parking.

Mr. Goncalves suggested that they wait until Safety gets back to the Board of Selectmen.

Moved by Mr. DeBarge to table this issue until there is a report from the Safety Committee, seconded by Mr. Gennette. Vote 5-0. All in favor.

158. Letter from Matthew Tibbits resigning as member of the 250th Anniversary Committee.

Moved by Mr. DeBarge to accept the letter of resignation from Matthew Tibbits for the 250th Anniversary Committee, seconded by Mr. Gennette. Vote 5-0. All in favor.

159. Letter from Sgt. Brian Shameklis announcing Officer Derek Smolinski resigning from the Safety Committee effective immediately.

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2022 DEC -7 P 1:25
TOWN OF LUDLOW

Moved by Mr. Gennette to file, seconded by Mr. Rosenblum. Vote 5-0. All in favor.

160. Ludlow Cultural Council update on Community Market event.

Mr. Goncalves read the letter from the Ludlow Cultural Council outlining the upcoming Community Market event.

Moved by Mr. DeBarge to file, seconded by Mr. Gennette. Vote 5-0. All in favor.

UNFINISHED BUINESS

Board to approve and sign the Point Software Contract (tabled from 9/6)

Moved by Mr. Gennette to table until next meeting, seconded by Mr. Rosenblum. Vote 5-0. All in favor.

Moved by Mr. DeBarge to approve and sign the Executive Session Minutes of July 12, 2022, with all members present except Mr. Gennette, seconded by Mr. Silva. Vote 5-0. All in favor.

Moved by Mr. DeBarge to approve and sign the Executive Session Minutes of July 26, 2022, with all members present except Mr. DeBarge, seconded by Mr. Gennette. Vote 5-0. All in favor.

Moved by Mr. DeBarge to approve and sign the Selectmen's Minutes of June 7, 2022, with all members present, seconded by Mr. Rosenblum. Vote 5-0. All in favor.

Moved by Mr. DeBarge to approve and sign the Selectmen's Minutes of June 21, 2022, with all members present except Mr. Silva seconded by Mr. Gennette. Vote 5-0. All in favor.

Board to approve and sign revised Tigh and Bond Town Hall HVAC System Upgrades Study.

Moved by Mr. DeBarge to approve and sign the revised Tigh and Bond Town Hall HVAC System Upgrades Study, seconded by Mr. Gennette. Vote 5-0. All in favor.

Board to discuss and approve the new non-union classification plan.

Ms. Ribeiro handed out an overview to the Selectmen of a cost out of what the increase will cost the town to the positions that were found to be inequitable from the study. This was a classification study done for all of the non-union positions. There were about 29 positions that were actually studied. The CPO and the grant writer was not part of the study. The study was done to show internal and external equities. Internal, meaning how these positions compare with others in town. There are some positions that are contractual employees or union employees that get looked at every three years and they're increase are going up and then there's a body of people that are not moving because they are non-union and they have no contract and they're not getting looked at. They get the 2% COLA every year but the gap is getting bigger every year. Then the external equities would be surrounding communities and if we are in line with comparables as far as population and budget, etc. They comprised a list with HRS of surrounding communities that are comparable to Ludlow in size, population, tax rate, budget and public schools, which they will use going forward. There are two proposals for classification plans for management and non-management. These would take the place of the current classification plan.

Mr. DeBarge asked if Ms. Ribeiro was in favor of the new classification plan, M1-M8?

Ms. Ribeiro stated that she is.

Mr. Gennette asked if Ms. Ribeiro was happy with the final report for these positions?

Ms. Ribeiro stated that she thought the final report was a little vague. She thought there would be some clear recommendations of what they should be doing with certain positions based on the extensive research that was done. They do have new job descriptions with all of these positions. Although, some of these job descriptions were revamped in house recently. There was a market data report provided which shows an average high and low of each position compared to all of the comp. She did a comp average, a low and high range, a median and then a seventy fifth percentile of the market and the last column she shows the highs and lows of the positions. Ms. Rebeiro highlighted the ones that should be

addressed by the Board.

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2022 DEC -7 P 1:25

Mr. Gennette stated that this report took a long time to get to us.

Ms. Ribeiro explained that the report was based on all FY22 wages because that's when they started doing this but she updated the list to FY23 wages. With the COLA and 1% adjustments that all of the town employees received in July 2022; the discrepancies were not as apparent. However, if she went out and got all new data for FY23, it would make the disparity larger again. The study took a long time and there were a lot of delays but as far as the final report is concerned, she assumed it would be a little more detailed. Ms. Ribeiro agrees with all of the positions that were marked as low.

Mr. Gennette asked if every position was on the list?

Ms. Ribeiro stated that every position that was analyzed, is on the list.

Mr. DeBarge agreed with Ms. Ribeiro that the report is very vague, and he was expecting a more detailed report after waiting so long for the study to be completed. He was hoping for a better idea of these positions and the direction that the town needs to move in. The report seems inconsistent to him.

Ms. Ribeiro explained that in the final report, they did explain that there was limited data with some of the positions that weren't specifically in other towns or that were too different or unusual to compare. Some of the positions that she could not find information on were the Golf Course, the TV station and some of the elected positions in town. The study cost a lot of money and Ms. Ribeiro wouldn't want to just disregard it.

Mr. Gennette asked how much money is still owed for this report?

Mr. Strange stated that it has been paid in full.

Mr. Goncalves asked where is the number of employees supervised in this for each one of these positions versus what they are and how do we know we are not overstaffed in any one of these departments by comparison to other communities?

Ms. Ribeiro explained that the study wasn't about whether or not we are overstaffed in certain departments.

Mr. Goncalves explained that if one company has a manger that supervises five people and another company has a manager that supervises twelve people, they should not receive the same amount of pay.

Mr. Silva stated that most of these studies take that into account. That's why they compare to other towns of our size like Wilbraham, to compare apples to apples.

Mr. Gennette explained that it is going to be an average.

Ms. Ribeiro stated that's it's never going to be a perfect science. However, with the exception of maybe two titles on the whole study, do not supervise more than three people. Each office has one to three people. There a few that supervise more than that but everyone else has one to three employees. There are titles on the list that the town does not have job descriptions for, and they have never been looked at for any type of pay equity. Ms. Ribeiro believes at the least those titles should be looked at. She also explained that the last column that states increase to minimum wage with a number should be adjusted to get to the maximum wage.

Mr. Silva does not want to redo this study again.

Mr. Gennette asked if Ms. Ribeiro feels that she has enough information in the current study to put a financial package together?

Ms. Ribeiro stated that it would be a $65,274 to make those adjustments suggested. Plus, an additional $5,000 for two non-management positions.

Mr. Silva does not feel that that is an unreasonable amount to get all of these positions where they need to be.

Mr. DeBarge stated that this will come down to the budget, will it be too much all at once? He believes they have to find a happy medium.

Mr. Rosenblum does not think they should take this on all at once. He believes it should be phased in over two to three years.

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2022 DEC -7 P 1:25

Ms. Ribeiro stated that these numbers are only based on the study, they can adjust them accordingly. They can reclassify someone at a higher rate based on the new management proposal scale and put them in the steps. Then each year, they are getting a step instead of just maxing them out.

Mr. Silva believes that some of these employees have been waiting a long time for this and does not believe that it would sit well with them if they didn't do something to move in the right direction.

Mr. Gennette stated that usually the budget is so tight after union negotiations that it is not doable and asked Mr. Strange what he thinks?

Mr. Strange thinks that they will be more efficient with how they spend their personnel dollars fiscal 24 and believe this is doable. He also believes that they should get the current employees up to where they should be and then look at new positions second.

Mr. Rosenblum agrees with Mr. Strange. Over the past several years it seems like the same departments are requesting positions.

Mr. Goncalves would like a comparison to six or seven other communities and what is happening in their departments. He feels that Town Hall is a little overstaffed in comparison to other communities.

Ms. Ribeiro agrees that some offices are overstaffed. She has made recommendations in the past that when someone leaves a position, it should be looked at to see if it can be replaced with part time or if it needs to be replaced at all. However, department heads do not always want to accept the recommendations.

Mr. Gennette believes that Mr. Strange should be able to vet out different positions as he seems fit.

Mr. Goncalves believes that spending every penny that the town takes in, is not fiscally responsible.

Ms. Ribeiro confirmed that she is going back to the positions they are considering increases and compare them to other towns make up?

Mr. Silva said yes and just give her recommendations.

Mr. DeBarge believes that is a burden on Ms. Ribeiro's office.

Mr. Goncalves thinks they need more details, and the size of different departments should be addressed.

Ms. Ribeiro will look at the list again and rework it after getting the information requested tonight.

NEW BUSINESS

Board to discuss issuing a request for qualifications for legal counsel.

Mr. Strange explained that the Town has been with the current firm for some time and thinks that it would be good to put a request for qualifications out to see what else is out there, particularly Municipal Law work. It's a good time to check the market.

Mr. Gennette supports Mr. Strange and his request to look at new legal counsel qualifications.

Mr. DeBarge also supports Mr. Strange's idea to see what else is out there.

Mr. Silva asked if the Board just recently signed a proposal with the current counsel?

Mr. Strange explained that with law firms you sign fee agreements, not contracts so they cannot lock in their clients.

Mr. Silva wanted clarification that the fee agreement was for the year?

Mr. Strange explained that the town pays a monthly fee to the legal firm but is not a contractual arrangement.

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Mr. Goncalves stated that it is an annual agreed price that is billed monthly. Mr. Goncalves, Mr. Gennette and Mr. Strange met regarding the current attorneys, and they realize they may not have exactly what the Town needs moving forward as they did lose a few attorneys recently. After looking at the resumes of potential attorneys, they are loaded with knowledge. They have land use specialists, they have contract negotiation specialists and they are a little bit deeper where the town can go out and get information may be a little bit quicker and require less effort on everybody's part.

Mr. Silva does not believe that there is anyone deeper than this current firm as far as land acquisition as far as real estate and they were tremendous in helping the Assessors out. They were right on the ball always. Rosemary has always been very helpful to him.

Mr. Goncalves stated that in the past they had been very easy to deal with and very quick to get answers but they also realize that they may not be a specialized as the Town needs them to be anymore. They want to at least explore the option.

Mr. Rosenblum stated that they can still put their hat in the ring and we can look at all of our options, including them.

Moved by Mr. Gennette to issue an RFQ for new Legal Counsel, seconded by Mr. DeBarge. Vote 4-1. One opposed.

BOARD UPDATES/MISC.

American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA) Funds Updates.

Mr. Rosenblum requested a new list of what has already been approved for ARPA.

Mr. Goncalves stated that the engineers are going to review everything one last time for the track and field and then get the bidding paperwork together. Mr. Goncalves asked if anything was back for Vets Park yet?

Mr. Strange stated that they are still waiting for the engineering scope for Vets Park and the estimate for the additional work on the baseball field should be in tomorrow.

Mr. Silva asked about a letter that was sent in by a resident regarding the bleachers at Whitney Park? He also asked if the award for the bleachers from the State was ever received?

Mr. DeBarge explained that it was supposed to be $100,000 but it was taken back. He also explained that there was an football association that wanted to replace the press box and do some upgrades and hit roadblocks.

Mr. Rosenblum stated that we had talked about replacing the bleachers at Whitney Park with a smaller set with the ARPA funds, which is why he would like a list to see if they are still in there.

Mr. Goncalves also stated that the money allocated previously for the engineers is what is being used for the track and field. They have not used any ARPA funds for this.

Chairman to approve and sign all bills, warrants and abatements. A record of all warrants is in the Selectmen's office for perusal until provided to the Town Accountant's Office.

CLOSING COMMENTS

Mr. Rosenblum believes this was a productive meeting and is happy that they're moving in the right directions by communicating with all of the departments. He is good with Ms. Ribeiro's report but this may be time for job sharing.

Mr. Silva agrees with Mr. Rosenblum. He does feel that the town needs to start tightening it's belt. He does not want to spend money foolishly.

Mr. Gennette feels that the town is going through a big revitalization between the school and Ms. Ribeiro, they are trying to be more transparent and accountable. He feels that everything is finally coming together. That is very encouraging.

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Mr. Goncalves agrees with everyone tonight about the direction they are moving in. Reminded everyone that September 24th and 25th is the second annual community fair at the gazebo.

Moved by Mr. Rosenblum, to adjourn this meeting at 7:36 p.m. and not return to open meeting but to enter into Executive Session for the purposes to discuss strategy with respect to collective bargaining or litigation in an open meeting may have a detrimental effect on the bargaining or litigating position of the public body, seconded by Mr. Gennette. Vote 5-0. All in favor.

_____Chairman

Ludlow Board of Selectmen

All related documents can be viewed at the Board of Selectmen's Office during regular business hours.