Meeting of the Board of Selectmen held on Tuesday, December 13, 2022, beginning at 6:00 pm in the Department of Public Works Conference Room

Members Present: Antonio Goncalves, Chairman, Manuel Silva, Derek DeBarge, and William Rosenblum

Also Present: Steve Santos, Chairman, Keith Ouellette, Dan Soares, Alex Simao (Board of Public Works), Marc Strange, Town Administrator

First Order of Business: The Pledge of Allegiance

VISITATIONS:

6:05 pm Board of Public Works – DPW Quarterly Meeting

Mr. Simao: Welcome Gentlemen.

Mr. Goncalves: Nice to see you guys.

Mr. DeBarge: Pleasure to be here.

Mr. Santos: Thank you Gentlemen. Hopefully we will get a few things solved tonight. For those of you who don't know, we have an appointment at 6:00 pm with the Board of Selectmen. Hopefully one of many more quarterly meetings to come. Topics for discussion on the agenda. We'll start with ARPA Funds disbursement. We'll probably go between, if our Board has questions you can go through me as a Chair and you guys can go through Tony as the Chair. Tony, we'll go back and forth.

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Mr. Goncalves: Sure.

Mr. Santos: The ARPA Funds disbursement, I reached out to the Board of Selectmen and asked what was going on with the ARPA Funds. We had done a couple requests early on. They had been the same request straight through. We haven't heard what was going on or how it was going with Capital coming up. The three requests that we put in were the tennis courts/pickleball courts at Whitney.

Mr. Goncalves: How much?

Mr. Santos: That was for at total amount of $97,441.30. Originally, we had your liaison, and I don't know if he's still your liaison because we haven't seen him, was James Gennette. He came in and voiced some concerns because we had residents that sent us a petition that they wanted pickleball courts at Whitney. So, those tennis courts are in total disrepair at this point, and they're used very little. They've got large cracks in them, but the fence is still in good shape. What we anticipated we were going to try to do was take the fence out, rip the blacktop out, put the blacktop in, re-coat it, put 2 tennis courts and 2 pickleball courts in. We wanted to move forward with it, Recreation was behind it, so not knowing what the ARPA Funds are we put it through Capital. When we went to Capital, it was denied and said it was ARPA Funds eligible, so we would do it through ARPA Funds. Then we never heard anything. There was also a discussion, more verbal than anything else, on where we were going with the bleachers. The bleachers have been deteriorating rapidly over the course of the years. They're obviously outdated. Another big concern that we had, that I know we had reached out a few times to the Selectmen, was what we were going to do with the press box. The press box got rotted out and had some squirrel damage. Squirrels were eating it, so they lost the roof and one of the back walls was in disrepair. What this Board didn't want to do was go and get quotes to fix that and then find out the Selectmen decided they were going to fund it, or we were going to do it through ARPA Funds or through Capital and knock it all down. It was a little under $10,000 to fix it. The Football Association was complaining because they didn't have a press box. All the controls for the scoreboard were up in the press box and they couldn't move them down. It wasn't really habitable to be used because it was kind of dangerous. We didn't hear anything. We took it out of our budget and recently this fall did all the repairs; put a new roof on it, put a new fascia board, new back wall, made sure the electricity worked and everything was up and going. There was some talk of State funding, when Mrs. Villano

was here, about re-doing all the bleachers. Supposedly, it was before my time, and then things fell through.

Mr. Goncalves: Is that the 3 items for ARPA or is that all one?

Mr. Santos: No, that's a separate one. Whitney Street Park was two separate ones. One for the bleachers and one for the tennis/pickleball court. The last one was something that came up towards the end. This request was done in April. What we discussed at our April 5 meeting was we have a pump station at what they call Lodge Street/Westover. It takes the industrial park of what the Town owns off of Randall Road, not the jail. The jail is still tied into the air force base through the back. This takes those businesses, which are ADS, Bill's Tires, Fletchers; there's some industrial buildings. That goes into a sewer there and is pumped across the swamp over to Lawton Street. I don't know if you Gentlemen know where Lawton Street is.

Mr. Goncalves: Wasn't there a repair done to that pump in the last couple years?

Mr. Santos: We've done annual repairs.

Mr. Goncalves: There was not a healthy one done, a big-ticket repair?

Mr. Santos: No, as far as I know, we've never replaced a pump. We've ripped them out and re-built them.

Mr. Soares: I think he's referring to Chapin Street.

Mr. Santos: Chapin Street pump station had a major repair and we had to replace a pump. That had to go through procurement and was quite a thing. What happened is, that was constructed in the late 70's, that pump station. So, a very small pump station, shallow wet well where the pump sits, probably 20 something feet. It's got two common pumps like you guys would have to pump water out of your basement. They're submersible pumps. They pump up to a 6" main and go across the woods and up into Moody Street. The generator is old and it's running into disrepair. Its water cooled, but not as a radiator type. Its fresh water cooled, so it takes water from the water meter, goes through it, and then discharges it into the wet well. That water pump is now leaking. There's nowhere to find one. So that generator is basically in total disrepair.

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Mr. Goncalves: How much is that one?

Mr. Santos: To re-do the pump station we reached out to our third-party contractor, Mott-MacDonald, does all our sewer work, and he's talking about $708,000. That's keeping some of the existing infrastructure, which would be the wet well, a little bit of upgrade for the electric service, but the actual pole and service is there. This was all submitted to you guys for a breakdown, like I said, if you need it again. We do have a portable generator that was sent to us when they adopted First Avenue because that doesn't have a stand-by at place generator. What we're doing now is putting a transfer switch in so we can tow it up there and put it in if there's a long-term blackout. The problem being is that leaves the one on First Avenue with no backup generator, so if the whole Town goes out, someone has to run up to Lawton Street, pump that one down, run over to First Avenue and pump that one down. The only thing good about that is they're both industrial areas. So, it's not like we're relying on those for household purposes. That is something I believe was ARPA Fund eligible, as far as infrastructure for sewer and water improvements. What we are doing is, we only have 4,600 sewer users, so that would come out of the Sewer Enterprise Fund, so it's not like we would take it out of General Fund, which takes out of the tax base. The 4,600 sewer users are the ones that support the Sewer Enterprise Fund. There's not enough in that fund right now because we've been doing sewer projects.

Mr. Goncalves: That's what I was going to ask you. If we somehow find that $700,000 you will leave the Sewer Enterprise Fund alone.

Mr. Santos: Correct, or if we could subsidize that somehow and take some out of the Sewer Enterprise or ARPA that's definitely one way to go. A couple of things this Board is trying to do is improve existing infrastructure now with the sewer lines, because a lot of the stuff down off of East and the existing sewers, all the county streets down there, all that's sewer in people's backyards. There are manholes in peoples garages, that we have to get permission for. Between that and trying to expand the sewer system for the residents outside the sewer district that are just

outside, but within it, but they're not quite down. We just did a project on Cady Street for Grimard. Half of Grimard came from the back and half from the front. So, we just did a sewer project for a little over $600,000. We also brought a piece up to Tower Road. It stopped at East, and we brought it to the top of Tower Road. We added 4 houses that had failing septics. We also found a small piece of the main that needed repair off of Motyka Street.

Mr. Goncalves: I'm familiar with that one.

Mr. Santos: Those were bid out as 3 individual jobs, depending on what we could transfer for reserve transfer. Those are the kind of things we're looking at. Those 3 alone were $666,000. We also don't process our own sewer; it goes to Springfield for processing.

Mr. Goncalves: I thought the county streets got fixed with little Canada.

Mr. Santos: No, little Canada separated the sewer from the drainage, so it was more cost effective to take the drainage out of the sewer. All the drainage and sewer were combined, all the catch basins went into the sewer. They re-did the drainage system, which was easier than going in to do catch basins in one main rather than going to every house.

Mr. Goncalves: And you're not pumping that stuff for treatment?

Mr. Santos: Correct. This way if they separated all those, they are plumbed interior to go into the back of the house. You would either have to dig all the way around those houses or re-plumb all those houses to come out in the front. I think it was more cost effective. I wasn't here when that was done, I just worked on it with the contractor. It was more advantageous. There were some pieces of sewer that were changed, but not a lot of them. It was the same thing on the tree streets, Elm, Oak, and Maple. Those were backyard sewers. They re-did one piece on Howard and fixed some drainage there.

Mr. Goncalves: Questions?

Mr. Strange: Have you guys looked at leveraging the State Revolving Fund to do that project?

Mr. Santos: The sewer project?

Mr. Strange: Yes.

Mr. Santos: No.

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Mr. Strange: The State Revolving Fund is basically this pocket of money the State offers. They offer low interest loans for gray infrastructure. Because $700,00 is a big lift for Towns. You'd have to bond it, probably not going to pay for it out of Capital. ARPA is a possibility, but most Towns would use a State Revolving Fund for something like that.

Mr. Goncalves: I'll tell you where we are with ARPA. We've got the commitments out there with Track & Field, we've got an HVAC system at the Safety Complex and Town Hall and we're trying to get Vets Park demolished with that money. So, we're not really sure where we're at. In addition to ARPA, we did come across another grant for a million and one of the Community Block Grants, was there something for Whitney Park in there?

Mr. Strange: They're doing a survey. They don't know if that's going to qualify or not.

Mr. Goncalves: Pioneer Valley Planning?

Mr. Strange: Yes.

Mr. Goncalves: We're trying to get some money for Whitney Park to do either improvements or I know the bleachers came up in conversation. I don't know if we have much of anything else, beyond what I just told you, that would be of the same importance. If there's money there, we could probably throw some this way. I'm not speaking for myself; you guys tell me. There's really nothing else we've talked about that's, well if we have enough, we're going in this direction, and you'd be behind them. Fair enough?

Mr. Santos: Yes, and like I said, for Marc's point, I know we had bonded for the sewer jobs before, because those little Canada jobs I believe were bonded. I wasn't part of that so I'm not sure how that was bonded or who did it, but I know what we do have in our Sewer Enterprise Fund that there

is bonding that comes out of that for bonded jobs we've done before. I don't know what it's about, I just know it's taken out of that line item for bonding. I don't know how far it was.

Mr. Strange: You can bond, but I think the State created this program, so you don't have to bond. Basically, the State guarantees like a 2% loan or something like that, that you can pay back over time.

Mr. Santos: Thank you, we'll definitely look into that.

Mr. Goncalves: Questions?

Mr. Rosenblum: No, I'm good right now.

Mr. DeBarge: I don't have any questions.

Mr. Soares: I have a question for the Chairman. What funds went into Town infrastructure, as far as ARPA Funds?

Mr. Goncalves: None, we can't use it for Town infrastructure. There's a fine line on what we can use it for. Again, there's other monies we're looking at right now that we can free up if we can push those grants and the other money that's coming in to free us up quite a bit. A biggie is going to be Vets Park. We don't know if Vets Park is going to cost us a million and a half or two and a half or 3 million to knock down. I don't know if the survey has been done yet on the hazardous waste. Once we know what that is we'll go to bid on that. If that comes in a million, million and a half that would be incredible. We're keeping our fingers crossed. We held tight; we didn't spend any of it yet. Waiting for the right things to come along and hopefully we'll know shortly.

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Mr. Santos: Keith, anything?

Mr. Ouellette: No, I'm good.

Mr. Santos: Alex?

Mr. Simao: Nope.

Mr. Santos: With the demolition of Vets Park, that's something we should probably get together on. What is the overall outlook for that property after it's demolished?

Mr. Rosenblum: It has to go back to Conservation, if I remember correctly, and then it can come back into circulation if we did. The thought was to put new basketball courts, reconfiguring the fields. We talked about it but obviously we haven't talked about any design. It would have to go back to Conservation first. It could be pickleball courts. Until we find out the price on being able to demo it then it has to go back to Conservation.

Mr. Santos: Ok, I think our concern is there's some infrastructure that has to stay in place even though the building is demolished because we do have irrigation for those fields, so we have to keep the water on. With that being said, I believe the lights for the parking lot are off of that building. We also need electricity to power the irrigation. When we demolish that it's not like we can just shut off the utilities and go. It can be done but we're going to lose all those fields because we have no way of tempering that stuff. Some type of structure is going to have to be built. Right now, we'd love to have permanent restrooms. There is a sewer line for the school. If we do some type of portable restroom with some type of utility that keeps the irrigation, a male and female restroom for special occasions somewhere in the middle where it's feasible. And obviously parking. We should get together once the school is down and figure out what we're able to do with that. Right now, at some of the fields we just have Sani-cans. It's not really out of town athletics coming in and using Sani cans. It doesn't look good. That should be something discussed when we tear those buildings down. Just so everybody knows there is some infrastructure there. When you put that out to bid there's got to be some temporary stuff there.

Mr. Goncalves: Thank you, that makes sense. Maybe fields, basketball, pickleball. I think pickleball at Vets is a little more centralized, less vandalism.

Mr. Rosenblum: The Boys & Girls Club is doing a project that they brought to us. They will also be doing pickleball behind their facility.

Mr. Santos: They did bring it to our attention. They were going to bring the loam down here and we told them we were going to give them any excess gravel they needed. Whatever was unneeded as far as excavation, was going to be brought down here and we should have enough hard pack to bring it up there. Whatever we do for park equipment is a benefit for the Town, whether it's a basketball court or more playground equipment, a field or whatever it is I think it would be a benefit to the Town. Just try to make sure we do it right and whatever supports are lacking in facilities we try to fill it in.

Mr. Goncalves: Final word. We'll definitely keep this on the table and see how far we can stretch the money. We've been very lucky. Marc has been getting a ton of little grants in, which is kind of neat. 50's, 60's, 80's, a million, which I think is going to help out quite a bit. Loosens up some ARPA money for us.

Mr. Simao: It all helps.

Mr. Goncalves: For sure. Next.

Mr. Santos: I don't know if you want to go out of order. The exit interview for DPW Director. Do you want to move that to last, and we can go over other stuff.

Mr. Goncalves: Yes.

Mr. Santos: FY2024 budget update. Gentlemen, we have the MUNIS budget. We haven't met with our Board, Marc, since we had the budget meeting. I don't know if you Gentlemen know, we had a budget meeting. Rhonda was with me. We went over our FY2023 budget. I think it was a very good meeting. Some things were brought up. I think the biggest thing we have and Mr. Chair if you don't mind, I'll refer to Marc, some issues came up. Obviously, the elephant in the room is the articles in the Register, so we're referring to some of that along with some of the exit interview. There were (5) PW-3 vacancies. If you guys don't know what our structure is I can explain it to you. A PW-1 is basically a laborer. His only license requirement is a regular drivers license to get him back and forth to work and his ability to drive a pickup truck. Small, under 10,000 lb. pickup truck. That's a PW-1, regular laborer. PW-2 can do the same thing as a PW-1 but is required to have his Class B or II minimum license, which requires a commercial vehicle gross registered over 26,000 lbs. with air brakes.

Mr. Goncalves: CDL?

Mr. Santos: Yes, CDL. That makes him able to drive the 6-wheeler dump truck and plow. We also have a 10-wheeler dump truck and plow. PW-3 is able to do the PW-1 and PW-2 job but he is also required to have a CDL plus a 2A hoisters license, which allows him to run a backhoe loader which does some excavation for the cemeteries and sewer repairs, the skid steer and loader to load themselves with the salt for the winter, which is what is covered under the Massachusetts 2A license. PW-4 is all of that, but he takes a crew in a managerial position. He's a working foreman. He takes a vac truck, sander truck, one ton, basically does everything. Then there's the Director of Operations, which is Kenny. The pay scale we offer is no big secret. Everybody has a tough time finding help from restaurants to any type of service. Everybody is crying for help. We've had PW-3 applicants posted for quite a while. We only had one mechanics position, so we decided to do a PW-3M. One of those 5 was a PW-3M. He would do all of that work as a PW-3, but his license requirement didn't require a 2A hoisting license. It required a CDL so if a CDL truck broke down on the side of the road, him, and someone else could go get it and return it safely. If they took it somewhere to get it fixed, they would have a CDL. That is a PW-3M, for the same compensation. Due to contract negotiations, we are committed to what our pay scale is for our compensation plan. So, we had a PW-3M. The PW-3M has been posted for about 6 months. We spoke with Carrie and rather than posting it for 2 weeks to see what we got and repost it; we asked her to post all positions that we have open until filled. If we interview and its not filled its still posted and we don't have to wait for the interview process and wait for that person to decline or not. So, they're posted until filled.

Mr. Goncalves: Can I ask a question?

Mr. Santos: Yes sir.

Mr. Goncalves: How is it working for you having to sub the mechanic out rather than just having an employee with benefits and everything else?

Mr. Santos: Right now, he's still doing some mechanical work.

Mr. Goncalves: Right, but do you see what I'm saying? Is that M really a big deal or if you've got $30-$40,000 of subcontract work out to a third party you're not picking up a 30-year-old and supporting him for the next 60 years.

Mr. Santos: Correct, but the PW-3M mechanic just moved his position back to a PW-3. I have a letter on why he did that. We just started that within the last 2 weeks. He's not leaving us high and dry; he's still fixing stuff. On the sanding crew the other night some issues came up. He's still doing it. The biggest thing we've discussed before is the stipend. He took his tools out of here. He uses whatever Town tools we have, and he's purchased some. With that being said, the 5 PW-1 positions open, we did come with the Finance Committee, and you did grant us two PW-1 positions. We posted and filled those positions rather quickly with two good, qualified candidates. It seems like the lower qualified positions were easier to fill. In the meantime, one of those PW-1's is going for his CDL license, moving him to a PW-2. That left a PW-1 open, and we filled it very quickly. What the Board decided to do with our track record of trying to fill the PW-3's, we approached this year with asking to put a PW-1 on the classification plan and a PW-2 on the classification plan with the difference in pay from a PW-4 to a PW-3 for the mechanics' position. So, we're taking one of the 3's and making it a 4.

Mr. Goncalves: The M?

Mr. Santos: The 4-M. There are two technical positions in this department. But the mechanics position we can't fill because the pay compensation is low. The gentleman that left that position said a lot of other surrounding communities pay the mechanic the foreman's position. That has to be a classification change through you guys.

Mr. Goncalves: So, you're going to eliminate the PW-3M?

Mr. Santos: No, we're going to keep the 3M. There are 3 PW-4's on the classification plan. Carrie said we're going to leave those three.

Mr. Goncalves: Who are they normally, managers?

Mr. Santos: There's 2 PW-4's financed. One was Jamie, one was Nick Axiotis. There is a 3rd PW-4 but it's not financed. Carrie said leave the 3rd PW-4 unfinanced and create a PW-4M, and that's going to be the mechanic with no managerial responsibilities. He's not going to have a crew, it's basically for the compensation plan.

Mr. Goncalves: The guy who eliminated himself as an M, is he going to go to that 4?

Mr. Santos: We don't know. That would be his decision. That's what he wanted but obviously we couldn't do that without coming to you guys and getting approval. He also was looking for the $2,500 tool stipend, which has been all over the place. We discussed this before, that we wanted to get out of stipends. I think previous stipends were discussed and it went to the person at a one-year check. This gentleman said he doesn't want a one-year check, he wants a tool stipend. We were trying to set it up with Matco or Snap-On for the amount of $2,500/year so he could purchase new tools customized for these vehicles and upgrade his other tools that weren't covered under warranty. Batteries for cordless tools and stuff like that. That stipend would be for his tools, and he would have kept his tools here, which were over $100,000.

Mr. Goncalves: You're asking for a total of 3 positions?

Mr. Santos: Yes, but what we did was, and Marc can attest to this, was decided we were going to un-fund two PW-3's out of the compensation plan but leave them in the classification plan. We were going to finance the difference between the 4 and 3 for the mechanic, right Marc?

Mr. Strange: Yes.

Mr. Santos: Finance the PW-1 and PW-2. And still be under our current payroll. Correct?

Mr. Strange: Yes.

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Mr. Santos: If no hiring was done now, as of July 1 you would have a PW-4M open, three PW-3's, a PW-1 and a PW-2, which in the meantime if that PW-2 goes for his hoisters license, if there's a vacant PW-3 he can be moved up to the PW-3 and a 1 can go into the 2. It seems to be easier to find that type of workforce right now than it is for qualified people. We also have to remember we might be competing with at least 9 construction companies in Ludlow.

Mr. Goncalves: Nine that the Planning Board knows about.

Mr. Santos: Those guys are all certified prevailing wage in the $50-$60 range, even $70 for an operator. They're paying Amazon drivers crazy money. Obviously, our compensation plan is a little low. At contract negotiations, Derek was there, it was brought up and that's why you guys approved the 3/3/3 because Carrie said it's very hard in this job market to get people to work. You can't go 4 or 5 across the board. It can be reconstructed. Wilbraham just went through that. They reconstructed and boosted everything up by contract. Due to contract negotiations and budget restraints, we can only do so much.

Mr. Soares: They're paying Class A drivers $30/hour right now anywhere you go.

Mr. DeBarge: We talk about this at every one of our meetings.

Mr. Soares: It's one of our requirements. We're constantly behind the 8 ball. We're never going to get any good candidates because our compensation plan doesn't work.

Mr. Goncalves: What other kind of money about the budget? That looks like a net 1 higher pay position.

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Mr. Santos: At the budget that's actually going to lower our payroll because you're looking at lower positions. So, they'll be a surplus if this budget stays the same. Marc, we were talking about $15-$16,000?

Mr. Strange: I don't remember what the total was, but it was definitely going to be lower.

Mr. Santos: The Director's position is open and a Senior Clerk's position has just been filled. At budget time it was news to my ears that we filled it. There's a Business Administrator and two Senior Clerks. I believe she starts in January. That was the biggest part of the budget. Going forward with our regular operating budget there really wasn't much changes. We know with budget restraints and money there's other departments that need stuff. We brought up traveling conferences, $5,000. Our training was a little lacking. An injury which created some inspections. We needed a little more training, which we haven't done in the past. We did sub that out to a contractor to come with compliance, so that cost us some money. We did take it out of this year's money. That will be ongoing moving forward to keep us in compliance. Our material safety data sheets. Safety rules and regulations and changes that are done through other State Municipalities, so there was an increase there.

Mr. Goncalves: Where's your budget year to date vs. last year at this time?

Mr. Santos: You have to remember trash. It's the biggest thing.

Mr. Goncalves: With the trash out of the way.

Mr. Santos: We're pretty much level where we have to be. We were over on police detail, which we adjusted, but we adjust the budget year to year. We discussed this today with the procurement officer. It's very hard to nail our budget down and see too far. We tried to put a list of roads together, depending on what our annual bid is and what our Chapter 90 Funds are. This year we got $698,000. In our operating budget you see road repair maintenance is $190,000. That's all we get from the Town budget to do paved roads. A lot of our budget numbers are based off of State funds. Chapter 90 stuff.

Mr. Goncalves: The only reason I asked you is because you guys had an increase of 23-22 of about half million dollars in your budget from the previous year to the current year. Was that all because of trash?

Mr. Santos: Most of it was because of trash.

Mr. Goncalves: We'll visit that a lot more in months to come. Do you guys want to talk about trash?

Mr. Santos: Are you guys all set with the budget?

Mr. Goncalves: Yes, we'll probably get a little bit more into the nitty gritty after the new year.

Mr. Santos: You have to remember there's a lot of different working parts over here and we hold that true to be accountable to the taxpayer. We'd love to have our budget go through the roof, but we also have a reality. We have capital expenses that have to be done. Truck replacements, you need lawnmowers. One of those new 6-wheeler dump trucks, knock on wood we got brand new, is up to $280,000. One of those little one tons is $100,000. To me that's a lot of money. A pickup truck that really doesn't do much is $60,000. Like we have been, we need to update our fleet. A lawnmower that went through the last capital was $146,000 to mow the fields. We understand as a Board that there's other departments that need some of that funding, so we try to only put forward what we absolutely need to keep the basic services going. If there are any extra expenditures, we try to do whatever.

Mr. Goncalves: Do you have the capacity to chase down grant money?

Mr. Santos: No, that's why we were so excited about the Grant Writer/Procurement Officer. Jimmy in engineering goes after some small grants but we don't have the capability to write them or look for them. It's tough when we try to do them through Town Hall because I think all grants have to go through the Town Administrator to start with. That was brought up before because I think there's only a certain amount that certain people can apply for. We try to do whatever we can. One time we discussed with the Police Department Public Safety grants, like a co-grant. I think Paul Madera was there at the time. I said we could get grants together for signs or crosswalks or safety improvements.

Mr. Goncalves: We're getting Town Hall running more efficient the last couple years. It was efficient before, but I think Marc is doing a great job of putting key people in place. I think the grant part of it is going to start coming a little more frequently. We got more grants in the past year than we've got in the 3-4.

Mr. Strange: In addition to the Chapter 90 for last year the Town got around $400,000 for the … recovery.

Mr. Santos: Jesse was looking into that, but he never got to us on how it went. There were certain aspects you can spend that on. I don't think it was formally brought to us. I know there were some limitations on it and Jesse was working on it. He sent me a couple emails. I believe the number was $440,000. He was looking into where and how we could use it. Some of it was paving, but we couldn't do line striping with it. We couldn't get police details out of it. It was new to him.

Mr. Goncalves: Did any of it expire?

Mr. Strange: No, that's my point. We got $400 something thousand dollars sitting there that we can use for infrastructure.

Mr. Goncalves: Can we push that money to that pump station?

Mr. Strange; I don't know. We should fund the pump through the SRS. It should be used for roads. It was Covid money for damage to the roads and potholes. Like Steve was saying, all these grants or pockets of money have some rules to them. But we should look at it and use those funds.

Mr. Santos: The only thing I had left on the budget was a question on building repair and maintenance. You hired a grounds and facility manager. There was some confusion about who was responsible for what. It came up when the old Town Administrator was here. There were certain buildings that weren't under the Selectmen's pervy. Like the administration part of this building was maintained under you guys but the garage part was our responsibility along with the out-parcel buildings. The other one was Whitney Street clubhouse and that garage. That came to fruition when that boiler was starting to fail. The boiler that just got put in there went through Capital because it was $30,000. We take care of that and the oil for that came out of our budget. The gas furnace in the garage came out of our budget. That metal building was ours and it came out of our building maintenance fee. The last one that came in with some help through the State

was the Town article we brought forward for a matching grant for the grange. The Grange is under us. Any repairs that have to be done to the Grange, broken windows, or anything they may need, comes out of our budget. I didn't realize that until last year because that line item was stuck at $2,000. If you mess up a garage door spring, it's $2,000. This came up because we have unit heaters that heat up the garage area and 2 of the 3 went down. I contacted Ellie to get some quotes. If we got no heat, it's going to freeze. She said, "That's not our building, you're responsible for the garage in the back." We replaced 1 two years ago and then we upped the budget again to make sure we could replace the third one now.

Mr. Goncalves: Have you been in touch with the facilities person?

Mr. Santos: Not yet. Basically, everything is good here but just need clarification if you guys are going to take all of this over and we're going straight through him or if we're going to take care of our garages and out parcels.

Mr. Rosenblum: We had this discussion earlier today. Basically, anything that has to do with a Town building is going to be under facilities. Like the discussion with golf, if something goes on in the clubhouse, call Jamie, if something goes on with an air conditioner here, call Jamie. That's basically why we have that position, to be proactive instead of reactive.

Mr. Santos: So, all buildings can go to him. That's something we can adjust in the budget.

Mr. Goncalves: No, we can't adjust the budget. He doesn't have a budget. He is going to help you and help us with the planning and have an idea that 2-3 years from now your HVAC is going to need to be replaced. Or if there's a similar issue in a half a dozen buildings maybe group some to get better pricing, whereas you guys won't know something is going on in a different Town building.

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Mr. Santos: So, the financial responsibility is going to stay the same?

Mr. Goncalves: Yes.

Mr. Strange: Every building has its own budget. Jamie's responsibility is if something is wrong with the HVAC, he is the point person to reach out to someone to manage the process. He has he budget, buildings budget. He has his own budget but it's duplicative of what's in your budget for building repair and maintenance. You shouldn't be spending money on building repair and maintenance without Jamie.

Mr. Santos: OK

Mr. Strange: Having said that, for Whitney Park, there are some gray areas. That's a park so that's within DPW's domain. You can talk to Jamie about taking ownership of it. I have no problems with that. Conceptually, you guys have parks so that doesn't necessarily fall under Jamie, but if he wants to manage that too, that's fine.

Mr. Santos: He was the one that approached us about putting his office here, because it's got to be very closely … Right now, if the Police Department calls and we need potholes fixed at the Police Department, it's a Town building but we have the blacktop. The Chief can call Jamie and Jamie can call us and we can get potholes patched over there. The gray area is on the finances. There was a problem with the gazebo earlier this year for Celebrate Ludlow. We patched it together because if we were going to try to replace all the fence it would have been a Capital project.

Mr. Goncalves: Who patched it together?

Mr. Santos: The DPW. The building inspector had some issues. We should have replaced the whole thing. It wasn't ADA compliant because of the steepness of the ramp and the handrail itself. All of the handrail had to be replaced. It would have put us over the procurement amount. We were able to not hit that threshold in order for it to be fully compliant. That's an issue that's happening so if Jamie wants to do something there's only $10,000 in that budget.

Mr. Goncalves: What could happen with Jamie is that if all of a sudden there's 2-3 projects at $2-$3-$4,000 each, maybe he can negotiate a better deal.

Mr. Santos: Which is a nice thing because now we have one plumber. It's a great concept, the problem is the money to finance it. That building maintenance fund takes care of all those

buildings. Like Marc said every building has a budget, but Whitney Street Park doesn't have a budget. If the kids break the lights or they go down, we pay for that out of that budget. If the fire alarm or if something happens with the smoke detector, it comes out of that budget. It's the same if something happens at the gazebo. It's not like everyone has a $10,000 budget, that's the budget for all the buildings we're responsible for. Other than that, out of the operating budget, that's basically where it stands. There was an upperage with police details because we constantly go over police details. So, we put some money in there. Other than that, Marc, you didn't see anything major, correct?

Mr. Strange: No.

Mr. Goncalves: Next.

Mr. Santos: Do you want to do the snow budget?

Mr. Goncalves: Isn't that the same?

Mr. Santos: It's normally the same. We did a comparison from last year. Because of the inability to get contractors we revised our contractor rate, anywhere between $5-$15 per piece per hour. We had Kenny do a comparison of what we did last year to this year. The salt last year was $68/ton. We spent $248,336 just to buy the salt. If we buy that same amount of salt, which is 3,652 tons, we will spend $287,412.

Mr. Goncalves: Almost 4 times?

Mr. Santos: So, there's a $39,000 difference between last year and this year just to purchase the sale. That's purchase & delivered.

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Mr. Rosenblum: Delivery is included with that?

Mr. Santos: Yes

Mr. Rosenblum: I know in some instances tri-axle fees are being added in.

Mr. Santos: There's no fees, no trucking, no escalation.

Mr. Strange: Every town goes over their snow budget. Whatever the overage is …

Mr. Simao: We're hoping the State will give us some money.

Mr. Santos: That's not our sole bid, we're in collaboration with 4 other communities to try to get the best price. Last year was a small snow year but we had many events. It was more icing and refreezing and small piddly storms. That why the salt was exuberant. We only brought the hired contractors in for 40 hours. The total last year we expended for the hired contractors was $92,358. We budgeted $70,000. Not a concern. If you get heavier snowstorms, like this 5" snowstorm, we called hired help in. I believe they came in at 9:30 and they left at 1 or 2. That's 8-10 hours out of the 40. With the current rates we just went up to we'd be expending $115,760 for that same 40 hours. So, every 40 hours is costing you an additional $23,402. The last thing which was fairly not expensive is we budget $60,000 a year for overtime for our employees. Last year we only expended $44,067. Those numbers are pretty close but it's only for reference. Those numbers are pretty solid from last year to this year. That's what we were concerned about. Our total snow budget for the year is $240,000. What we did with Kim Collins was because the salt went up so much, we asked if we could add $20,000 to the Public Works Supplies. That would total the whole budget to $260,000 for snow removal for the whole year. Last year we expended $425,778.70. That's a rock-hard number because that's what's in MUNIS. Kim said the closest we've been in the last few years was a deficit 1 year of $40,000. That's the closest we've ever been. I did an analysis a few years ago with the Finance Committee over a 15-year period. Another big concern of Finance Committee, every time I've gone to the Finance Committee with these Gentlemen to try to boost it up to get a little bit closer so it wouldn't go to the tax rate the following year, is that if the Governor declares State of Emergency all your snow funds have to be expended before they will reimburse you. In 15 years, it was only done once, and I think reimbursement was a couple hundred thousand dollars. If for like the October snowstorm that we had that decimated the Town and he declared a State of Emergency but we hadn't expended our whole snow budget yet so there was no reimbursement. At that point it didn't matter. That's the latest catastrophic event we had with

snow and ice. That's the background with the snow. You see it when we send over the letter for a State of Emergency. Kenny keeps us appraised as to what's going on with the budget. We want to be responsible and not just say we need this money for snow. Any questions?

Mr. Simao: No

Mr. Santos: Tony, our next line is planning for the current trash/recycling contract, and we can also talk about the trash budget.

Mr. Goncalves: That and if we can touch on the collections.

Mr. Santos: I haven't heard anything from Joe the Assessor or Collector. Maybe Marc knows more, but last I heard they billed Blisswood.

Mr. Strange: You know more about it than I do. Last I heard they set a deadline, but I can't remember what it was. November 1 or October 1? For the Town to come in and pay their bills.

Mr. Goncalves: Is Fred just taking the money and marking it off on sheets?

Mr. Strange: Yes.

Mr. Goncalves: Is there no chance that if maybe you got that second clerk in you could get those individually itemized?

Mr. Santos: The problem with the condos is we have 2 sets. Condos that have curbside pick up and condos with dumpsters. They were all originally billed to the condo association.

Mr. Goncalves: The condos aren't paying the trash fee?

Mr. Santos: Yes, they are. Each condo is getting billed for their unit, but it's going into a dumpster. That's where the confusion lies.

Mr. Goncalves: Legally, there is one attorney that represents the majority of the condo projects here. They don't have the power to impose that bill on anyone. They can't say if you don't pay you can't have trash. They can't increase the association dues.

Mr. Santos: How do we do that?

Mr. Goncalves: They're saying you're sending a tax bill to each person like everyone else in Town. Everyone getting a tax bill, hypothetically, should be getting a sewer bill.

Mr. Santos: They don't get a sewer bill. That's how we billed it. When we send a sewer bill out, we send it to the Association.

Mr. Goncalves: There's no way for them to meter that individually, I get it. If the tax bill is going out to each individual condo owner, why can't the trash bill go out also? I know there's accounts that need to be set up in MUNIS for each one of those homeowners. The problem is no one wants to do it, or they don't have the manpower to do it.

Mr. Santos: There's 2 issues. MUNIS wasn't going accept it because we didn't have the upgraded MUNIS. That's why we had to do it manually between our department and Assessors. The second part of that is, what we do now is if you're an individual house owner and you don't pay your trash bill, we have a list with Waste Management to not pick up, how do you do that with a dumpster? We got some pushback from the condos that had curbside pickup. We set it up with Fred and Joe was able to help us. Joe was instrumental in this whole process. We had no list. There are 7,600 households that need to be billed. Some are duplexes or 3 families. We do pick up the 3 families. We have no idea over here what those residences are so the Assessor had to give us that list. He works with MUNIS all the time and he couldn't get it. This department paid out of our budget $5,000 to MUNIS for an upgrade and it never panned out because MUNIS couldn't handle it. Our problem is the condos that have a dumpster. If we bill them individually and half of the users pay that bill, how do you stop the other half?

Mr. Goncalves: The Association doesn't have a mechanism that they can force payment.

Mr. Santos: Correct, so we're stuck between a rock and a hard place. We had to go with it like for the sewer bill. Everyone gets billed individually for their sewer, not the condo. Everyone gets billed individually for their water.

Mr. Goncalves: There's no way to put a betterment on the taxes, same as you would with the sewer?

Mr. Santos: That would have to come from the Collector. With the sewer, we get the water usage from the meters, calculate it out and send it to Fred and it goes from there. We had a spreadsheet and we had to check it out as they came in. They are now paying it over there.

Mr. Goncalves: We'll leave that for another time.

Mr. Santos: Now if you don't pay your trash bill, we send something to Waste Management saying don't pick up 57 Center Street because they didn't pay the bill. You can't do that with a dumpster. We're trying to work on that. But how do we do that without getting into legal jeopardy.

Mr. Goncalves: Let's talk about the rest of the trash while we're at it. That renewal is coming up shortly.

Mr. Santos: Right now, we're 6 months into a 3-year contract.

Mr. Goncalves: Was it a 3 year, or 1 year with ability to renew?

Mr. Santos: It was a 3-year contract. The biggest one was the haulage contract. The collection of solid waste material. The first year was $1,203,150. The 2nd year was $1,263,308. The 3rd year was $1,326,473. That's the solid waste municipal for households. Also, with that contract was the collection and transportation of municipal solid waste and recyclable materials from our transfer station.

Mr. Goncalves: That's …?

Mr. Santos: No, that's a different one. Those are the 40' dumpsters. Those take different trucks. We call them when we need it. Jesse did an excellent job. The first year we negotiated these numbers down. I believe one of the vendors was almost at $70,000. The first year was $26,820. I can get you guys a copy of this. Year 2 was $28,161. Year 3 was $29,569. That's collection and transportation of municipal solid waste and recyclable materials from municipal buildings. That also covers some of the dumpsters, not the school dumpsters. I believe that covers Town Hall too, right Marc? You don't pay a dumpster fee for the Town Hall.

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Mr. Strange: Town Hall, Golf Course, used to be Senior Center too.

Mr. Goncalves: That's about $65,000 between the 2 of them each year.

Mr. Santos: That's municipal and solid waste. Now we have other stuff. The mattresses are hauled to a different place. There's a haul fee to haul that 40' dumpster not to their facility for transport. The first year was $265/haul, year 2 is $278.25, year 3 is $292.16.

Mr. Goncalves: You're collecting on those?

Mr. Santos: Yes. Some of these numbers are offset for what we charge for the disposal of those bulk items. Obviously with the metal there's a little bit of a return. The problem is with the metal comes the evacuation of the freon, so what we charge for that we don't charge for the evacuation. Say we charge $10 for the refrigerator we might get a little bit of credit for the metal but the freon evacuation might be $10. There is a little bit of revenue in here, but this Board has looked at those rates numerous times. We always try to pick them up to cover operating costs. What we keep into account is if these numbers go high here and people aren't willing to pay a minimum to get rid of it, they end up on the side of the road. It costs us a boatload of money because it comes back here, and we have to eat the whole thing. We try to keep the numbers feasible, the only thing that went out of control was mattresses and that was everywhere, but we were able to negotiate a deal down to $40/mattress.

Mr. Goncalves: What do you charge to dump one here?

Mr. Santos: It was $60. We had a $100 disposal fee coming our way so we decided we would split the difference because $100 was way too much. We knew we were going to find them on the side of the road. So, we upped it $60. Jesse advised us that towards the end of the year we would have to look at this. It's only $40 to dispose of a non-recyclable mattress, whereas it was $100 for a recyclable one. We figured if we split the difference, it would wash out.

Mr. Simao: We also pay for the bags.

Mr. Santos: That's basically everything with the trash.

Mr. Silva: Aren't you able to call the company to pick it up at your house and pay them directly?

Mr. Santos: I don't remember any of that here. Everyone that had one had to take it to the transfer station.

Mr. Silva: Anyone disposing of any large items has to bring it to the transfer station?

Mr. Santos: Yes. If it's during the day, they come in here and pay one of the clerks for a slip.

Mr. Silva: For some reason I had the idea that at some point a while ago we were able to do it just like Springfield does.

Mr. Linton: 8-10 years ago, Central Mass was able to take bulk items but not anymore since these other companies took over.

Mr. Silva: OK Thank you.

Mr. Santos: On Saturdays they are able to pay there by check. We don't have a credit card machine or anything like that. We put it on a slip up there and compare it to what's picked up. The only other thing that comes up, that there's a line item in the budget for, is the disposal fee. That goes to a different vendor. I don't know if you Gentlemen were aware, but last year we had an issue with Eco going out of business. We had no where to dump the trash, so we were able to get it to F&G Recycling, which is the old Art Cement or USA's facility here in Wilbraham. Last year we were in a bind, and we were able to negotiate something so if we brought it to that facility, it was only $90/ton. The Agawam facility, which they also bought, was $97/ton. We didn't have an agreement in place with them. It was the same price we had from Eco. They honored that price, and they were able to extend that price for 1 year. This $90/ton for disposal fee is good until June 30, 2023. We reached out to them and asked them sooner rather than later if they would extend that figuring labor rates and fuel were going to go up and they said that they wouldn't look at that for another few months. That's your line item for rubbish/recycle disposal for $618,000. That is FY24, FY23 is $550. We average between 5,000-7,000 tons of trash a year that we have to get rid of.

Mr. Goncalves: Are we staying level or are we putting out more?

Mr. Santos: Covid we were at the 7,000. It came back down in the last 2 years when people went back to work to a little over 5. We don't have anything yet for this year. So, we're somewhere around the 5,000-5,200 mark/ton on what's got to get disposed of.

Mr. Goncalves: Overall, we're at a level fund?

Mr. Santos: Obviously we had to go up for the haulage but we pretty much level funded that. We actually took a little bit off because last year they were charging us to recycle and then halfway through the year they didn't charge us. That's why in our return budget last year we gave back $110,000 because it came back. We budgeted for $150/ton for recycling and halfway through the year they stopped charging us. We did put some of that money back in because they could reach out next week and say we're going to charge you $95/ton for recycling. We don't have anywhere here to put it and I can't put it at my house. We have to make that split second decision on where we're going to put that recycling. We want to make sure we have funds available but if they're not expedited, they go back.

Mr. Goncalves: That's good news that it's not going through the roof.

Mr. Santos: As long as we got contracts. I can't speak for the Board, but I can probably open it up to them, but this year we met with you guys about going automated. I have a couple concerns

because if the workforce doesn't get any better, I know USA wouldn't even give us a price for pick up annually, so I want to tend to believe there was only 2 vendors, Republic, and Waste Management. We've all watched the news. Obviously, Republic had some issues with drivers, and they got dumpsters they can't pick up. I can't believe they would be in any position unless something comes around very quickly that they're going to be able to hire a workforce to pick up 35-gallon drums on the side of the street. Either we go that way, with Waste Management or another company, or full automation. I think it's much easier to get someone to pull a handle all day to dump a recycle can than to have that same driver huffing it in all day. In the rain, snow, cold, hot. My perspective on this whole thing being in the construction industry and seeing what labor is, I don't think we're going to get this offer on the table in the next 3 years. I don't think we're going to have curbside pick up as an option. It's either going to be fully automated, or like we discussed, and no one likes to hear, we just get out of the trash business and go private, like Wilbraham, Belchertown, and everyone else around us. Even if you raised the trash fee to $150, which was close to getting it level, it's still a bargain, because at $100 it's $1.97/week to get rid of 35 gallons of trash up to 50 lbs. and all the recycles you want. Even if you double that, it's $4/week compared to some of the prices we got from a private vendor. Yes, you get a 96-gallon drum, and everything goes into it but you're looking between $500-$600/year, billed quarterly. We discussed if we went up to the $150-$200 maybe billing it quarterly. We just gotta make sure the billing says this is a quarterly billing. We billed it one lump sum and have to explain it is now quarterly.

Mr. Goncalves: Hopefully people will watch this. There's a myth out there that you've heard that the $700,000 we're collecting we're actually making money on that. They want to know what's going on with the rest of the money. Is it a slush fund? Our total trash for this year would be how much?

Mr. Santos: $1,984,469 predicted for FY24. FY23 we're predicting $1,843,570. When people pose that question to me and say what do we pay taxes for, I explain to them the trash budget is close to 2 million dollars. The $700,000 subsidizes those 2 million dollars. 1.3 million of tax dollars go to trash. Whatever the trash fee is it goes to subsidize the trash bill.

Mr. Rosenblum: The fact that you have 7,600 households and you're not getting 7,600 households paying the extra $100, so you're still coming up short. $698 out of $747.

Mr. Santos: And there was some discrepancy. Some of those 2nd years are coming in because here and Town Hall are getting some of those payments. This was a growing pain for everyone, but I think it will be streamlined. Over here we don't know how to put liens on real estate. There was confusion on real estate transfers. The biggest race was to try to get it out at a certain time, so the real estate transfers were in with the closing costs, like water and electric. Because MUNIS wasn't working, we couldn't get it all in. This year will be the closest year we can get it out when we're projected to get it out. There were a lot of working parts that weren't coming together. In a perfect world it would have been great.

Mr. Goncalves: That's exciting that the trash isn't going to kill us again. I think a lot of people missed it that year when you had to impose the $70 the first year. There was no way we could stay under 2 1/2. To introduce that into the budget would have required an override. At any point right now if we were to try to introduce that into the general budget it would require a substantial override. People have to understand, if they're not paying it on one side, they're paying it on the other. It's just not going away. There is no slush fund.

Mr. Santos: I think now, with the way the economy is, people know things are costing more.

Mr. Goncalves: UPS doesn't deliver it and they can't eat it or drink it.

Mr. Linton: Steve, you forgot about out back with the leaves and brush. The last time we paid $30,000. When I was on the Board, we kept it as a service to the Town. If you didn't have this transfer station, people would be lost with their leaves. That was about a year and a half ago.

Mr. Santos: That's not out of this budget. Some of it we compost and use for Town material. The trees and brush, we contract a vendor to come in, grind it up and get rid of it. That's our general budget, that doesn't come out of anything here.

Mr. Linton: 10-12 years ago, we had a room full of people here saying condos were homeowners and we came to them and said yeah in Framingham they lost a lawsuit at the State level and that's why we put them into the contract. A lot of Towns are not in there. It kind of got confusing where some had dumpsters and the newer condos that were built are curbside pick up just like a regular household. I don't understand why the Associations just can't bill the people. That should be up to them, or we just don't pick it up.

Mr. Goncalves: To change the bylaws in an Association requires a unanimous consent and you're always going to get that one.

Mr. Silva: If you're not going to vote you're not going to get your trash picked up.

Mr. Goncalves: You have to figure out the ones that pay or don't pay.

Mr. Silva: The Association has to be responsible for that.

Mr. Goncalves: I'm not saying it's not the Association that's responsible, I'm saying the Associations are complaining they don't have a mechanism to enforce people to pay. Nobody is getting paid on those Boards to be a Board member and babysit those that don't want to pay it. These Trustees don't get paid, they're doing it voluntarily.

Mr. Silva: Why is that, when they have sewer bills, they have to pay. Put it into their fee.

Mr. Goncalves: That gets picked up on a municipal lien certificate so if they don't pay it,it transfers with the property, where this isn't happening.

Mr. Santos: Barry, can you identify yourself for people that might not know.

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Mr. Linton: Barry Linton, former Board of Public Works member.

Mr. Goncalves: And former rubbish remover for this Town.

Mr. Linton: My first contract was $94,999 in 1981.

Mr. Simao: Bring it back, Barry. We'll give you $100,000, but don't tell anyone.

Mr. Goncalves: I fought West Mass because of you. The guy still hates me. Barry wanted to buy a piece of property on Moody Street and West Mass Development said we don't want your type; it will hurt the park.

Mr. Santos: That concludes the budget and trash. Is there anything else, Gentlemen? DPW staffing updates. Basically, what we went over with the budget.

Mr. Goncalves: I think we did staffing.

Mr. Santos: You guys are good with that. You know what's going on with all the open positions. Everything with Carrie should be posted. Other than that, we have 6 applicants for the Director's position that we will be narrowing down to come in for interviews. If you want, I can send them over to you so you can see what we have for applicants.

Mr. Goncalves: Let's start with the exit interview for the DPW Director.

Mr. Santos: A couple things I want to start this with is, I think this meeting has been very cordial to this point. As a Board we were quite upset on not how the exit interview took place, but how it was brought to us. We thought it would have been a professional courtesy that when the exit interview was done, we would have got a copy of it so we could review and discuss it and then you could have brought it forward on your side. I understand that's its not proper to have an exit interview with a Board that you're leaving because you probably wouldn't say anything negative towards them because you wouldn't want to offend that person or the position you hold. I'm in total agreement that we could have been left out of it. The only issue I have is that we should have been notified before you guys read it on air and out of professional courtesy you would have said we brought it to the Select Board. Someone said this is what the Select Board came up with and can we get some feedback. The whole process, the way it was brought out, was a slap in the face to us because we had no idea what was going on.

Mr. Goncalves: I'm not sure if it was brought to us or we went to look for it, like you would have the opportunity to go and look for it also. Our concern is there's a tremendous amount of turnover going on. That was the 4th Director in a short period of time and things aren't happening. It seems there's more confusion here. You guys have lost 18 employees in the last 5-6 years, 4 Directors. 10 employees left in 2022. That's more turnover than Town Hall in 5 years. I think we would be remiss if we didn't try to get involved to an extent and figure out why it's happening. The morale, the fact that you can't get somebody is it because you're not paying enough or because of everything else. We hear stuff on the outside and it's because of everything else going on. From the standpoint, it's this Board gets too involved in the daily operations of what's happening out there vs being a governing Board. We're getting those types of vibes. It would be no different than me walking into Fred Pereira's office and telling one of the secretaries there how to do her job. That's not my place. What we're hearing and what we got out of that exit interview was that there's too much micromanaging coming from this Board down to the PW-1's. The confusion that's going on is who do they listen to, who's in charge or is everybody in charge and they have 16 bosses.

Mr. Santos: Tony, hold on one second. We're going to have to take this one step at a time. As far as the Directors leaving, I got this list from HR. Mr. John Gaucher, he was obviously hired before I was on the Board. He served from 8/30/14-12/16/16 and I think you were here.

Mr. DeBarge: Uh huh.

Mr. Santos: That was basically an underperforming employee.

Mr. DeBarge: I didn't work with him, and I don't remember what that was.

Mr. Santos: Basically, he was a nonperforming Director. He facilitated what the Board wanted and there was quite a bit of non-cooperation with other Boards and other departments.

Mr. Strange: You can go through all of these but it's not constructive because nobody knows what the context of those relationships were. Nobody knows what the context of the relationship with those people and that Board were. He might have been fired because the Board didn't do what you wanted him to do. Nobody knows that so it's misleading.

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Mr. Santos: So is this exit interview.

Mr. Strange: No, it's not because I heard those words with my own ears. From current DPW employees, other than Jesse, I've heard those words from former DPW employees, from former BPW members. Those are facts.

Mr. Santos: You guys are saying there's been 4 Directors in 5 years, but it hasn't been. There's been 4 Directors from 8/30/14-11/5/22. So, it's 8 years.

Mr. Goncalves: 6 years from the time the first Director we're talking about left. Two of them left or had to be dismissed because of underperformance. Mr. DeBarge, you can attest to the last one because you were well involved with that. There were some issues with the contract as well as underperformance, correct?

Mr. DeBarge: Yes. You don't want to talk about the one before Mike? You don't want to talk about Steve?

Mr. Ouellette: What do you want to know about Steve?

Mr. DeBarge: Why did Steve leave?

Mr. Ouellette: Steve was approached by Springfield Water and Sewer because a good friend of his worked for Water and Sewer.

Mr. DeBarge: That's not what he told me. I talked to him personally about it.

Mr. Simao: So did I

Mr. Ouellette: So did I. As a matter of fact, I talked to him today.

Mr. DeBarge: I don't agree, but OK.

Mr. Goncalves: So, 3 of the previous 4, not that you did the hiring, or this Board might have been there was Gaucher, Frederick and maybe Suprenant.

Mr. Santos: I was here for Frederick. I wasn't here for JT or Mr. Suprenant.

Mr. Goncalves: What's concerning to me is that shortly those 3 people will be in our retirement system and again we're supporting them forever making those contributions. It's costly to the Town. Those hires right there are probably tens of thousands of dollars a year for years to come. Because of poor decisions to either hire someone who was not qualified or for whatever reason once they got here their expectations weren't met.

Mr. Simao: I agree with what you're saying. The problem is over those years you had 5-6 different Board members here. I was here for the last 2. The other ones were around with me, but I did not hire them. Some of them I voted against. You can't accuse us. You're saying the retirement is coming from the Board members.

Mr. Goncalves: What I'm saying is the Town is picking up retirement forever on these people. It is costly mistakes being made in the process of the hiring. Whether they're not properly vetted or more eyes need to be on it, I'm not sure.

Mr. Santos: We've done everything with HR. HR vets them, looks at them, does the background check.

Mr. Goncalves: I know for a fact that HR warns people not to hire him and he was hired anyway.

Mr. DeBarge: It was Suprenant.

Mr. Silva: The issue is what's happening here. I was just out last week at dinner, and someone came over to me and said that the Board is absolutely wrong in what they're doing. I'm not going to go into anything. The issue we're having is what these people are saying, what's going on here, why the people are turning over. I haven't had a person tell me the Board is great and we're doing fine. I've been here 12 years. In all 12 years, except for the very first few, did I get any of that. I'm sure you know there's been issues.

Mr. Santos: Absolutely there's been issues. There are issues in every DPW. It seems complaints are more easily spoken than gratitude for stuff that's done. Whatever has been rectified and has been fixed, this is a thankless job over here. We don't do this job for thank you. There are issues that come up on social media and every day. The parks are bad. There was a whole thing on the slide at Creative Park. The slide was ordered and there were 15 comments about the slide being bad. When we fixed that nobody said the parks look great.

Mr. Strange: You're proving the point Steve, that's not your job. If Tony Goncalves knew my job and my department as well as you know yours, I wouldn't make it through my first contract either. There's no room for a professional to do their job. You know everything there is to know about the DPW, you're a wealth of knowledge, you have the best interest at heart. You shouldn't have that much knowledge; you should not be that involved. If these guys knew as much about what I do as you do about the Board, we talk to each other like peers. You're a Board member, you're not a municipal professional. You should not know the intimate details of the department that much. It's not your job.

Mr. Santos: But we don't have a Director. When you have a nonperforming Director, it comes back to the Board.

Mr. Strange: Jesse English was not a nonperforming Director. He was an excellent hire. He was the future of this department. He left because of the micromanagement of this Board. His words.

Mr. Simao: He told us he was leaving for better money.

Mr. Strange: He's not going to tell you that.

Mr. Simao: He told us he was leaving for better money, a company car. This place is so bad, but his son works here.

Mr. Strange: I can't speak to that. What I can say is that human nature is he's not going to tell you that. He has respect for you guys because you hired him. He's not going to say he's leaving because

you guys micromanaged him. Don't use him saying he got a different job as the reason. I can assure you it was not. He's a respectful person. He has integrity.

Mr. Simao: For him to tell you that this place is not good to work for, I'm surprised he got his son a job here if it's not a good place to work.

Mr. Strange: I can't speak to that.

Mr. Goncalves: 17 people left here in the last 2 ½ years, not counting Directors. That's a bigger turnover than we've had in Town Hall in 20 years.

Mr. Simao: How many quit, left on their own, got fired?

Mr. Goncalves: I don't know.

Mr. Ouellete: The past 2 years we lost 4 retirees. We've had positions open since summertime and you can sit here and say Ludlow DPW has a bad reputation, well Springfield Water and Sewer doesn't have a bad reputation and God knows how many openings we have right now.

Mr. Goncalves: Domingos Goncalves?

Mr. Simao: He left and came back.

Mr. Goncalves: Bill Thompson?

Mr. Simao: He went to Palmer.

Mr. Goncalves: Jamie Tomas?

Mr. Simao: He's going to you guys.

Mr. Goncalves: Mike Hastings?

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Mr. Silva: I don't think we should be bringing up names, other than the exit letter we got that was discussed. Just say a lot of turnover and everyone that leaves here does not have good words. It's simple. You can say whatever you want. Some of them have been my friends, some of them I vogued for to come here and they left with far beyond sour grapes.

Mr. Santos: Usually when you leave a job it's for money or because you're having a discrepancy with someone, whether it's a fellow employee or management.

Mr. Silva: If I leave for money, I say I'm leaving for money. I don't go saying the Board was terrible.

Mr. Santos: I have from one of our PW-3's that we interviewed through HR. I'm not going to mention the Gentleman's name. "Good morning, Lisa, I wanted to thank you and everyone else involved in the hiring process for me. You are all very pleasant to work with and very helpful; however, after careful consideration I'm going to decline the offer for the position at this time. Unfortunately, the reality of the job is it is exactly what I'm looking for, but the pay won't work for me. The way the pension works I end up losing quite a bit of money for what my income is. Again, thank you for all the help for consideration."

Mr. Silva: Again, that has nothing to do with the person.

Mr. Strange: That's an admin coming in from a private employer. I know what you're talking about.

Mr. Santos: That's a PW-3 interview. We offered him a job. She hired the Senior Clerk with HR. Our other Business Administrator hired the other Senior Clerk. We don't get involved with hiring them. Carrie told us it's not a Board decision to hire. She's responsible for business. I have a letter from Mr. Kolodziej on why he left his PW-3 mechanic position to the PW-3 regular position. I can read it, or I can synopsis it. The biggest thing was the pay increase from PW-3 to the Foreman's pay, the stipend and the responsibility that comes along with that.

Mr. Strange: It's very frustrating because when talk you're not giving the full story. The full story is the Board would not pay. It's my understanding that there were 2 PW-3's that wanted to come here but the Board would not approve a higher salary. The reason they would not approve a higher

salary is because you guys didn't want to pay those new people as much or more as the existing people that work here.

Mr. Santos: Correct.

Mr. Strange: Then what are you talking about.

Mr. Santos: If you hire a new hire for positions that are funded right now and we have people in place and we hire someone outside that we have no background with and we hire someone above them, they're going to leave and go wait a minute, why did I get hired at a 2.

Mr. Strange: Your point is people are not coming here because of the pay and you just admitted you didn't pay these people what they needed to be paid even though they wanted to come work here.

Mr. Santos: You're going to hire people over people you got here and expect these people to stay? They're going to file a grievance.

Mr. Strange: Raise the pay.

Mr. Santos: We have 5 steps. If you hire someone over a step 2 you can do that but you're going to get a grievance against you. I have an email at home stating that. I asked her how to fix this. It's the Board's decision to hire any step but what does that do to morale in the back.

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Mr. Strange: Raise their pay.

Mr. Santos: We can't because of the contract.

Mr. Strange: It doesn't have anything to do with the contract.

Mr. Santos: Everyone is at 5 right now so we'd have to raise everybody up. How do we do that?

Mr. Silva: We're talking about people coming in and that's not where we're at. I have someone with a CDL that was coming here, and they talked to an employee and he said you do not want to come into this environment. It's a very close person. I'm not going to mention names and that's a fact.

Mr. Santos: I also had a person that left, went to a MA DOT job and 2 weeks later he came back. This works both ways. If this place was so horrible and he left here, and the MA DOT job didn't work out why didn't he go somewhere else? He could have gone to Wilbraham or Springfield.

Mr. DeBarge: We don't know Steve. Opportunity, he needed the money right away. It doesn't matter. That's not the point. The point is the exit interview. The fact that the outgoing Director said the Town will have a hard time finding quality candidates for DPW Superintendent with the Public Works community because of irreparable damage. The DPW issues will not be fixed unless the BPW's authority is removed. This is Jesse, respected by all of you. That was the end of this. You said the elephant in the room at the beginning of the meeting was the 2 articles in the paper. I respectfully disagree. The elephant in the room is the fact that we are divided as a Board because we are sick and tired of hearing year after year the problems with your Board. The issue with your Board is simply one person micromanaging everybody and the other Board members not doing anything about it. The proof is there. I spoke to Steve when he was leaving. I was the liaison and he told me he was leaving because he was being bombarded by a Board member and he couldn't do it anymore. No matter what he says about the money, employees or anything, the reputation is the reputation. The main thing for us, at least for me, is why I wanted to come here, rather than …the funniest thing to me is ARPA issues, this whole budget thing and all the time that this took, which had absolutely nothing to do with why we're here. We're here because you would not come see us, we're here because you would not go to a neutral site, because you would not talk to us and yet you want a reason on why we didn't include you in the article, which we did with every other department head, every other Board. Not with the school, they have their own money. We did all that. We got information back from each department head, from each Board, about what each respective area could do with the money. We met et nauseum about what we could do with the money right away, HVAC system and in the future. Case in point, the track & field. It's not that we wanted to take money away from anyone else. 2.8 million was the first quote for the track &

field. I'm getting the feeling that you brought this up because you feel like you were not included in this and that's not true.

Mr. Soares: You're doing the Town a disservice, not us. We all do what we do for the taxpayers of the Town of Ludlow.

Mr. DeBarge: I don't think you understand what I'm saying. The communication was there, but a decision has to be made about how you're going to use the money. What best serves everybody in Town, which was what our interest was. The time that we took not meeting, not talking, going back and forth in whatever platform you want to talk about, had been detrimental to all of us. You both know I was against the Special Municipal Employee status for this Board, but I voted for it because the first time that the Board of Selectmen put an article forward to disband the Board of Public Works it didn't work and that was our fault. Nonetheless, the people spoke. I did not want to vote for Special Municipal Employee, but I did anyway because the people spoke and that's my job. From that time when it didn't disband the Board the authority of the DPW on to the Board of Selectmen we said fine, give it some time. Well, guys it's been time and all I hear now is we've lost a ton of staff. I've heard the reasons and the other Board members have heard it too, you've lost a director that you all had respect for, and we had respect for. The things that he said in his outgoing interview has pretty much explained what most of the Board members hear was that we kind of all knew this was going on. I think these points brought up in this exit interview are serious enough where I don't know what the outcome should be other than a change. What we're doing here is talking about in the future we need to do this. The issue is what's going to happen with this Board. What is your goal? What can you do to convince the people that if this goes forward that you're going to fix all this. It has actually gotten worse from the last time. What is the end game? Are you looking to continue on status quo, because this volatile thing between us is one thing that happens in municipalities, but most importantly, what are you going to do? How are you going to change if we don't make this change? If you guys stay the Board of Public Works and advise the Director but have no authority over the Director, I don't have a problem with that personally because you are in the job of advising. You know that line of work better than we do. Our job is not to micromanage Marc. I doubt he would ever tell you privately that we do. I know I don't. That's not our goal here. What is your goal? How are you going to turn this around with this kind of damaging information? What is your plan to get these Directors that are going to interview here and hear the reputation, accept the job?

Mr. Ouellette: With regards to all these damaging things that Mr. English said. These are spoken to Mr. Strange. No one on the Board of Public Works had anything to do with this. I could tell you I won a million dollars today, but if you don't know any different of course you're going to believe me.

Mr. Strange: I'm not going to accept mischaracterization and lies. The implication is that I fabricated this information. Secondly, after our interview I looked at Carrie and I was shocked, and she said this was nothing I haven't heard for 7 years. He's not going to tell you. He has too much respect for you.

Mr. Ouellette: There's things on this exit interview and no one has any idea what he is talking about, because even if we said it amongst ourselves, I wouldn't open it up and say it. … had strike one against him when dealing with a DPW role in a public event. No one on this Board has any idea what that is.

Mr. Strange: I know what that is because he told me, but I'm not here to do that. The person knows who it is.

Mr. Ouellette: Told Jesse and staff members that the Board was up here and the DPW employees were down there.

Mr. Strange: What are we doing here, what's this exercise?

Mr. Ouellete: This is all stuff he said but nobody here has any idea what he's talking about.

Mr. Strange: Everyone's edification to reiterate exactly what was told to me. I don't think that's going to help any of these guys.

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Mr. Santos: I think some of this exit interview is coming from feedback from other employees. He was hired in April. One of the bullet points is BPW employees micromanaging snow plowing contractors. If he was hired in April and left in November, how would he get information that there were Board members micromanaging the snow plowing contract.

Mr. Goncalves: It was conversations with subcontractors that were looking to come in.

Mr. Strange: The answer is Jesse was reiterating what someone else told him and the person that told him that told me directly. It's not hearsay because the guy told me directly.

Mr. DeBarge: We're here today because when we go over this you have an excuse for every one of these. You have an explanation and excuse for everything that Jesse said.

Mr. Santos: This is the hard part because through this whole process working with Jesse, we all respected each other. We never saw this coming. There was not a lot of pushback where he was saying anything we were doing wrong. He wanted 6 months to review the whole department from top to bottom and figure out how he was going to change it. We didn't implement anything. As the chair, and you said it, I know a lot that goes on with this department. All the things I told you this evening are all the things I sat down with him and said these are the things we've done in the past. What do you think some ideas are? You spoke to him. We're stuck between a rock and a hard place when someone comes into a new job that has nothing and we're not going to offer him any help or guidance on where it's going. Whether micromanage or overrunning a department happens, the other elephant in the room is everyone is looking at me as micromanaging this department. I am far from it. I have my own family and my own business. If someone doesn't bring this to someone's attention, and no one shares it with me, where do we sit with where our department? Our department is not in total shambles as it is. We were looking for this Director to take it over. For the past 3 months I haven't been here. I told Jesse, and these guys can back me up, we got a Director, we gotta get out of here. I'll give you a month solid where you can call me every day and go over everything that we have done, things that are coming up, questions and concerns other Boards and committees have, go and introduce you to other people to figure out if this person calls you, you can associate a face to a name.

Mr. Goncalves: Did you go on any job sites at all and have direct contact with employees that were doing a job and say that possibly they're not doing them correctly or even jumping a machine.

Mr. Santos: We had one night out where he wanted to see what happens before a storm clean up. So, me and him actually went out together and I showed him what was going on and communication that was happening. He had no idea how it worked in Ludlow. There was never anywhere when we sent somebody home because I was doing the job.

Mr. Goncalves: Have you ever gone out on jobs where you had employees and directed them and gave them orders and told them they weren't doing something correctly?

Mr. Santos: No that is a foreman's position and if not a foreman a group leader. We don't have enough foremen to go with a group. The tree guy would do whatever he has to do. When Kenny's absent that would either be a foreman or when Jesse came in to direct the guys on where to go to do phone calls and get communication going. The problem is the police department is calling the on-call phone, it gets pretty hectic at night when things are going wrong.

Mr. DeBarge: 2nd bullet point. BPW member will show up at job sites and do the work that should otherwise be done by DPW employees. So, he's lying?

Mr. Ouellete: I can tell you one instance without a shadow of a doubt was the Memorial Day Parade. Nobody came in for the overtime at the Memorial Day Parade to take down signs, take the trash cans and throw them away. You know who came in, Mr. Santos, because no one came in. Kenny didn't come in. None of the employees wanted to come in. Who was going to take care of it then?

Mr. DeBarge: I saw another committee chairperson cleaning up the War Memorial area after Celebrate Ludlow by herself. Keith, it happens, but that's not what this is. If Jesse is lying about these, then that needs to be addressed.

Mr. Soares: He's not here to ask, so what are we doing here?

Mr. DeBarge: Is he lying?

Mr. Soares: We don't know because he's not here to ask.

Mr. Santos: I don't think he's lying. There might be exaggerations of some sort. I have that much respect for that Gentleman because we did work together, and I think we worked very good together for 3 months while moving forward. I don't have any friends and I wear a raincoat every day, so people throw stuff at me, and it rolls off. He knows that. We've had more disagreements and more back and forth than this exit interview did. If he really wanted to do this, it would be 4 pages long. We agree to disagree sometimes. These guys did the same thing. They would sit with Jesse and do whatever they had to do. Keith had some issues with the cemetery. Alex had the same issue. All these guys did it.

Mr. Ouellette: Just like you guys get calls from residents when they have issues.

Mr. Strange: They come to me.

Mr. Simao: They didn't do that in the past. When I have a problem, I go to Steve.

Mr. Strange: Steve is not the department head.

Mr. Simao: Who do we go to?

Mr. Ouellette: When people call to complain that there's been a dead racoon sitting in front of their mailbox for 4 days, we call Jesse. Towards the end he would not answer his phone calls. Our job is to take care of whatever the residents want us to do for them.

Mr. Strange: No, it's not. If a resident comes to Tony Goncalves and says my building permit hasn't been processed, he's not going to the Building Department and processing it.

Mr. Ouellete: When people would have issues, we would call Jesse and say there is a problem. It would be brought to our attention, and we would bring it to Jesse's attention. How is that micromanaging?

Mr. Silva: I worked in local government for 35 years in the Town of Wilbraham with the DPW and Mr. Miga and, unless I was blind to it and we were friends and he would tell me things that were going on, nothing of this sort. Every time I would mention Ludlow DPW, it was not good. The reputation that this Board has in the Town of Ludlow is not only with your employees, it's with other DPW's and other people. We're a laughingstock in the whole area. We are the only community that has a DPW in this format.

Mr. Strange: This is the only elected DPW out here.

Mr. Silva: There's issues, you can't deny that.

Mr. Santos: Some of these issues were corrected. Board members call subordinate employees to assign them to a task. That was rectified. If a resident called and said we need this pothole fixed, rather than call Kenny directly, we set up a thing where they would call clerical and they would put it into a work order system. If it was hearsay that somebody hit the pothole and they decided they were going to send it to us to reimburse them for it we were on the line for it, and no one had any record of it being called in other than hearsay. Everything was directed either through Kenny or Jesse through a work order process. I'm not calling anyone a liar, but there's a pile of them here that I either sent from a call from a resident or self-viewing traveling down Center Street and there's a crater like this. This is where we're being claimed as micromanaging and telling employees what to do.

Mr. Strange: Tony Goncalves would have no idea that level of detail. Not one member of another Board would have that detail about the day-to-day management, even in this Town where Boards are unusually powerful.

Mr. Santos: No, but he would have a lot in the Assessors Department because his background is in real estate.

Mr. Strange: You're missing the point. No Chair of any Board anywhere knows as much about their department as you do.

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Mr. Santos: And that's a bad thing?

Mr. Strange: Yes, it is. Your job is policy. Jesse's job was to manage the DPW. Mr. Simao looked at you as the Department Head. You're not the Department Head. You act like it you talk like it.

Mr. Santos: All the comments that come in from people, we're just to ignore it and call the office?

Mr. Strange: Yes.

Mr. Santos: If the office doesn't comply or it gets missed what happens?

Mr. Strange: That's a management problem.

Mr. Santos: There was an email back and forth when you coached the Legion team about fields that weren't getting prepped.

Mr. DeBarge: Last year was horrible, I called Kenny myself.

Mr. Goncalves: You're calling DPW directly.

Mr. Strange: He's calling DPW as a coach of a team that plays on a field that the DPW …

Mr. DeBarge: Because the field was supposed to be done and it wasn't. I called Kenny panicking so we could start our game.

Mr. Santos: That should go to Debbie Gates because she's in charge.

Mr. DeBarge: Stop. I've been doing this a long time. I go to baseball meetings. Debbie has the schedule and what does she do? She calls the DPW and gives you the schedule of my games.

Mr. Simao: Calm down.

Mr. DeBarge: Is this better?

Mr. Simao: Yes

Mr. DeBarge: I go to the meetings and fill out the forms, Debbie sends the schedule of all the teams to you guys and then the fields are done. They're done the Friday before if it's a weekend. This summer it wasn't. Staffing was the issue. I called Kenny as a coach and asked if they could do the field? I have no material here to do it. I didn't call him as a Selectmen, I called him as a coach.

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Mr. Strange: That doesn't have anything to do with what you're saying.

Mr. Silva: Would you say that I have a lot of knowledge of the Assessors Department?

Mr. Santos: I would assume after 5-7 years you would have.

Mr. Silva: Do you think I go into the Assessors office and tell Joe what to do and not to do? I don't do it at all. We had a discussion on something coming up. Marc and I talked about it.

Mr. Santos: What if he goes to you and asks you a question like did you do this in Wilbraham. How did you guys approach this?

Mr. Silva: That's informational, Steve. I'll give him any information he wants. I'll tell him this is what we did and then he takes it and runs with it. I don't do it. I explained to Marc we can't get into these Departments and try to force them or tell them what it is they have to do.

Mr. Simao: You're trying to get rid of this. I got one speech then I have to get out of here. We're all here for the best interest of the Town of Ludlow. I watched a Selectmen's meeting. Mr. DeBarge said we should all quit. I asked Mr. Santos what's going on. I didn't know anything about it. I didn't call the Chairman. We can't cooperate in this Town. The Selectmen should have contacted us and said let's have a meeting.

Mr. DeBarge: Alex, please, we did. You refused to come see us.

Mr. Simao: We said to come to our meeting. What did we need a neutral place for? Getting into a war? You were our liaison and would come in every once and a while. The last time we saw a liaison was 2 years ago.

Mr. Silva: We had quarterly meetings and you guys decided to stop them. For any Board not to be responsible and go see the Selectmen, it's unheard of. It shouldn't happen.

Mr. Simao: It shouldn't happen.

Mr. Silva: We're here for the townspeople. Second of all, we're not trying to do this because we don't want to see you guys, we're trying to do this to effectively run this community the best possible way. What we've gotten, whether it's from your employees or Directors or out there, communication from State officials, what we've gotten is that the best way is not to have this Board. That's the best way the community can run. We're not trying to do your job. I don't want to do what you do. Steve, what you do is far too much for me to even think about. I want to put the people in place that are going to do it. They're going to come to us and say this is what should happen. Back to your point. Let's stop this. This is one community. It's not the Board of Public Works. Yes, you're elected to do certain things. I've been on different Boards and you're always a policy Board. You have to first remember you're here for policy, not operations. Again, nothing to do with any one of you guys, I just want to see this department working functionally for this community. But it's not working. So, let's fix it. If the boat was working well, I wouldn't wreck it.

Mr. Simao: You guys are saying we didn't go to your meetings. I'm the one that would bring up every time, why don't they come to our meeting?

Mr. Ouellette: I think we brought this up at one of our meetings. This quarter you come to us, next quarter we go to you. Why was it that we had to go to you. We never had a liaison show up in the year and a half I've been here.

Mr. DeBarge: I'm sorry, I forgot my hat with the propeller on it. It's like romper room going on. It's the Board of Selectmen. There's a conference room. The other Boards come in and we have our meetings there. We came here tonight so we could get something done because you refused to meet with us. Whatever works to get this going, fine. We had to come here to do that. If that's what you want, fine.

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Mr. Simao: What is the problem alternating coming? Was there a problem coming here today?

Mr. DeBarge: We do that with all the other Boards. Why do we have a conference room then?

Mr. Linton: When we started, we were alternating every other quarter.

Mr. Simao: Like Manny said, the bottom line is we're trying to work for the Town of Ludlow, but when you get all these calls, and I watched you on TV. They should all resign. I didn't know what's going on. We all know each other. You can't call anyone and say let me talk to you one on one. Jesse told us why he left, and I believe him. Did you do a survey when everyone else left?

Mr. Goncalves: We try with everyone.

Mr. Simao: So, he's the only one.

Mr. DeBarge: We don't know that.

Mr. Santos: We know the building inspector left. Who would have done the exit interview with Carrie? He works in your building under you. How would you get a fair assessment from that individual?

Mr. Strange: It would have just been Carrie.

Mr. Santos: I understand they're not forcible and some people don't want to give an exit interview. I didn't see an exit interview with Todd Gazda or Gary from IT.

Mr. Silva: There were no issues there.

Mr. Santos: We as a Town should know why our employees are leaving.

Mr. DeBarge: You can't make them.

Mr. Santos: It's nice to know how to better your department or the Town.

Mr. Strange: That's privileged information. If Jesse said, "I'll tell you guys this, but you're not allowed to say anything", we wouldn't be able to. But we asked Jesse if we could.

Mr. Santos: You can't share that information with these guys without a quorum or a public hearing. How are you going to get it to them?

Mr. Strange: Like this.

Mr. Rosenblum: This information came to us at our Board meeting. The first time I saw this was when I sat down, and it was in front of me.

Mr. Simao: How long ago was that?

Mr. Strange: It was November 15.

Mr. DeBarge: I find it funny that we're talking about these little things like why did you do an interview with this guy, but not this guy. The biggest problem in the room that we're trying to figure out is what we are going to do going forward and all I hear on that side is you should have done it this way, that's not true, we didn't know this, he didn't say this. The end result is the end result. The article is done. The article to make the daily operation of the DPW to the Board of Selectmen. From now until then or the election, how do we change that to not make us push that forward.

Mr. Santos: The ultimate goal that this department has always had is to get an accountable Director that the taxpayers are comfortable compensating over $100,000 to run the department.

Mr. Strange: Have you looked at those resumes, and do you think they are long term candidates?

Mr. Santos: I don't think the 74-year-old Gentleman from New Hampshire is a long-term candidate. We vet them and rely on HR to do her vetting.

Mr. Strange: How many people have you hired?

Mr. Soares: Can you tell me what the winning lottery is for tonight? You're asking hypothetical questions.

Mr. Santos: We're looking for someone to run the department as efficiently as can be for the taxpayers. That's what the ultimate goal is.

Mr. Silva: But how long is he going to stay here in this environment?

Mr. Rosenblum: Despite what's on here we can say it's true or not true. To your point, and we all believe it, we want to do what's best for the Town. We all discussed it and everyone at Town Meeting has discussed it is to change the form of government. The Board of Public works in the sense of this state is archaic. When we say we want to oversee the Department of Public Works, it's not that we're going to do day to day operations. There are 4 other ones in the whole State. I said it when I ran 3 ½ years ago. If we got to a point where we have a top down and people are accountable across, we have 14 Boards on one line. We can't get crap done. It gets kicked down the road. This is the first step in it. It's the Board itself. It's not just you Gentlemen yourselves, it's been going on for a while. The Board is archaic. We move it to a point where we have a Director that reports to us, they do it in Wilbraham, I know an ex-chairman of the Board there. Tanya. She runs everything. If she needs something she goes to the Board of Selectmen or Town Accountant and reports back. I don't want to go in and turn a wrench or jump in a plow. I want to make sure you put the same thing you guys want. A person who's competent that can run the department and move towards a new form of government. If we get to the point where this Town says Yes let's do it. I know your sister, brother-in-law, great people, they went through it 10-12 years ago, I would step aside. If we had a Town Manager, Mayor, City Council, that's the end game. I think this, beyond all the yelling and screaming about what this says is the fact that this makes a step in that direction. If we go to Town Meeting and if any of you get up to speak or any of us speak, I will say to them you've been clamoring for a change of government for years, this in itself is the first step. This isn't personal, it's business. The way things have been going, looking at this, hearing rumors over the years and having it solidified, it's time. We all want to move that way. The yelling and screaming aside, we can do it together and I think this is the first step. Things like assigning

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work tasks is a grievance waiting to happen. That gets us in trouble and that contract is with the Board of Selectmen.

Mr. Santos: There haven't been any grievances since Jesse has been here.

Mr. Rosenblum: The fact that someone jumps in and does some work, a union worker can file a grievance. We might disagree on how this has been written out and how it's been said, but this is a step I believe we need to make to go to where the end game is. If that end game is in 4-5 years and none of us are here and we have a different form of government and things are running hunky dory, so be it.

Mr. Ouellette: I don't think Mr. Rosenblum is far away. I do think we are beyond the Board of Selectmen and beyond the Board of Public Works. We are at a point in this Town where we need a Town Manager. I think the way the Board of Selectmen has gone about this, getting us to this point today, screaming out in a meeting that we should all resign, I don't think that was even remotely professional. I do agree with Mr. Rosenblum. This Town has to change its ways. I think if we were to go the Board of Selectmen should be the next one changed.

Mr. Rosenblum: That's where we want to go.

Mr. Silva: We tried that.

Mr. Goncalves: Fred Pereira announced his retirement, and that position is being eliminated. We're taking that to Town Meeting to be eliminated. Elsa Barros is not running next time, and that position will become available. We're bringing them together. That's the other article. As the occasion arises, and maybe it wasn't under the same circumstances it took this to say maybe this time we eliminate this one too. This one being a Board that equal Boards are less than 2% in the state of Massachusetts take the opportunity with what we're going through with what just happened and say maybe now is the time to do that and just start eliminating Board after Board. And show the people of the Town we can run efficiently with less committees and Boards and a different form of government.

Mr. Simao: You'll be hiring more people.

Mr. Goncalves: No

Mr. Simao: You're going to have one person do two jobs?

Mr. Goncalves: Yes.

Mr. DeBarge: That's actually in a lot of municipalities too.

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Mr. Goncalves: Like the eventuality of Fred being gone and Elsa being gone, somebody like Kim would take over and be the Financial Director of those two departments.

Mr. Simao: She's going to need more help?

Mr. Goncalves: Probably not.

Mr. Simao: You guys have hired more people already, haven't you?

Mr. Goncalves: Yes, we're trying to streamline. We needed a facilities. We got to the point where we put it off as long as we could. The procurement is already paying for itself. Everyone was ordering paper, pens, paper clips, whatever. It's kind of nuts. We can do it in one place and get buying power.

Mr. DeBarge: Keith, I've been trying to get signatures for 3-4 years now. COVID really put a damper on this, and I couldn't go door to door. I couldn't get signatures for the Charter. I agree with you. We're archaic, you're archaic. Everything needs to change. With our new Town Administrator, we started making some progress towards streamlining things by letting the Town Administrator do more things without our involvement. We're all in agreement with you. I would love to see this Board go and see a hierarchy that is actually a hierarchy and not have arguments on where to hold a meeting. For the Charter Commission itself, we need help. We need people getting out there, getting signatures to do that. Bill said it best, this is a step in that direction.

Mr. Goncalves: I have papers in my office. Send anyone there you want 9-5.

Mr. Rosenblum: The fact is that we have 3 people doing it. If the Town is really interested in doing this, which everyone says but no one does anything, you need 100-150 people to get the papers and signatures. At this rate we need close to 3,000 signatures in order to get it.

Mr. DeBarge: We have about 800 now. The presidential election bumped up our registered voters.

Mr. Ouellete: Why can't that be put up to Town Meeting for a vote for a change of government?

Mr. DeBarge: You have to get signatures, then the Charter Commission, then the change.

Mr. Ouellete: Are people aware of it? What would make a non-binding referendum?

Mr. Strange: Tomorrow the State is coming in to interview me, Tony, James and some of our Finance people for a financial review. They did one in 2004 and they recommended the Town create a Charter Committee. I suspect they are going to make that same recommendation. I'm going to ask them to do that. That's the springboard for this process. So, then we publicize that. I think the Board has to appoint a Charter Committee. That's kind of where we're going.

Mr. DeBarge: The Charter Commission takes 12-18 months.

Mr. Simao: You're the Chairman, aren't you?

Mr. DeBarge: No

Mr. Rosenblum: As Board members we can't be on that.

Mr. DeBarge: We can start getting signatures in by the Spring and have them in by December and have a commission question on the ballot next March.

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Mr. Goncalves: It would be 2025 before it could happen.

Mr. Silva: Being around for the last one and how it got overwhelmingly defeated, it's a chore.

Mr. Santos: I think a lot of issues and concerns that we're discussing right now are if we had an active liaison to go back and forth, some of these things wouldn't fester so much. With the Safety Committee we have 2 liaisons that come to them, and we've never been to a Safety Committee Meeting. We had a liaison with the Finance Committee, and it worked wonderfully. Myself or the Director called the liaison of the Finance Committee when there was an issue.

Mr. Rosenblum: You and I talked before when I was the liaison. I can't remember who it is now.

Mr. Santos: The last thing is, there's a lot of comments on social media also about how the Board of Selectmen mess things up.

Mr. DeBarge: What pedestal? I get bashed all the time. We're just trying to make things better.

Mr. Santos: We get that everywhere. We're a Board and Committee. It's a thankless job.

Mr. Goncalves: Nothing we discussed here today had anything to do with social media.

Mr. Santos: That side of the table has some issues as well as this side. We are aware of that. There are people that don't talk kindly about the Board of Selectmen either.

Mr. Silva: Why do you keep saying that?

Mr. Simao: My closing remarks are what we spoke about today should have been talked about earlier no matter where we went. But to go on TV and say that you were trying to get rid of us was horrible.

Mr. DeBarge: I appreciate that.

Mr. Silva: We're not trying to get rid of you.

Mr. Simao: If I'm not happy with the Selectmen I should ask them to resign?

Mr. DeBarge: You did the next week. I didn't watch your meeting but didn't you guys tell me to resign.

Mr. Simao: I probably did.

Mr. DeBarge: I didn't take it personally.

Mr. Soares: One thing you Board members mentioned is how the voters have spoken and we listened to the voters. In March of 2021 when this came to fruition it was 905 votes for No and 674 for Yes. They have spoken already.

Mr. Goncalves: To that point, I'm not too sure that some of us didn't, not regret, but back off a little bit once the thing had gone forward and let it take its course hoping that things were going to get better. We didn't necessarily push it after it happened. We have since thought about it and maybe now it's got to be a little bit more serious. Not to say that the outcome is not going to be the same, but I think it's going to be a little bit different with the information available to people this time around vs just a great idea. And when they get to the ballot it's going to be oh yea, I think they talked about that I don't really know what happened and they check yes or no.

Mr. Strange: Town Meeting approved the question to go to the ballot and the voters voted it down?

Mr. DeBarge: Yes

Mr. Goncalves: Are we good guys?

Mr. Simao: Our next meeting is at your place?

Mr. Goncalves: Sure. You're welcome to come any time.

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Mr. Linton: Sitting here as an observer and former Board Member, we did a lot of good things on that side of the Board. We got the sewer enterprise fund; we got the trash where it had to be. We just made policy. The best Director we had was Paul Dzubek. We got a lot of flak because we started the sewer enterprise fund and gave Paul $20,000 extra to manage it. We were crucified for that. You gotta pay $125,000 to get a good Director in here. You can't get him for $85,000. That has to happen. The second thing was, I sat in on a lot of contracts over the years. We tried to help the guys get their things and it would go to you guys. You guys were contracts, not us. Half of it is split. You have to get the guys more money and you have to get a Director. We went back to the Board the last year I was on to get rid of the P.E. because a Professional Engineer is going to require $150,000. We needed a manager. Jesse wasn't an engineer, and I didn't work with him, but it sounds like he was a good guy. He wasn't a P.E.; he was a manager. He had DPW experience, and he did his job managing. I think we have to pay more. You need that guy at the end of the table to run this place. That's the bottom line. That's why I sat through all of this. Because I sat over there for 18 years with some very good people and ran what I thought was a decent thing. We didn't have Mark Jurga anymore to do the fields. We had to hire a contractor to fertilize the fields. That's where we're at now. We always went there one quarter; they came here one quarter. As far as a liaison, one of you two Boards should go to a Wednesday, one should stay on Tuesday. You can't have the same meeting night.

Mr. Goncalves: We're every other week for the most part.

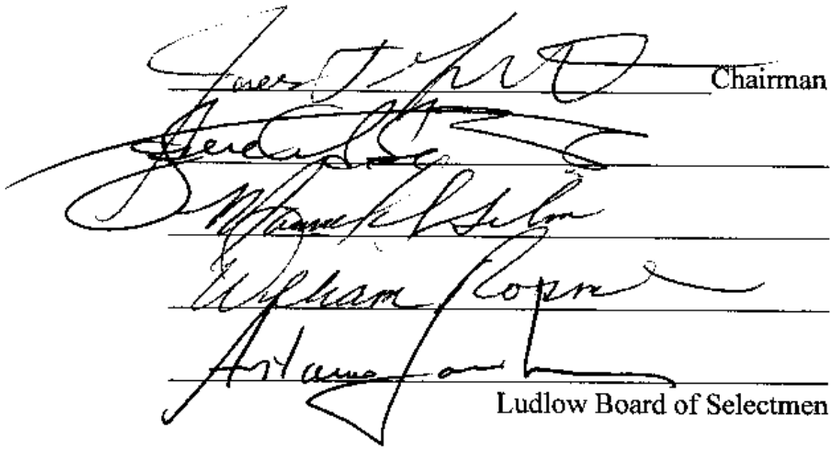
Mr. Santos: We are too. This was an off week for both of us and we met. This Board meets when there's contracts or things that have to get done. We don't meet every two weeks because it takes too long. We're trying to streamline this process and get things done. If we have to meet every week, we meet every week.

Mr. Goncalves: As we do. Anything else guys?

Mr. Linton: Motion to adjourn.

Moved by Mr. DeBarge at 8:38 pm. to adjourn meeting. Seconded by Mr. Silva. All in favor. Motion passed 4-0.

Mr. Goncalves: If we don't see you, Merry Christmas



Chairman

Ludlow Board of Selectmen

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