The Meeting of the Board of Selectmen held on Tuesday, April 4, 2023, began at 5:30 p.m. in the Board of Selectmen's Conference Room.

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

Members Absent: None

First Order of Business: The Pledge of Allegiance

Board to Reorganize.

Mr. Goncalves: Before we take any motions, I just want to say it's been a pleasure serving as Chairman for the past year. Different perspective. It's been a great time. Maybe another day, another time I'll be able to do it again, but for now it's time to turn the helm over to one of my colleagues.

Motion made by Mr. DeBarge to nominate James Gennette for Chairman. **Mr. Rosenblum second. Mr. Silva abstain. Motion passed 4-0-1.**

Mr. Gennette: Next order of business is to nominate a Vice Chairman. I'd like to nominate Mr. Derek DeBarge.

Mr. Goncalves: You can't.

Motion made by Mr. Goncalves to nominate Derek DeBarge as Vice Chairman. **Mr. Rosenblum second. All in favor. Motion passed 5-0.**

VISITATIONS

5:35 p.m. Finance Committee to discuss FY24 budget.

Motion made by Ganhao to open the Finance Committee Meeting. **Mr. Goncalves second. All in favor. Motion passed 4-0.**

Mr. Silva: How many on the Finance Committee do you have?

Mr. Ganhao: Five.

Mr. Gennett: We have Mr. Eisenthal coming in 15 minutes. Is he still on time? He's the bond coordinator so we'll be interested to hear from him. What is your prospectus so far?

Ms. Lombardi: We are meeting next Wednesday so we need to discuss the School Committee and see where we're at. Marc, do you have any updates to any of the numbers since last week?

Mr. Strange: It's still a fluid situation obviously. We factored in the Treasurer/Collector combination, we factored in the DPW changes. There are some small changes in the Assessors Department. We also, for the sake of having a place holder to be put in, the funding for a firefighter/paramedic. As we sit here, we're $517,000 under capacity.

Mr. Goncalves: Giving the School Committee how much?

Mr. Strange: 3%. The biggest variable on that, there's multiple variables, depending what the house does with their local aid, but it's going to depend on how much our payments are going to be for the Public Safety HVAC financing. David Eisenthal will have some insight on that. So, we're about $517,000 under. And that assumes flat revenue, which hopefully won't be the case, but we want to be conservative.

Mr. Rosenblum: At our meeting with the School Committee, we were at about 540?

Mr. Strange: We were 570 or so.

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Mr. Rosenblum: So that means we're down 53, so if we had gone 4% with the School Committee, it would have been 235. So, 53 we're about 180 something, if we go to 4%.

Mr. Strange: Yes.

Mr. Gennette: Do you have anything else?

Ms. Lombardi: No, like I said we're going to meet next week.

Mr. Goncalves: Do we know how the new growth figures are?

Mr. Strange: We estimate about 575 every year. There's going to be some parcels on Riverside Drive, there's going to be some new growth there. I think we'll probably be above 575 next year but again we want to be conservative on it.

Mr. Gennette: I guess that's it then, thank you for coming out.

Mr. Strange: Do you guys want to hang around for Mr. Eisenthal?

Ms. Lombardi: Sure.

Mr. Gennette: We might as well do some correspondence while we wait.

CORRESPONDENCE

41. Steve Lottman, Divisional Controller, Charter Communications – Check in the amount of $312,665.25 for PEG Access Annual franchise fee pursuant to Section 13.4 of the License between the Town of Ludlow and Charter Communications.

Mr. Gennette: Is that a big increase from last year? Isn't it usually like 260?

Mr. Goncalves: It's a decrease, I think.

Mr. Rosenblum: Closer to 350 last time.

Motion made by Mr. DeBarge to file. **Mr. Rosenblum second.**

Mr. Silva: I believe we have to accept that.

Mr. Goncalves: It's contractual, I don't know.

Mr. Strange: That's a good question.

Mr. Silva: I believe we should accept that check because anything that comes, we should accept. I don't think it's going to hurt us by accepting it.

Motion made by Mr. Rosenblum to accept the check in the amount of $312,665.25 from Charter Communications for PEG Access franchise fee pursuant to Section 13.4 of the License between the Town of Ludlow and Charter Communications. **Mr. Silva second.**

Mr. Goncalves: For people that are viewing so they understand what this is. It's 4.5% of the total revenues collected by Charter for basic cable only. For pay-per-view or any of that other stuff that goes on, we're not getting any of that. We're not getting anything from the internet, which is something the next time a contract is negotiated maybe we can get away with it but a lot of it's regulated by the state. It's for cable only. No internet, no specials, no pay-per-movie events, etc. In addition to 4.5%, cable is obligated to provide free internet to all our buildings in town, so we

don't have an internet bill for any of our public buildings, schools, etc. In case anyone was wondering.

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TOWN OF LUDLOW

All in favor. Motion passed 5-0.

42. James R. Esposito, Jr., Strategic Initiatives and Compliance Manager, Bureau of Pool and Waterfront Safety, DCR Massachusetts informing the Board of the updates and information relative to the operation of the John F. Thompson Memorial Pool for 2023.

Mr. DeBarge: The summary on this report basically says the facility is in good condition with minor repairs needed. It also suggested they contact R.H. White to make the repairs. I would assume this is all state funded.

Mr. Strange: I think there's going to be some outlays we have to make. I'm finalizing with Debbie and Sean on it.

Mr. Goncalves: I think there's a contract in here we should send out to Counsel. It's over 42 pages and at quick glance is looks like they're only responsible for major repairs over $5,000. I don't know where the rest of it's going to come from.

Mr. Strange: I can follow up with Sean & Debbie if you want to table it.

Motion made by Mr. Goncalves to table the pool contract and compliance bulletins. **Mr. Rosenblum second. All in favor. Motion passed 5-0.**

43. Robert Radowski, requesting to be appointed to the Council on Aging.

Mr. DeBarge: There are vacancies?

Mr. Gennette: I think there's more than one.

Mr. DeBarge: I'm pretty sure there is.

Motion made by Mr. DeBarge to appoint Robert Radowski to the Council on Aging. **Mr. Goncalves second. All in favor. Motion passed 5-0.**

44. Sean McBride, Chairman, Westover Golf Commission – requesting the Board to start the process for appointing a new commissioner since the term for Brian Mannix is expiring in April 2023.

Mr. Rosenblum: We have to put this out to advertisement, right?

Motion made by Mr. Rosenblum to start the process by advertising for the appointment of a new golf commissioner since the term for Brian Mannix is expiring in April 2023. **Mr. Silva second. All in favor. Motion passed 5-0.**

45. Chief Pease – request to charge off medical expenses and lost wages to Chapter 41, Section 111F for an injury sustained by a Firefighter/Paramedic as a result of an incident that occurred on March 26, 2023.

Motion made by Mr. Rosenblum to charge off medical expenses and lost wages to Chapter 41, Section 111F for an injury sustained by a Firefighter/Paramedic as a result of an incident that occurred on March 26, 2023. **Mr. DeBarge second. All in favor. Motion passed 5-0.**

46. Board to vote to abate invoice #53 for $25.00 for E L Nutrition as they have moved out of town.

Motion made by Mr. DeBarge to abate invoice #53 for $25.00 for E L Nutrition as they have moved out of town.

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Mr. Rosenblum: Did this invoice occur prior to or after? Just saying if it's an invoice that needs to be paid prior to them leaving.

Mr. Rosenblum second. All in favor. Motion passed 5-0.

47. Board of Assessors – Reorganization Chart.

Mr. Gennette: All Departments from the Board of Assessors May 31, 2023, organization. Please be advised that at their meeting on March 29, 2023, the Board of Assessors voted to reorganize as follows. Antonio Rosa, Chairman, Michael O'Rourke, Clerk, Member and John Urban, Member.

Motion made by Mr. Silva to file. **Mr. Rosenblum second. All in favor. Motion passed 5-0.**

48. School Committee – Reorganization Chart.

Mr. Gennette: To all departments from Dr. Frank Tiano, Superintendent. Ludlow School Committee reorganization dated March 28, 2023. At their meeting on Tuesday March 28, 2023, the Ludlow School Committee recognized in the following manner. Jeffrey A. Laing, Chairman, Sarah F. Bowler, Vice Chairman, Jeffrey Stratton, Secretary, Ronald G. Saloio, Member, Joao Dias, Member.

Motion made by Mr. Rosenblum to file. **Mr. Silva second. All in favor. Motion passed 5-0.**

49. Paul Chrzan, Post Commander, PAV of Wilbraham requesting the Board to attend a dinner/dance on Sunday April 23, 2023, at the Ludlow Country Club to celebrate the Veterans dedication and service to our community and country. Stanley J. Strycharz will also be honored for his 75 years of service.

Mr. DeBarge: I'll be there.

Motion made by Mr. Rosenblum to file. **Mr. Goncalves second. All in favor. Motion passed 5-0.**

UNFINISHED BUSINESS

Board to review and discuss draft warrant for the Annual Town Meeting.

Mr. Gennette: That's pretty extensive, do you want to wait on that one?

Board to discuss and sign Intermunicipal Agreement with Springfield for West Street Bridge repairs.

Mr. Strange: The West Street Bridge needs to be repaired. The City of Springfield has taken the lead on it. Obviously, we share the bridge with them. Essentially what's going to happen is Springfield is going to take the lead on it, bid it, handle all the administration and we're going to be reimbursing the City of Springfield for our half. In order to do that we need to have an intermunicipal agreement and you guys need to sign it.

Motion made by Mr. Goncalves to approve and sign the intermunicipal agreement for the construction services for the West Street Bridge between the City of Springfield and the Town of Ludlow. **Mr. DeBarge second. All in favor. Motion passed 5-0.**

Board to discuss and vote on using ARPA funds for O'Reilly Talbot & Okun Associates for Demolition Contractor Selection Administration Support in the amount of $610.00.

Mr. Silva: What is that demolition for?

Mr. Strange: It's for Vets Park.

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Mr. Silva: Was that an open bid session?

Mr. Goncalves: No, that's consulting.

Mr. Silva: Unfortunately, we probably could demolish it for $610, but because of the constraints we have with state bids, it gets into crazy money. It amazes me. And I have friends that do this kind of stuff and the difference in monies is incredible. It's a shame, as we are so constricted to do certain things and the monies, we are allocated from the state funds. We do something and the state requires us to pay crazy money. It boggles my mind. That's the reason I asked. I, too, was amazed at the small amount. Something should be done about that. The money we spend because of legislation, it's crazy. I know friends that would take that building down for at least half of the money we have to spend. That's neither here nor there.

Motion made by Mr. Goncalves that the board approve and pay the invoice for $610 for OTO for the consulting on Veterans Park demolition project. **Mr. Rosenblum second. All in favor. Motion passed 5-0.**

Board to sign the liquor license for Casa Pizzeria, LLC.

Motion made by Mr. Goncalves to sign the liquor license for Casa Pizzeria, LLC. **Mr. Rosenblum second. All in favor. Motion passed 5-0.**

Board to approve and sign Executive Session Minutes of March 7, 2023.

Motion made by Mr. Goncalves to approve and sign Executive Session Minutes of March 7, 2023, all members present. **Mr. DeBarge second. All in favor. Motion passed 5-0.**

Mr. Gennette: I guess we're going to have to hold on Mr. Eisenthal for now. (to Finance Commiteee) Thanks for showing up and hanging out. I wish we had more information for you.

NEW BUSINESS

Board to appoint Ken Batista as Interim DPW Director.

Mr. Silva: I questioned Marc at the meeting we had with the School Committee. I was a little troubled that we took over and just left DPW as it was. Did you check with Town Counsel that we should appoint someone to oversee the whole department for the interim?

Mr. Strange: That's your call in terms of operations.

Mr. Silva: I think we should have somebody that's going to oversee and give them authorization to deal with everyone over there and deal with some of the things for the time being until we get a director in there that's going to do it. I absolutely think we should appoint.

Mr. Goncalves: Marc, I know there's some other things in the works right now as far as those positions. How far away is that?

Mr. Strange: We're hoping to do DPW director at the April 18th meeting. It's posted and we're receiving applications now.

Mr. Silva: Did we get word that it's changing and hopefully it's going to get better?

Mr. Goncalves: We need to put somebody in place for the month.

Mr. DeBarge: Mr. Silva, I don't know if I misunderstood what you were saying. I probably missed it. We did have a plan in place if the ballot passed. We had everything ready to go. Interim Director set up and ready to go. I don't want anybody to think that we were just waiting for the ballot to

pass and some of us didn't have a plan moving forward. We were moving on it the very next morning. Marc was on it the very next morning.

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TOWN OF LUDLOW

Mr. Silva: I agree with you that we were. I think an appointment is the official thing to do.

Mr. DeBarge: Ya, you didn't want to meet Tuesday.

Mr. Goncalves: I think you should make a motion, Mr. Silva.

Motion made by Mr. Silva to appoint Kenny Batista as the interim director, or whichever position we want to put him into to oversee the whole Department of Public Works. **Mr. DeBarge second. All in favor. Motion passed 5-0.**

Mr. Gennette: I think we're a minute early for our visitations but don't think we're going to wait. We're going to invite…

Mr. Silva: Before we get into that, I'm sorry, I actually forgot something. Have we discussed this with Kenny and he's willing?

Mr. Strange: Yes, the morning after the election we met with Kenny & Jimmy.

Mr. Gennette: We'll bring up Senator Jake Oliveria and Representative Aaron Saunders to discuss Legislative updates. Always a pleasure to see you guys.

Mr. Oliveira: I have to say, this is our 6th or 7th Select Board meeting, and you are the only people that wear ties and jackets anymore. Usually, I'm overdressed so I'm glad I put it on. You guys are well dressed as far as everybody is concerned. Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Each year, I know that in the past, Senator Lesser and myself, the few years I was in the house, always wanted to go around to each one of the Select Boards to give a brief legislative update, but also introduce ourselves. Aaron and myself, Aaron being a former member of this body as well, we're very familiar with the work that you do, having spent 16 years in local government in town, understand the role here, but we just wanted to offer ourselves up for anything you might have questions for, but also understand our offices a little bit better. Obviously, we are both new in our new roles coming in this legislative cycle, as opposed to the last 2 years, which I had 4 communities, Belchertown, Ludlow, Springfield, and Chicopee. I now have 12 communities and 170,000 people that live in my district. Obviously, Aaron's district has changed significantly with now having 7 communities, 2 of the larger ones being Ludlow and Belchertown, that make up the most of his district, and then 5 smaller communities. I have been going around to Select Boards, as well as Aaron, to introduce ourselves but also to let you know that our offices are always open to you. Proud to say that we have Jennifer Pickering. Jennifer was district director for Senator Lesser and stuck around with my office, thank God. She is someone who understands the communities in the district. She is a fixture at the Ludlow Senior Center, more than once a month many times, but officially once a month for office hours, where members of the community can come in and reach out to us if they have constituent issues. Jennifer is somebody that I'm so thrilled to have on our staff helping out with all the district matters. Before I turn it over the Aaron, a couple of differences between the house and the senate. On the Senate side you're automatically a committee chair for a policy committee. With 6-7,000 bills filed each legislative session and each bill getting a public hearing before the legislature, a lot of the work in the legislature is done in the committee process. Aaron's on 4 committees himself, I'm on 7 committees aside from the one I'm chairing. The committee I'm chairing has a lot to do with municipal government. It's the joint committee on municipalities and regional government, which processes any home rule petition that comes from a local community that requires legislative approval. That committee has hundreds of bills each session, many having to do with charter changes, many having to do with election reforms. It also deals with things like dog and cat and animal regulations, kennel regulations. That all goes before the joint committee on municipalities. Thrilled to be chairing it this session, but also serving on several other committees, including being the vice chair of public health, vice chair of tourism arts and culture, which for Western Massachusetts is very important because 1 out of every 6 jobs is tied directly to the creative economy out here. Aside from that, I also sit on financial services,

which deals with banking, insurance regulations and whole host of legislation is before that committee. The election laws committee, which deals with any changes that local communities want to make to their election procedures that need local approval as well. Also, a committee that I was on before, consumer protection professional licensure, which again a lot of local governments have to go to if they want to change the number of liquor licenses they have. That goes before the joint committee of consumer protection. I'll have Aaron describe a little bit more about his committees and his role going forward, but I'm just here today to open it up and answer any questions you might have. I was proud over the last 2 years to bring back over 8.5 million dollars directly to the Town of Ludlow, most of that having to do with the Ludlow mills. We were able to secure almost 8.3 million for things like water and sewer improvements, affordable housing, working with Winn Development right now, looking at making sure WestMass is able to develop the property and giving dollars to them to grow the expansion of that important project. It is an example of local government, state government, federal government, public and private partnership coming together to make this partnership a reality. I wanted to offer that and other pockets of funds to celebrate our 250th, 50,000 there, Lupa Zoo, 100,000 & 50 in 2 different pots for different items. Working with Marc, who's been a great partner for us, making sure that we get information we need. Bonded funding is something that is not direct, guaranteed money, but we have been able to put in place markers in the various different bond bills that we have authorized at the state level for things like HVAC for this building. Looking at intersections that can be a little bit dangerous, including the Fuller/Chapin intersection. Looking at some of the road projects for reworking them. We have been able to secure language in there. It's not direct funding and has to be released by the administration, but Marc has been someone I can rely on to find out the needs of the Town of Ludlow and hopefully take that and run with it in the legislature. Just wanted to thank Marc for all of that as well. I'll turn it over to Aaron to give his opening comments. We can get into various different areas of funding as we get into the FY24 budget season. Happy to discuss Chapter 90, Chapter 70, Special Education dollars which continues to burden a lot of school districts and communities' bottom line, but just wanted to offer up my assistance for my hometown and proud to be the first actual State Senator to live and be from Ludlow in our 250 year plus history.

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Mr. Saunders: What more can I say? Senator Oliveira mentioned he has 12 towns. He can do that for each of the 12. For folks in Ludlow, it's a unique opportunity. It's nice to be back in this room. I had the chance to serve 7 years on this board. Senator Oliveira, about 32 on the School Committee.

Mr. Oliveira: 12.

Mr. Saunders: There's a familiarity with Ludlow I can say other delegations don't always have the luxury to have, in terms of familiarity. The institutional knowledge of challenges and really being able to identify opportunities as chief among them, as Senator Oliveira went into. This is my first term, as many of you know, in the house. I am going into that building as having had experience working with our, not previous Senator, but the one previous to that Senator Lessor, Gail Kennar, Assistant Chief of Staff for 7 years, not much has changed in that building, which is good and bad. The upside is that I think despite the tenure of the delegation, we've been able to hit the ground running and really pick up where our predecessors left off. For those of you who care to know, everyone in the house, regardless of the lowliest staffer to the top of the mountain in the speaker's office, still has tremendous regard for Tom Petrolati and I hear his name more often than my own in that building. Again, it is indicative of the role that Ludlow has in Western Mass in our respective districts and how we can be most effective on behalf of the town and its residents. Quickly, Senator Oliveira covered a lot of the committee work. I sit on the public service committee, which handles a number of pension and retirement issues, many of which have direct impact on finances of communities. The Labor and Workforce development committee, which especially for our small businesses in town now is front and center. I think it has the full attention of the speaker and leadership in the state house. Finding creative ways to ensure that businesses can not only thrive across the state but can do so with a talented workforce that can fill the positions we have here. I sit on the cannabis policy committee, which may be more salient to the town of Ludlow as things progress, as well as the house committee on the employee engagement human

resources, which like any other business, the state house has an obligation to our employees and to maintaining a tight knit shop there. With that, happy to discuss.

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Mr. Oliveira: As we get into budget season, and I know that you are in the throws of it right now. Obviously, the life blood of any municipality is unrestrictive local aid, Chapter 70, Chapter 90. Those are the big piles of funds that communities get to municipal finances. We had passed in the house and senate the Chapter 90 bill last week in the senate and the week before in the house. We were negotiating differences. Obviously, the Western Mass delegation has been very active on reworking the funding formula that is based on a number of employees, population, roadways, and disadvantages of a lot of Western Mass communities, particularly low densely populated communities further out in the area. Ludlow can be considered that because we have a lot of roads. On the senate side, we put in a new pot of funds 25 million dollars above and beyond the 200 million for low densely populated communities. That's going to be divided amongst communities based on miles of roadway, which would benefit Ludlow greatly in this funding formula. We also put in both the house and senate additional dollars for things like small bridge repairs, which Ludlow has a significant number of. We put in more money for culvert repairs, which is something we're seeing a lot of communities struggle with repairs right now. Even though the pot of Chapter 90 has remained untouched for about a decade or so, we put in another 175 million dollars that communities can access to help out with road and sidewalk and bridge programs for the communities. Hopefully, we resolve the differences between our 2 chambers and make sure we can get the money to our communities because timing is so critical for that as well. Our season of construction is so short. Added to that, as we go through the FY24 budget process, obviously Chapter 70 for communities like Ludlow, and many of the communities that I represent, haven't had the benefit of the student opportunity act that we would like to see. Places like Springfield, Chicopee, and Holyoke, which were chronically underfunded for many decades, are finally now seeing Chapter 70 funds flowing to those communities right now. The benefit of reworking the funding formula a few years ago is that we're not waiting another 25-30 years before we crack open that funding formula. We're on year 3 or 4 of funding that round of a 7-year process of fully funding what was decided by a commission to fully fund public education in our commonwealth. My goal is when we rework that formula in the next few years, communities like Ludlow, Belchertown, Wilbraham, and Hampden that don't share in the benefit of the student opportunity act get some preference in there and get greater funding to accommodate the rising cost of education for all of our school districts. We also need to look at the major cost drivers that are driving the costs for our school districts. Special Education costs, including out of district placements are going up by 14.5%, which is well outpacing inflation and what a lot of districts can afford. In order for districts to accommodate those increases, the state created a pot of funds called circuit breaker funding for those costs that go well above the average per people spending for the district. The Commonwealth has made a commitment to reimburse that 75% level for that. I actually filed a bill in the legislature to accommodate for these increasing costs to move that up from 75% to 90%. A subsequent bill I filed as well, working with the superintendent's association, school committee association and mass municipal to do a whole scale look at how we fund special education here in the commonwealth because it's not sustainable. Mass Municipal Association is well on board with it as well. Similar to what we did with Chapter 70, creating a commission that will report back to the legislature to show and to give a guide path and a plan to address these rising special education costs with additional state funds is something that I'm actively pursuing because that is a drain on many a municipal budget right now in school departments. We're feeling it in every community and every board we go to. Just as a precursor to the discussion of budget. If there are any questions wanted to lay out those things. With that, Mr. Chairman, happy to answer any questions you might have.

Mr. Saunders: Just wanted to follow one thing on the Chapter 90, 150-175 million, one of the things unique is that these are competitive funds. Now with interim director Batista, we very quickly go from top line to 150 million statewide to drilling down what are the projects that Ludlow would qualify for. Jake and I both stand ready to advocate with the Department of Transportation once those projects are identified. It takes municipal leadership to identify the projects, make the case for it. Basically, give us the ball and we can run with it.

Mr. Gennette: The School Committee has shown up and the Board of Health is here and I'm sure they may have some questions, but does anyone have any on our Board?

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Mr. Silva: Love all these projects, great, we're getting money however, that's not helping elderly. The people that are struggling day in and day out. These projects are awesome. We're talking 8 million for this, 7 million for this. I'm not saying these projects don't need it but where's the help for these people struggling. The economy has gone bonkers. People are struggling to pay their regular tax bills. When I worked, I got some of these incomes from residents, astonished. What I got from them I was astonished how they were actually living. It boggles my mind how they can afford it. I don't see anything coming from the state and upper level to help us out. We're struggling with getting the school budget in right now. We had a meeting; we're looking at our numbers. It's great, we're giving the mills 8 million dollars. Where does that help the local communities and our budget to get us to where we need to be? We're doing road, mind you I'm not disqualifying anything we do need. Proposition 2.5, which we all know, was voted by a long time ago. 1980. I was there. I got my job because of proposition 2.5. It mandated we assess values, and I became an assessor. It's getting to an impossibility for us to stay within proposition 2.5 and not go over our budgets. I haven't seen the State in many years where they're helping us with doing that. Every time I turn on the TV, we're spending 150 million dollars for infrastructure for this and that. You don't slip in a bill. The poor people that are local people that are really have to pay their tax bill day in and day out. Because of that we've had to increase fees for everything. It's another tax. We're raising fees for this, raising fees for that. It's just another tax. Call it what you want but it's another tax. The small taxpayer is getting burdened. We need to somehow figure that out. I worked with the different chapters for the elderly, the exemptions, they're minimal. Look at some of their incomes. I think if some of the legislature look at the peoples' incomes, ridiculous. It's astonishing. If they could somehow throw some money into that…we're going to have to raise our bills again. And Aaron you were sitting on this board, every year 200-300-400, they're limited.

Mr. Saunders: Mr. Silva, I miss sitting on that side. These are fundamental questions we struggle with and seek a balance on. Let me take both pieces. You mentioned tax relief for individuals, especially seniors and folks living on fixed incomes, then you touched on state support for municipalities. Last summer, and I know Senator Oliveira worked hard on this in the house, there was a proposal to provide broad based tax relief for seniors, caregivers, families seeking affordable childcare, a whole host of regions. This got turned on its head by Chapter 62F, the other petition that was passed in the 1980's. The vast majority of Ludlow residents saw relief with that, but the 3-billion-dollar price tag that came along with 62F as a one-time tax rebate forced the conversation about broad-based long-term tax cuts to be put on the back burner for that year. It is highly unlikely that we're going to trigger 62F again. In this analysis, it was a combination of factors, even the authors of that legislation in 1987 wouldn't have anticipated. However, the house is going to be taking up broad based tax reform and it's going to be focused on the people who are struggling the most to meet the day-to-day cost of living. There's a much longer conversation around the impact of global inflation and commodity costs. I used to go to the Fish and Game after these meetings when I was on the board and those conversations happened then and I'm sure they'll happen again.

Mr. Oliveira: That's where we're going after this by the way.

Mr. Silva: That's where you get most of the comments, local establishments.

Mr. Saunders: We're going to be taking that up this year. It was a priority of Governor Healey, it's a priority for the house and I'm sure it's a priority for the senate as well. We're going to be having a long conversation. There's going to be folks pushing back on it too. I think the advocacy to ensure we have the type of tax cuts that meet needs of folks that are living in our communities takes advocacy, and it takes smart advocacy, respectfully, within the means we have to work with. Let's not forget over the last 10 years we cut the income tax rate by over a quarter percent from 5.3 to 5.0. It's remained there. Unfortunately, we've taken regressive taxes with the sales tax and increased that. And that sales tax, a penny of that goes to the MBTA. They may be looking for another bail out. This is a non-stop conversation. Hearing it tonight, and I know I hear it on a pretty regular basis, is going to help shape how that tax relief looks and ultimately adopted. As far as municipalities go, I sat in that chair, back when we had fiscal responsibility, it was the year before

the great recession, and Mr. Silva, this was the year just before you joined the board, mid-year, significant cuts to local aid on the order of 30-35%. The problem is when you cut local aid 30% halfway through the year, it has the impact of a 60% cut because you've already spent the budget for the first half of the year. I think the creativity and ingenuity that this board, along with the town, showed was some of the best work municipal governments could do. I know we served together and there are other people in this room who are having conversations on health care reform and how we were smart about that to ensure that benefits weren't cut but costs were. Because at that time we were very inefficient about how we went about paying for health insurance. We went around investing in economic development. So, when we talk about 8 million dollars put into the mills, it's not just kicking 8 million dollars off the trestle into the river, it's putting money into a project that's transformational for this town that is bringing small businesses, bringing larger businesses in. It's been the catalyst for another hundred and how many units of housing that Winn is undertaking on top of it. One of the things about bringing in those businesses is property tax. When I was on that side of the table I voted almost religiously for a single tax rate, recognizing that in and of itself was an incentive for businesses to relocate in town. And those businesses tend to draw less on services and pay more into the kitty. The reason I say this is it's not only about direct appropriations, it's about how we are smart about incentivizing growth and development that takes the edge off relying on homeowners to foot the bill. Senator Oliveira touched on my district. I have communities in the northern part of my district that have next to zero commercial, industrial, and personal property tax revenue. Next to zero. They might have an Eversource right of way, and that's it. And they have no choice. The rest of the land is protected, nothing can be developed, they don't have the infrastructure there to begin with if they wanted to. The answer to that question is how can we work together to say we have parts of town here that are ripe for development and continued development. We talk about the mills a lot. The whole area down on Moody Street. We did a lot of work on lower East Street infill and taking advantage of things like 40R and making sure that together we can make the most of what is a really cool scene that is developing around East and Sewall and Center. Casa Pizzeria, it's great you can grab a cocktail there now. You can get your insurance, get sushi, grab records. Some of the best food you can get in Western Mass is happening in our town. What Senator Oliveria and I do to support that is take votes to extend outdoor dining and takeaway drink laws that went in during Covid. These are the types of partnerships and cooperation when we hear that the need is there to help further what's working in town and continue to move that forward. It's a shared goal to make sure that seniors living on fixed incomes are not put out beyond their means, to ensure that the town could meet the basic needs of its residents.

Mr. Oliveira: I would just add to that, my grandmother is 97 years old, she survives on $12,000/year. The people that worry me the most are the ones you can't even see in a local establishment because they can't afford to be there. Her heat in her place is electric, the bill would be over $400/month. She can't afford that on her income. Without the subsidies the state and federal government provide for electric and utility cost rates that many seniors take advantage of working with the senior center, filling out the forms, making sure they take advantage of it is so essential for the affordability so we can keep seniors in their homes right now. I would add that for every dollar we invest in Ludlow mills, it comes back at least 10-fold back into the community, back to making sure we grow our property tax base, making sure that we grow our businesses and industry for the commonwealth. We've also done things in the legislature recognizing that families are struggling, by doing things like making universal school meals permanent and putting more money towards that. Sometimes it's the only meal that a kid is going to get during that day, is the meal they get at the schools. The thing we've been trying to put in place with working families and seniors, we're going to be looking at the budget. So, Governor Healey's tax proposal includes a lot of the items that were included in the tax proposal that I voted on last summer that because of 62F didn't get over the finish line. Things like adjusting the 2nd lowest in the nation, only Oregon is higher than us, in that threshold for the estate tax, which kicks in and is now affecting middle class families more than ever. Reworking that. Looking at the child and dependent tax credit which puts money in people's pockets who have children and dependents that they're caring for, including a lot of grandparents who are caring for their children. Looking at the earned income tax credit, which will put more money in working people's pockets. All of those things. We're looking to utilize this budget as a vehicle to do. Thank you for the question. We feel it, we see it. Our offices are inundated with calls on unemployment, benefits, issues from working families. We hear

about it every day. We try to help and resolve as best we can. Thank you for recognizing the struggles that families are having in this high inflation time.

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TOWN OF LUDLOW

Mr. Goncalves: For you guys to keep in mind that we're going to be undertaking a 4-million-dollar project behind the high school, so if there's any money floating around there. We're taking the lion's share of the ARPA money we were awarded. If there's any loose money hanging around. We got $100,000 up front. Senator Lessor hooked us up with $100,000 just before the elections and took care of some of the engineering and discovery work.

Mr. Saunders: Just for the demo?

Mr. Goncalves: The $100,000 we used just for engineering.

Mr. Saunders: No, the 4 million.

Mr. Goncalves: The 4 million is to build a new track and field and everything behind the high school. Maybe 3 or 4, we're not sure where it's going to come in. I know a couple of years ago it was a million and a half and the town kicked it down the street. That million and a half was going to be direct taxpayer money. This is ARPA money we saved. So, anything we can get there will allow us to take some of that ARPA money and put it into parks or something else here in town so keep your eyes open on that one for us. On Chapter 90, we've got that bridge, I don't know if you guys were here for that. West Street cooperative. That's a quarter of a million dollars so if you want to put a marker in.

Mr. Oliveira: In talking with the other municipalities on the other side of it and looking at it as well about some help in the FY24 budget, we're aware of it.

Mr. Goncalves: Thank you, just keep bringing it home.

Mr. DeBarge: I don't need a lot of time. We already had lunch. I picked your brains about all that. I do want to stress the money we have gotten over the years for the mills project. This mills project to me is the key of Western Mass. I think this has got the answers to some budgetary issues. Investment into the mills is investment into this community. It's shown it already. There's a ton of land, a ton of promise, a ton of everything. I personally don't think that we as a board do enough for that mills project because I think that is the key to, I don't want to say our financial future, but a better future with investment into that property. I wish that I could give up a reason why Ludlow is most important for all that you do in the state and senate. I think the mills keeps us above any other town because I only care about this town, but I think the project itself puts us above and that has been proven by the money we've gotten and federal grants, EDA grants, all of that stuff and I hope that continues. That will make Ludlow what I think we all envision it to be.

Mr. Oliveira: It's a point of pride and it's a point of pride for me, my family came here because of those mills, but it's also something that when I go to Warren or Palmer or other communities that have aging mill buildings, they're all looking to Ludlow. So, we have a lot going for ourselves with that project. It's a jewel here in Western Massachusetts but when I visit other communities and different Select Boards, they see their aging mill buildings and they look to Ludlow as an example to follow.

Mr. Saunders: It shouldn't be lost on anyone, less than a week into office officially, Governor Healey was at the Ludlow mills. She could have gone to any one of the 351 cities and towns, she came there. It is a model, not just for Western Mass but across the state as we take on housing challenges. The fact that Winn Development has been so successful, they're very talented people there, but it's cooperation. I think some of you were involved when the Town of Ludlow made a commitment and expedited permitting and approval. There was 1 board that looked at everything that had to do with the mills. I think it still sits that we weren't putting WestMass through the paces of visit them and 3 weeks later… A 2-week advertising period here and once you get those 3 approvals go back to the first place and hopefully no one said anything different in between. That is a model for permitting and economic development. That is absolutely something that not only

in Western Mass but across the state, the town should be proud of, the town government should be proud of. While there theoretically is always more to do, the town took a risk getting involved in this project. The town laid itself out when it took on some of the property and the town fought hard to make sure the riverwalk was the riverwalk. There are steps each and every spot along the way where the town of Ludlow has been an essential partner along with the state and federal government in making this the success that it is and there's still a long way to go.

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TOWN OF LUDLOW

Mr. Rosenblum: Thank you both for coming in. You're all over the place in more communities you can shake a stick at. Like it's been said before, we sat down with the School Committee last week and something that needs to be is that Chapter 70. That's my belief. The fact is when you look at the percentage of our budget being in that 44-45% of our town budget and seeing an increase of the funding they've been getting from the state at .03%, or something crazy like that. The number is going like this and we're watching inflation go at an 8% clip, and then the cost of goods and services is through the roof and then obviously with the pandemic and special education is that its unsustainable for us to actually give them what they need. We can't do it. We've had a discussion, we're working with them, we're trying to do it. To your point, it's things like these take a year or 2. It's really not going to help us much now. It's getting to that point it needs to be pushed across the state, if not across the country. Funding just doesn't seem to be on the upward rise as everything else. As inflation costs. The other thing is, I understand looking at WestMass and the mills project because we all sit there and look at the businesses we'd love to see in there, but I also see it from their point of view. They want something in there that's sustainable and that's going to give them the best return on the investment because you can't go in there and say hey, we're going to put a pizza shop in there. That could be 6 months to a year then it's gone. They want tenants that are going to stay there and add to the viability to the town and bring people in. I get that aspect of it. I think it's something more that we need to get involved with and maybe working with you is try to get the ideas what can we bring in there and what can we do to work with WestMass to move the project along instead of waiting 20 years to see the windfall of money that we…obviously, right now they put up the tarp on the fence finally. We're getting to see the clock tower get done and things of that nature. These are…we need our growth to grow. We're staying in the same 550-575 so that mills project is huge for us and also Chapter 70.

Mr. Oliveira: On the school financing side, most of my communities that I represent aside from Chicopee and Springfield, 80% of my district is in the same position that Ludlow is in with their Chapter 70 growth not meeting the inflationary costs. We still have 3 more years of this cycle of student opportunity act before we re-open that funding formula. We are going to be reopening it to work on the language and places like Ludlow are first and foremost on my advocacy list, but that special education cost growth that's on there, what we can do now is go on some of the impact that some of those are having on school districts by growing a pot of funds and circuit breaker funded and also looking at the wholesale on how we fund special education because it's not sustainable.

Mr. Rosenblum: How do you see it east of Worcester?

Mr. Oliveira: If you're a community that looks like ours east of Worcester, it's the same. They're not getting the growth in Chapter 70 that cities and gateway cities are having. If you go out to a suburban community that is in the same demographics as Ludlow, same low percentage…it's a funding formula that's really trying to address the inequities of gateway cities in places that were chronically underfunded. Places like Springfield, Chicopee, Holyoke, Pittsfield, Fitchburg, a lot of the gateway cities outside of Boston that really were disadvantaged by the previous funding formula.

Mr. Rosenblum: My daughter is in a nursing program and it's amazing how her friends, where do you live? Where's Ludlow? Near Springfield. Isn't that like way… we get lost in the shuffle.

Mr. Oliveira: You talk to someone in Fall River or New Bedford, they'd say the same thing. We tend to be very parochial and lump everything east of Sturbridge together, but if you go inside Merrimack Valley, the Cape, south coast, they feel the same way about inside of 128 that we feel and we tend to lump them all together.

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TOWN OF LUDLOW

Mr. Saunders: There's value in that. I think Senator Oliveira sees in the senate that when our specific geographies don't determine our priorities exclusively, we get to work together on common problems. When I'm having that conversation with colleagues that represent the south coast or north shore, which are similarly situated, we're on the same page. As the Senator mentioned we have that opportunity to reexamine the formula, there's going to be a lot of members with the same concern. A lot of members sitting at a lot of Selectmen's meetings and school committee meetings having heard it. It's not always a east west thing but in this case I think it is a benefit. It's amazing, 2 people said south coast before you became in politics you would have never known that that word south coast. My daughter is going to school in the south coast, and they go welcome to the south coast. I guess it got flipped on me.

Mr. Silva: Here's my dilemma. The School Committee showed me something very interesting. Low-income people have risen. They're having issues with some of these people. Now they're coming in, they want us to help out with their budget. We're going to give them this money for their budget, fine. Now the tax rate is up here. You're going to get $50 to help out with these kids, the tax rate is going to raise their parents' rate by $200. It doesn't work. That is my dilemma. I don't know where we're going to go with this. This has been nonstop. The tax rate and taxes year after year. If you go back 3-4 years, you're talking about probably $3-$4,000 increase in tax bill. I don't know where they are getting their funds.

Mr. Saunders: It's not lost on me. The town of Ludlow has made some incredible investments in building a new elementary school and a new senior center. Those are figuratively and literally quite heavy lifts for both prop 2.5, debt exclusions, both at hundreds of dollars annually to the average tax bill. That's on top of trying to meet operational costs. I think this is the unique position that Ludlow is in where I spend a lot of time looking at census block data and several of the census blocks in Ludlow look a lot more like those gateway city census blocks that are receiving the funding under this current formula. This is central to this question of equity. We are seeing the challenges that our gateway cities face here in Ludlow, but the formula that's in place now does not necessarily address the challenges in communities like Ludlow that it does in the gateway cities the way this formula is designed to. I think part of the task over the next couple of years because it's great to say we have a schedule and we'll get to it, is to find those ways to address instances as they come up. Senator Oliveira mentioned special education out of district increases, but in addition to the formulate money, part of fundamentally our job is to look for those what of opportunities. Is there $100,000 kicking around that could help out here. Where's there an opportunity to reduce cost where it doesn't need to be spent there. Where can we be helpful. We partner with non-profits and the private sector to help out in ways that those nonprofits and private sector entities are quite frankly better at doing some of these jobs. It all needs to be on the table. I know that Jake has committed to this. If we can take that same collaborative approach as these costs and challenges come up, I feel pretty good about being able to take them on.

Mr. Oliveira: We're thankful here in Ludlow that we did our building projects when we did, both the Senior Center and the new elementary school. I'm working with several communities that are embarking on large scale capital projects for schools and senior centers and the inflationary costs in the last 3 years really puts in perspective that we struck while the iron was hot. We did it at the right time. We did it efficiently and saved our taxpayers a significant amount of dollars. Looking long term, the cost increases we see, especially with our low-income student population rising, I was in Hampden/Wilbraham about a month and a half two months ago, and they brought up the extra cost to educate a student who was low income compared to a student that isn't. Their percentage might be 35 growing right now. When I got on the school committee in 2009, I think it was around 20%, no we're at 35 and growing rapidly. On that end, you go to a city like Springfield, Chicopee or Holyoke, it's 80-85%. The cost drivers for there is really stark and that's where the initial round of student opportunity act funding was trying to address, but we're seeing all of our communities facing this that are on the suburban level. Even communities like Wilbraham and Hampden are rising in the amount of low income students and the cost drivers for their districts are going up and that's why we need to reopen the formula, look at communities like Ludlow and Belchertown and put in the accommodations so they can share in some of the increased funding that others have seen.

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Mr. Silva: That's exactly what I'm saying. I'm not talking about our community only, it's everywhere. Legislation is part of that, and we are just not combatting that. The disparity is just getting wider and wider. Again, I love the projects and they're well beneficial, no doubt about it, but let's try to get some of these funds geared toward the struggling people.

Mr. Strange: I think I'm going to get the bill wrong, but I think it was the Governor's supplemental bill had a mechanism for the opioid settlement funding, I don't know if you guys are familiar with this. Every municipality is getting funding through the opioid settlement and right now there's only 2 mechanisms to spend the money. One is put it in the general fund, the other is to create a stabilization fund. I think the Governor's supplementary bill would allow the town to create a special fund or revolving fund and I didn't know if you guys had seen that in your chambers or not.

Mr. Saunders: That's the one she just filed. The initial one we did the childcare money and the extensions, so that hasn't come in front of us yet, but we'll take a look.

Mr. Goncalves: It's going to be important for all of the communities from the standpoint that if some other mechanism is created at the state level, we're going to have to take that money into our general budget, go to town meeting where it has to be allocated. We know where that needs to go and how it needs to be spent to be effective, rather than 110 people who may have read the wrong article in the newspaper that day.

Mr. DeBarge: There's a lot of departments that can use that for educational purposes and we want to spread that out.

Mr. Laing: Marc, has there been any cost estimates on what Ludlow can receive on that?

Mr. Strange: It depends, right now we have $130,000 from Fiscal 23. Every now and then we get an additional tranche.

Mr. Goncalves: Theres 8-10 years' worth.

Ms. Bowler: There's like 15.

Mr. Goncalves: That's significant.

Mr. Oliveira: Just to follow up, you're looking at flexibility to spread that out over multiple years instead of spending it…

Mr. Strange: Right now, we'd have to either put that in the general fund and we'd have to be really careful about how we spent it and tracked it, which we could certainly do but it's labor intensive, or we have to create a stabilization fund specifically for the opioids and we'd have to go to town meeting to spend it.

Mr. Oliveira: Has Mass Municipal Association has done any analysis and advocacy on flexibility?

Mr. Strange: I don't know but I'd be surprised if they didn't support it.

Mr. Oliveira: I'll follow up with MMA's legislative person on this issue and try to get this information and we'll follow up, Aaron and I, to make sure you guys have what you need to utilize it for your purposes.

Mr. Strange: Thank you.

Mr. Gennette: You guys keep talking about gateway cities and how Springfield, Chicopee and Holyoke are getting a lot of funding that a lot of the communities that are not gateway cities are. You mentioned you were on a charter change committee, and we have been talking about that.

Does this make us a better recipient of funds if we change our charter, if we become a city, if we turn into this situation. Do we all of a sudden get a seat at the table?

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TOWN OF LUDLOW

Mr. Oliveira: You wouldn't be a gateway city. There's certain population thresholds.

Mr. Gennette: I think we're big enough now east of the river that we should probably have a seat at the table when we're talking about big funds. Big ARPA money came through for Springfield who got it right away, so I just wondered what you thought.

Mr. Oliveira: It changes the form of government wouldn't have. The obvious change is the form of government. I have a multitude of different types of governments that are in my district. I have rep town meetings, select boards, open town meeting with 3 members, large cities like Springfield, Holyoke, and Chicopee, but I also have town council forms of government in Palmer and East Longmeadow, and I can tell you it's a lot easier working with them sometimes when you don't have to go to a town meeting that meets once or twice a year. That you can have a legislative body that meets once a week or twice a month to decide things that would otherwise need to go to town meeting. The efficiency of a council, either a town form with a city form of government, strong manager, whatever the community decides, it makes things a little more efficient sometimes, particularly when you're in a community that's cresting over 20,000 people. There are challenges with that form of government. We have many charter changes that are going to be before my committee this session and it's interesting taking a look at it and happy to chat offline about what I see as something that works out in a certain community but also needs to fit with a community as well. Whether or not that would be available to access funds really wouldn't change much at the state level for accessing things like the large chunks of funds that are out there, but it might be a little bit easier to go after them because of the form that you have instead of having to go back to a town meeting once or twice a year or go back to a different board. There are benefits of the streamlining, but as far as any type of support really wouldn't change much by changing the form of government.

Mr. Gennette: My other question for either one of you is the state is really pushing with the climate change to reduce waste by 2030 and 2050 and I'm wondering what kind of assistance the state is planning on giving municipalities to try to meet that goal and is there a time to live on that kind of thing?

Mr. Saunders: Waste disposal specifically or overall?

Mr. Gennette: Reduce waste disposal.

Mr. Saunders: The easy answer is in and around town facilities there are obviously steps the town can take in the buildings and property it owns to reduce waste that it generates, recognizing that it is a tiny portion of the overall.

Mr. Gennette: I'm talking about the DPW purchase of recycling bins, large bins, those kinds of things. Those are millions of dollars in projects that these towns need to do to get caught up to speed by 2030.

Mr. Saunders: If there are specifics that Ludlow has, let's see what we can do. This is why you have folks representing specifically on the town's behalf. There are a number of grant programs out there that look for creative solutions to these challenges that all communities are facing. Part of this could be cash assistance with a bulk bin purchase, part of it could be technical support around the efficiency of collection and how to reduce tonnage. There's a lot of different ways that could be approached.

Mr. Gennette: But there's nothing you know of currently, programs and things like that have been talked about.

Mr. Saunders: To buy recycling bins?

Mr. Gennette: Not just recycling bins. Anything having to do with the DPW. There's got to be funds coming down. I don't know if it's through 90 or what.

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Mr. Oliveira: There is actually. The Chapter 90 bill that we both passed were set aside dollars like greening vehicles were more for DPW. So, we set aside a chunk of funds within that Chapter 90 bill so communities can have access to buy more fuel-efficient vehicle or electric vehicles. Our school system through the collaborative is electrifying all their bus fleet right now. I have bills to do that for PVTA right now and provide the funding that communities can assess. So, as we're looking at some of the climate mitigation efforts that have to do regarding things like expensive DPW equipment, other public safety equipment out there, there are grants that we're making more available for that. As far as waste collection, I'd have to check into that.

Mr. Gennette: We have the school committee here, the Chairman and Vice Chairman, if you'd like an opportunity.

Mr. Laing: Sitting here listening to you I'm so grateful you know so much about the problems we're facing and Mr. Oliveira, ever since we were on the school committee together, you've been talking about special education, so you know the problems that we're facing, and I don't think anyone else would be able to bring that to blossom better than you. Most of the things I've learned are from listening to you at meetings. As our population grows and in special education they have more requirements, they cost more, and we're at the point now where we're mandated to provide those services to those students, understandably so, and I'm afraid we're at the point now where we're reducing other staff in other areas or losing electives for students and for our general ed, and I certainly don't want to pit people against each other but I hope there can be something changed. How far away are we from becoming a gateway city.

Mr. Oliveira: You need to be above 40,000 and I don't see us being above 40,000 anytime. There are a lot of smaller cities that are struggling that look like gateway cities and fall just under the threshold from being there because their population doesn't meet that threshold. In fact, Holyoke is now below the threshold to be considered a gateway city and they're looking at tapering that definition because they dropped below that marker right now. Thank you for mentioning special education costs. I will say we do provide; we are number 1 in the country in providing education to our students here in the commonwealth, partly due to the supports we provide to students that might be struggling. You go to other states in the country, yea, their high performers are going to do well in their schools, the big difference are the support services that we provide for students that need that extra boost and that's what makes Massachusetts a great place to raise families. Because we provide opportunities to every student regardless of their background and learning disability, but there's a cost to it. We need to make sure that we recognize and fully fund.

Mrs. Bowler: Just listening to you, he has more questions than I do, with the formula you keep talking about and going back to the table, is that something that is looked at on a yearly basis?

Mr. Oliveira: It's recalculated every year.

Mrs. Bowler: It's not like we had one 7 years ago and now we're using that same formula.

Mr. Oliveira: When ed reform came into place in 1993, it created the funding formula that we operated on from 1993 all the way to 2019. We never revisited that formula during that time period. Obviously, things like special education costs, employee benefit costs, low-income student costs went up. With the formula reworking the foundation budget review commission that started meeting around 2015-2016, took a look at that outdated funding formula and came back to the table to propose something new and it called for about a 7-year implementation and that's what we're halfway through right now. Once that's implemented, that legislation that was passed, the foundation budget review, that reworking formula, said we couldn't wait another 25 years before we crack open that funding formula and start tinkering with the metrics in there. My goal, and our goal, and Aaron who is the son of an educator as well, understands that you can't wait another 25 years to revisit this formula that disadvantages our communities.

Mrs. Bowler: Over the last couple of years being on the school committee, I've noticed a huge change in the demographics of Ludlow. We've seen a huge increase in the homeless population, the pandemic alone has exploded the special education, as Jeff has indicated. We hear all the talk about the low-income housing that's supposed to be going up near Harris Brook. What is that going to bring to our community itself if that does happen. I don't know if there's a timeline on that. All these things together, I really worry, especially since we've cut costs in the school district and we don't have another 3 years of being able to cut teachers or staff, so thank you for what you're doing.

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Mr. Saunders: I think it's an important point that doesn't always get the limelight it deserves, the incremental costs for communities like Ludlow to take on the challenges of addressing homeless students, it's a huge cost. It's a horrible thing to have to say but if you're in a district that has a sizable homeless student population, that hundredth homeless student is incrementally less expensive to care for that the 99th. I'm 3 months into it, but it's part of the conversation already to not only look at these numbers as being strictly linear in terms of its impact to local budgets and its impact to school budgets specifically, but the cost at the front end to standing up the infrastructure to address these challenges is much larger than those operational costs moving forward. It's not lost on us to make that part of the conversation as we move forward and make the process and formula more fair for communities like Ludlow, who are doing their part.

Mr. Gennette: I think we're all set here.

Mr. Oliveira: Let us know throughout the budget process, Marc is always good at keeping in touch with us so thank you.

UNFINISHED BUSINESS

Board to review and discuss draft warrant for the Annual Town Meeting.

Mr. Gennette: We have a preliminary mark up for them Marc.

Mr. Strange: I'll go through each article quickly and if anyone has a question or comment on it, just chime in. Article 1 and 2 are stalwarts. Article 1 is reports to town officers, Article 2 is reports to the boards and committees. Article 3 would amend the CPR training revolving fund to expand the different fees that the Board of Health can charge and deposit into the revolving fund. Article 4 would establish the annual expenditure limits for each revolving fund. One thing of note is that we increased the maximum expenditure limit for CPR training to $25,000 to account for additional fees that we'll be depositing into that account. Article 5 would appropriate up to $5,000 for Celebrate Ludlow. That's the same article that the board and town meeting passed last year. Article 6 is we received a $4,900 request from the Commission on Disability to fund their operations for Fiscal 24, similar to Celebrate Ludlow. Article 7, we put in a request for $25,000 to hire a municipal government expert to support the town's goal of creating a town charter. Any thoughts on that?

Mr. Goncalves: Is that the idea of bypassing the actual charter and doing it the other way where we would send it off to the state?

Mr. Strange: What would happen is, you all would appoint a charter committee. That committee would work with a consultant to create a charter, essentially. That typically takes 12-18 months. Then town meeting has to approve that new charter. Then the charter goes through Jake's committee. Once the state blesses it, it comes back to the town, and we've got a new form of government. Article 8 is a standard article appropriating Chapter 90 funds. You'll see that it says submitted by the Board of Public Works. We asked town counsel because technically the Board of Selectmen is acting as the Board of Public Works, so I just wanted to check to see if the Board of Public Works should remain in all these articles or we can substitute that with Board of Selectmen, that's why they're highlighted. Article 9 is also an article in every year authorizing the Board of Public Works to enter a contract for with the Mass DOT. Article 10 is the capital

improvements article. Article 11 is a separate capital improvements article just for the Westover Golf Course, since they will be funding their capital improvements through their retained earnings.

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2023 JUN 9 P 1:07
TOWN OF LUDLOW

Mr. Goncalves: For anybody listening, this is not a budget item, this doesn't cost the town anything at this point. They're working completely through their own enterprise fund. It's not a money article in any way, shape, form or matter to the town of Ludlow and it doesn't affect our budget.

Mr. Gennette: Does that still get submitted out through capital or no?

Mr. Strange: Yea, capital approved I think 4 items in addition to the cart lease, and we just wanted to make sure that town meeting knew that those capital items were being funded through the golf course's retained earnings and not through the town budget. Article 12 is the $100,000 FinCom reserve fund. Article 13 is $100,000 for the building infrastructure article that we use to repair town buildings. Article 14 is the stabilization fund. Right now, we have a million dollars that would go into the stabilization fund. Article 15 would ask town meeting to approve a 4-year contract for the golf carts.

Mr. Rosenblum: Did you talk to Sean on this one?

Mr. Strange: Yes. Article 16 is the budget article along with the salaries for the elected officials. Article 17 is a reallocation of previously authorized but unspent bond funding. We have about $645,000 that's already been authorized, and we wanted to reappropriate that for the town hall project. Article 18 is the public safety HVAC bond vote. We'll know more about that once we get to speak with David Eisenthal. Article 19 asks town meeting to extend the vet center lease from 3 years to 10 years. Article 20, 21, 22 and 23 were submitted by the Planning Board.

Mr. Goncalves: For anybody listening, these are the mostly the introduction of marijuana into town after the moratorium.

Mr. Strange: The long and short of it is if these articles pass, recreational marijuana would be allowed to be sold in town.

Mr. Gennette: With this, I want to go back and read all this, but would this send at any point in this process would it go to the ballot box?

Mr. Strange: I don't think so.

Mr. Gennette: For me that's a problem, but anyway.

Mr. Strange: Article 25 is a zone change from residence B to business B at 244 Hubbard Street. Article 26 is also a Planning Board submission. This would amend the table of uses for self-storage facilities. They'd be allowed in industrial C. IA, IC, and mill redevelopment. Article 27, also submitted by the Planning Board also related to the self-storage facilities parking requirements. Article 28 is also self-storage facilities also submitted by the Planning Board. Article 29 is a zone change from residence B to industrial A at 0 Russell Street. Article 30 would amend the bylaws for the capital improvement planning committee to remove 1 member of the Board of Public Works and replace that with an additional private citizen.

Mr. Gennette: We have a meeting on the 10th for the capital planning committee, and I think we're going to try to revisit this. We might drop back down to 5.

Mr. Strange: Ok whatever you guys decide we can make the change. Article 31 was submitted by the DPW. There's going to be some land takings involved with the Piney Lane Bridge project. Article 32 requests the appropriation of up to $50,000 to pay for those takings and easements.

Mr. Goncalves: We have two 31's and 32's. Is part of this in a special?

Mr. Strange: No, the 2nd 31 is just a duplicate, so just ignore the 2nd 31, I can get rid of that. Article 32, which would be article 33, that's vote to appropriate money for the West Street Bridge and Cottage Street Bridge. The estimate is $250,000 for West Street and about $100,000 for Cottage Street. We're waiting on one more article, which would reallocate unspent special article funds to pay in part for the town hall construction project. Right now there's $300,000 in capital funding allocated for this project. If we can reallocate the bond funds and the special article funds, we'd be at about 1.1 million. The special is 2 articles. One is just unpaid bills and the 2nd one is police overtime. They're asking for $120,000.

Mr. Goncalves: I'd really like to have James make the motion on the unpaid bills, but he can't. He can actually.

Mr. Gennette: Any other discussion on warrant articles? No. Marc, while we're here let's drop right down to the West Street and Cottage Bridge. Board to discuss and possibly vote on funding options for West Street and Cottage Ave Bridge repairs. That was just brought up so we can make that vote right now. Marc, if you wouldn't mind reiterating the cost for that project.

Mr. Strange: The West Street project is estimated to be $500,000, which we would split with the City of Springfield then the Cottage Street is going to be about $100,000 each and we're splitting that with the Town of Wilbraham. We're planning on using free cash to pay for those projects.

Mr. Gennette: Can I get a motion to pull the funds necessary for West Street and Cottage Street Avenue bridge repairs?

Mr. Goncalves: Do we know for sure that's how it's going to come in?

Mr. Strange: Make the motion not to exceed because right now the original estimate for West Street was $300,000 but we just…Chris Cignoli suggested it was going to be about $500,000. If we vote not to exceed 250…

Mr. Gennette: That was just West Street.

Mr. Goncalves: And $100,000 for cottage.

Mr. Gennette: So, it's got to be less than 350?

Mr. Strange: Yea.

Mr. Silva: I think we should do them separate, one and two, do we need to actually vote on this? If we vote not to exceed…

Mr. Strange: The timing is difficult. Construction is going out to bid in May and construction is going to be over the summer, so we're not going to have a meeting before them, so it really needs to be voted on at town meeting on May 8.

Mr. Silva: I'm just worried that it comes out to 300 and we can't do anything.

Mr. Strange: We'd have to go to October town meeting and ask for the difference.

Motion made by Mr. Silva to vote to fund for the West Street Bridge not to exceed $250,000. **Mr. DeBarge second. All in favor. Motion passed 5-0.**

Motion made by Mr. Silva to approve the funding for the Cottage Street Bridge not to exceed $100,000. **Mr. DeBarge second. All in favor. Motion passed 5-0.**

Motion made by Mr. Silva to table the insertion of the articles at this time. **Mr. DeBarge second. All in favor. Motion passed 5-0.**

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Board to vote on proposed FY24 Capital Improvement Projects (tabled from 3/21).

Mr. Gennette: It was tabled because of the golf cart lease that was listed at 3 years. It was questioned by Mr. Rosenblum. Where are we at Mr. Rosenblum?

Mr. Rosenblum: In talking with some of the Golf Commissioners, when they first saw the meeting they said that we shot it down. It wasn't that we shot it down, we wanted to look farther into why a 3-year lease. The problem is we can't approve anything 4 years or more unless we go to town meeting. If we entered into a 3-year lease at $88,000, chances are the balloon payment we're paying off at the end of the lease is going to be too expensive for the town, which then means the next lease is over $90,000 because the price is only going to go up or stay the same. In talking with them, they discussed this before is going into a 4- or 5-year lease, which needs approval from town meeting and by going into a 4-year lease they drop down their payment. It's probably going to be in the 70's instead, I also mentioned looking into if you do the 4-year lease, what's the buyout on a 4 year lease and can finish the lease, keep the cart for 2-3 years and then purchase a maintenance plan. All these things can save them money down the road and put more money into their retained earnings and enterprise fund. I think going to that extra year saves them money. It's a no brainer. Instead of going 88 then 92 in 3-year leases. A lot of courses do 5-year leases and have a very low buyout on the carts, keep them for a few years and do the maintenance package or maintain them themselves. In the long run, it's going to save them on their enterprise fund. That's the reason I questioned it. Knowing how some cart leases work. I asked a lot of other people in the industry and they're saying yea, why wouldn't you go 4 or 5 years and then keep a maintenance program. A lot of these carts will go for 6-7 years, not the lease we had before this, or the fleet we had before this. We had a cart from 2004. We were looking at a 17-year-old cart and that's unacceptable. A lease 7 years or so you can maintain that fleet to a point where there's still some equity in the carts when you trade them back in.

Mr. Gennette: For the community that's listening, that's why it's in the article that we're removing it. Right now as far as the capital improvement project we reviewed, we need a motion to approve the ones. The cart lease was the only thing that was hanging us up before, so unless there's any other discussion can I get a motion to approve the capital improvement projects.

Motion made by Mr. Rosenblum to approve the capital improvement projects that were put before us excluding the cart lease, which has now gone into its own article. **Mr. Silva second. All in favor. Motion passed 5-0.**

Board to discuss and possibly vote on FY24 Budget Recommendations.

Mr. Strange: Paulina wanted to discuss. We've got 2 new positions. One is the Board of Health director, and one is the firefighter/paramedic. As I had mentioned before, both of those are currently contemplated in that $517,000 figure that you guys have. We didn't know whether there was going to be a discussion tonight or on the 18th about whether to keep those positions in the budget. We wanted to invite Paulina here to be available to discuss.

Ms. Matusik: I'm here for questions. What your questions are, concerns.

Mr. Goncalves: I thought we already talked about creating the Directors position but eliminating the public health coordinator position. Did something change?

Ms. Matusik: I thought we weren't eliminating, just unfunding.

Mr. Goncalves: I want to eliminate it. After the last meeting after we spoke here and listening to the board and the way they were acting, I feel more comfortable eliminating the position.

Mr. DeBarge: Marc, you said the budget numbers we had for the director and firefighter, is that with keeping that position? Because we did agree to remove that position.

Mr. Strange: That's with unfunding that.

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2023 JUN -7 P 4:07
TOWN OF LUDLOW

Mr. DeBarge: Right.

Mr. Goncalves: How much money do we have in nursing?

Mr. Strange: That's the other thing, I don't know if you guys want to discuss this. That was $50,000 for that 2nd full time nurse and it seems kind of in between. I don't know if $50,000 is enough to entice a 2nd nurse to work for the town. If it is, then I would recommend keeping it in there. If not, it seems like keeping it in there for I don't know what.

Mr. DeBarge: If it was up to me, I'd raise that nurse's salary so that we could attract another nurse.

Ms. Matusik: I guess my question for you guys is what are your expectations from a nurse? Why hire another one?

Mr. Goncalves: The public health coordinator position has been how long?

Ms. Matusik: I did it for one year.

Mr. Goncalves: I never got a piece of mail at home or a direct notice. Neither have my parents, and I checked with the 17 people at my office, and nobody has ever gotten a notice. This board may have gotten 1 or 2 items when somebody from the Board of Health didn't come in to see us and to turn around and have an additional person doing whatever it is that you didn't do in the past and for some reason we need a supervisor for that position. That's a teacher, that's a firefighter.

Ms. Matusik: It's not a supervisor for that position, it's a supervisor for a department.

Mr. Goncalves: I understand, but that department is running fine. We never had one in the past. We never had the public health coordinator in the past. We had nurses and an inspector and Tim's been around for a million years. He does just fine. I don't think he needs the supervision. Angela is a nurse. I don't know how anybody in there is going to be able to supervise her. She's a nurse. She's got more education from that standpoint than anybody else. I get it. I think we need that department head because Marc needs somebody that he can call down there and get the answer from one person and not Angela, Tim, and somebody else. From the standpoint of the public information thing, I'm really confused on that one. I just think we got other places right now. We got a tight budget.

Ms. Matusik: I just asked you what you expected from a nurse, but you just told me basically you don't need me.

Mr. Goncalves: No, from another nurse? I gotta believe that we had 4 nurses once upon a time and either back then nobody was working or whatever it is the 4 of them did now, we've got 1 and something's not getting done.

Mr. DeBarge: They did house visits.

Ms. Matusik: I guess I'm still not understanding what you want from a nurse.

Mr. Goncalves: I think Angela did 800-900 vaccines.

Ms. Matusik: Vaccines are coordinated. We only have flu vaccines and TB. If you want to hire another nurse where we have 3 pharmacies in town, Big Y, CVS & Walgreens, which we coordinate together. We work together. We're looking to focus our areas in other avenues, which is why we no longer have a department full of nurses. You have other services. You now have the senior center that offers what our nurses used to offer.

Mr. Goncalves: I spoke to Jodi and she's pretty excited to have Angela there as often as she can.

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2023 JUN -7 P 4:07
TOWN OF LUDLOW

Ms. Matusik: She's there once a week.

Mr. Goncalves: She'd like to have more of her.

Ms. Matusik: There's not enough room. Are we hiring a nurse for the senior center then? Another nurse to be at the senior center? Is that something we're looking at?

Mr. Goncalves: Personally, I would be into that.

Ms. Matusik: I'm not knocking down nurses, I'm not saying we don't need a nurse. I guess my question is what are you looking for out of a nurse? We're looking to grow for the department the needs of the community not just…

Mr. Goncalves: What needs?

Ms. Matusik: We do tile 5's, septic's, plan reviews, complaints, we condemn, disease control, substance use, mental health, blood pressure clinics. I'm getting emotional.

Mr. Goncalves: I can tell you with disease control and I happened to be a selectman when Covid hit, everybody ran for the hills except one person. That was a wash.

Ms. Matusik: You're looking at the past where we're trying to focus on the future. There's been so much change in the department because there needed to be so much change. We used to contract out, we can now bring all these services in. Instead of spending money on out of towners, we're bringing money into the town.

Mr. Goncalves: Which ones are we contracting?

Ms. Matusik: We used to contract out for inspections and title 5 reviews. We no longer do that. When we had nursing, they could only focus on home visits, blood pressure clinics. I don't know what else they did. I didn't work at the department then. All we had were nurses and we contracted out for inspections and title 5's. We didn't even deal with complaints. Tim is doing inspections and complaints and when he's not here, I do those.

Mr. Goncalves: How about the title 5 stuff?

Ms. Matusik: He's in the training right now but we contract out for those?

Mr. Goncalves: Is that going to create another position?

Ms. Matusik: No.

Mr. Goncalves: When Tim gets licensed, he's going to be able to do all of that? So, we're not going to have to hire another person there?

Ms. Matusik: No.

Mr. Goncalves: I'm good. You know I've been stuck on this one for a while. I know that 4-5 years ago we had 4 nurses. We didn't have a public information person; we didn't have a director and we had Tim. Now we've got Tim, 1 nurse and we've had a public information person and now we're going in the other direction and I'm not sure if that's what we need the nursing department for, or the Board of Health for. I have a place in Monson. The nurse there, the board of health there is open twice a week for 4 hours a day. I haven't read anything in any newspapers that they're having a hard time with that out there or anybody is fighting for more.

Ms. Matusik: I can't speak for other towns.

Mr. Gennette: I think we're in a debate here. From what my perspective here is the Board of Health wants to have a robust health department and those are the items that you're thinking about and you're trying to build that up and I guess our concern is that we don't want to lose the nursing department. We don't want to sacrifice the nursing department to build up that health department. I think these are things we need to grow in over time, and we should bring them all up. We all want to have a good, healthy, robust health department. It's an important department. For me with the nurses I don't want to sacrifice one for the other. I want to give you the director position because you guys want the director position. That's an important position to you guys, but I don't want to lose a nurse to get it. For me, that's where it is. Whatever you decide you want to do in your department is up to you. We don't get to decide that. However, you see that working out is up to you.

Mr. DeBarge: I think I can answer a little bit of your question, Paulina with what I would expect from a nursing core working in the town in the capacity that I have. I'm at the senior center a lot. We're opening a vet center. I know when we had nurses before they did, most important than anything else, were their home visits. I wish we could get back to that. Here's one of the reasons why. One of the things we're going in the vet center, one of the offices is going to have a computer so that our veterans can come in and do telehealth because maybe they can't get to Leeds or maybe they can't get to Connecticut. For the non-veterans, for seniors, for anyone else, I'll give you an example. I had to change my annual physical. When I called my primary care and told them I had to change it she said we're a year and a half out. So, I said I can't change it so it's a year and a half out. My other point is with our technology growing as fast as it is and our seniors growing as much as they are, I'm afraid that we're going to lose that hands on…and maybe we are in the future, not a nurse knocking on your door and checking on you because you live alone and we have you in a rolodex as a senior that needs to be checked on. Foot care and regular hygiene and putting classes on at the senior center, classes on at the vet center for veterans that have a tough time taking care of themselves. That's what I see because that's what we used to do for the policemen in town and I would like to get back to that. Personally, I don't think we pay the nurses enough to be able to get back to that but let me digress for a second. When we had the previous health agent in here the dynamic of the Board of Health completely changed. Her vision of the Board of Health was not our vision. We answer to the people that live here and we want to continue services. The previous health agent wanted to basically get rid of all the nurses, slim the department down and make it more manageable for that person. I didn't agree with that organization. I don't agree with it now. I think a department needs to have a department head. I think the Board of Health needs to have more staff. In the situation we're in right now financially, and I'm not using the finances as an excuse, I think we need to grow each department as we can. Department of Public Works, all of that needs growth. Specifically for your department, you guys need a director to be able to supervise, which I'm assuming is what you're doing now. Again, it's timing but it's also basis of need for me.

Mr. Gennette: I just have 1 question. If we've already unfunded the Public Coordinator position, and we've already approved the director, what else are we looking to do here? Other than eliminate the position. You obviously value that position, but you didn't want to fund it.

Ms. Matusik: I don't think we should eliminate because I didn't hear anybody here state, I just heard I come from you guys about what you wanted for nursing, but I didn't hear you guys reach out to the community.

Mr. DeBarge: I talk to the senior center all the time.

Ms. Matusik: You guys are talking about 20% of Ludlow's population.

Mr. Goncalves: We're talking about 6,000 visits a month going in there.

Mr. DeBarge: 43% of our population is over 50. It's a big part of what we do here.

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Ms. Matusik: Of course, I'm not saying it isn't but I'm saying I don't think anything should be eliminated, I'm not saying you have to refund a position, but I don't think anything should be eliminated because you're only focusing on 20% instead of focusing on 100%.

Mr. Gennette: Do you think that public coordinator is going to fill a slot in the future?

Ms. Matusik: I don't know. I'm not saying it is and I'm not saying it isn't, but we could always revise the position. It's just harder for me to come and ask you for a brand-new position and fund a brand-new position, where taking that old position we could rebuild it, change it. I don't know if we need that position. I'm not saying we do I'm not saying we don't I'm just saying don't eliminate it because it's so much harder to come to you guys with a brand-new position and then ask for funding.

Mr. Goncalves: I listened to a meeting where I'm really confused how your board, not your board, the Board of Health, even would say that on camera. I asked my board members to watch it and see if they heard what I heard, and you were sitting there. I don't trust you guys right now, that if I leave that position there there's not going to be a way that somebody is going to try to fund it and back door the position.

Ms. Matusik: You guys still have to fund the position. There's no way that a position can be funded without coming here. If they leave that position. I'm not trying to be sneaky, but I also can't control the board.

Mr. Goncalves: It wasn't you.

Mr. Gennette: What we see with almost all the boards is they come in here and they say we need this position and it's going to cost us this much and we're like where are you going to get the money from. We have these few part time positions and this position, and we can take the money from that, and we can put it in there. If you've already got the position and already got the funds, we just transfer that money here and we can fund that position and we go alright well there's no weight on the town, no weight on the budget and the next year the same department comes in and says we just want to fund these part time positions that are over here. It's kind of a work around and I think we're sensitive to that. That's the resistance you're running into.

Mr. DeBarge: For the record, I'm not looking to get rid of that position, I'm just for not funding it now to fund a director. I just said that I believe the Board of Health needs to be built up a little bit more, it's just not our timing financially. I'm not looking to remove that position. If you guys are that's fine.

Mr. Goncalves: Didn't we already vote to do that?

Mr. DeBarge: No.

Mr. Rosenblum: Let's get the process straight as in the position goes unfunded, not eliminated. They want to fund the position in a year or 2. I've talked to your board members, and I said don't come to us asking for the director and this position within this fiscal. I said you're not going to get it; we need to spread it out. We unfund it, Paulina comes to us, the board comes to us and says we'd like to fund it next year or the year after. Who says yes or no?

Mr. Strange: You guys do.

Mr. DeBarge: We do.

Mr. Rosenblum: That's what I'm saying. The point if we eliminate it again, which you're right, we have to go through the process in building the position again. If the position is there and you unfund it, and I don't mean to be blunt about this, we can sit there and go no, no, no. If things have changed in 2 years or whatever, that's not to say 5 years down the road none of us are here and the

thought process is different. I don't think we need to eliminate it if there's checks and balances to unfund it.

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Mr. Goncalves: Your checks and balances are going to be an issue. I'm going to tell you now. There's going to be ways if there's money in that budget to shift stuff over if it's not used somewhere else. It's this *snaps* to create the position and this *snaps* to put it back on and I don't think it's that big of a deal to get rid of that position and when we're ready to put it back we don't have to worry about anything else going on there, but I'm one of 5 people.

Mr. DeBarge: The idea is that we keep the position but not unfund it, there are some that believe that the board will be able to move salary money into that position and hire a person there. Is that what you're thinking they can do?

Mr. Goncalves: It's what I kind of heard at their meeting.

Mr. DeBarge: I just wanted to make sure. I'm not disagreeing.

Mr. Goncalves: The idea was at that meeting I had said fine but we eliminate that position, and you heard it like I did, the next meeting they were sitting there, and they were like as long as we don't get them to eliminate the position then there's always that. You guys all watched the meeting.

Mr. Rosenblum: The comment was no we can do what we want on it. It was saying we can move the money and do what we want with it and I've had the conversations. I go no you still have to come before this board and HR, and it has to be approved. If that's the mentality at the board level that's wrong. That speaks volumes of a board that we had before. We can do what we want, and we don't need to talk to you, which they could because we didn't have any jurisdiction. The aspect if that's the thought process then maybe someone needs to go back and look at the job description and look at what the board is supposed to do. The board doesn't have the ability to take a funded position and say ok we're funding it we got the money, see ya.

Mr. Goncalves: You've got a school budget with MUNIS that fly millions around from line items, positions, and more positions, you're the one that put out the substitute teachers and wanted to know why there was $300,000 in a budget that only had 120 and how did the money get there…

Mr. Rosenblum: It got approved. I don't want to go into that one because school budgets move money like its checkers, and we don't see it. That budget we don't know what goes on and we don't see it.

Mr. DeBarge: Why are we talking about a multi-million-dollar budge vs the Board of Health?

Mr. Goncalves: I understand, but my point is there's the ability to move money within a budget from item to item.

Mr. DeBarge: If you go by numbers, the salary of the position doesn't equal what's left in the account for the nurses. In this circumstance, you can't borrow from Peter to pay Paul because the salaries are so uneven. Paulina, what do you envision the Board of Health being, position wise? Starting from director down.

Ms. Matusik: Ultimately, what we have now with a director, admin, health inspector, nurse and some sort of, doesn't have to be a public health coordinator, could be a social worker. I'm doing a department assessment right now, from what I'm finding out, what we have right now including the director is what we need currently. That doesn't mean that can change, that doesn't mean that's my final statement, that doesn't mean it comes from me, it's just what I'm going to present on Thursday to the board and from there. I hope they would make a decision, but you eliminate positions and it brings you back to square A.

Mr. Goncalves: If the position is not going to be funded, what difference does it make?

Ms. Matusik: My other concern is leaving the nursing position, which is fine if that's what you guys want to do but the pay, nurses are making over $100,000 right now plus a sign on bonus, plus we have our shared services so other towns are going to be posting for nurses for shared services so that leaves us to more competition. I don't know what the state's able to offer them compared to our small budget. These are things that I'm thinking about where we may be able to hire maybe a medical assistant and not an RN and they can still give injections and assist with flu clinics, but we may not need that RN title. You guys are calling it a nurse, but we may just need a medical assistant.

Mr. Goncalves: We'd have to change the job description on that one.

Ms. Matusik: That's why I'm saying don't eliminate any positions, where the public health coordinator can still provide education, outreach services, community, and then just throw in vaccinations and help assist with vaccination clinics.

Mr. Goncalves: What did you say before that?

Ms. Matusik: Vaccines?

Mr. Goncalves: No, before that. Outreach services. Isn't that what you were saying the other position was?

Ms. Matusik: I'm saying we would add to that coordinator position, but we can change that title and add instead of a requirement of a masters or bachelor's it would be a medical assistant. That's still something we would come to you guys to change a position. It wouldn't have to be called a nurse. I'm just trying. I know you're nervous but…

Motion made by Mr. Goncalves to eliminate upon approval…

Mr. Gennette: Mr. Silva, please go ahead.

Mr. Silva: First of all, I just want to say, I'm not hiding anything. I'm not going to say anything else with that. I'm not hiding anything. Was your board unanimous?

Ms. Matusik: On the director position?

Mr. Silva: Was your board unanimous on the vote to implement this director position?

Ms. Matusik: Meaning in favor? I'm confused, which position are we talking?

Mr. Silva: Your board voted to put in this request for public director.

Ms. Matusik: Public Health Director, right.

Mr. Silva: Was it unanimous?

Ms. Matusik: Yes, they were all in favor.

Mr. Silva: For the director?

Mr. Rosenblum: For the director position, yes, this was a public health coordinator which is the one we're discussing.

Mr. Silva: Secondly, how many people in your office?

Ms. Matusik: Currently there are me, Tim, Angela, and Anita, so 4.

Mr. Silva: Obviously your board members.

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Ms. Matusik: Yes.

Mr. Silva: I get it from 3 that it's not necessary. I'm not hiding anything. I get it from 3 that it's not necessary to be doing this.

Ms. Matusik: To be doing the director position, the coordinator position?

Mr. Silva: To add another position. Essentially that's what this is. Come on. You have one that's not funded now, yes. There's a position there, now we're adding another one essentially. Yes, it might not be funded but we're adding a position. Any way you look at it we're adding a position. I know you're emotional and quite honestly, I'm perplexed why. Do you think that by doing that your position personally is going to be eliminated?

Ms. Matusik: I'm emotional because when I get angry, I get upset. I'm emotional because I do this job but none of you guys do.

Mr. Silva: I agree.

Ms. Matusik: It makes me emotional because I've been doing this and it's a lot.

Mr. Goncalves: We get it that it's important to you and it's an important job but we're stuck in the middle because we have all these constituents that expect us to make decisions for them and 5 or 6,000 on a monthly basis that have told us, and I don't know about the rest of them, and I know that there's 2,000 kids in school that have access for 4 nurses and public information that you can get to them quickly or somebody in there can get to them quickly but there's a void there.

Mr. Silva: Hopefully by putting in this position hopefully you will be able to step forward and do this position. I don't know if you have credentials or if there's an issue with that, and you'll be able to do that position. Honestly, I come from way back with Mr. Goncalves where we had 4 nurses. Suddenly we don't need them anymore and I don't know why. I have a nurse that goes to my mother in law's. Wonderful. I'm a person that loves services. And the services we used to provide, we've eliminated a lot of stuff, have we not?

Ms. Matusik: That was before my time.

Mr. Silva: Really, they do that at the board of health? I was shocked at some of the things we used to do. Do we need to have them done? Maybe, maybe not. I can't say because like you said, we're not there. Personally, I'm in that fact that we do need one person to oversee the department, take control of the department and manage it. I'd like 2 nurses at least. I would want 3 but I'm not going to go there. That's where I am.

Mr. Gennette: Before we make a motion, I just want to say the board of health was one of the few departments that actually got a position. You guys requested a director. We know you guys need a director down there, we get it. And that's why it was approved. There's give and take here. I think that's all we're looking at.

Ms. Matusik: I appreciate it and appreciate you guys doing this, I'm just trying to play devil's advocate for the department as well. And I have a board to answer to.

Mr. Gennette: It's a tough spot, middle management.

Mr. Silva: The other question I have, and I'm a stickler for this, why isn't a board member in here with you?

Ms. Matusik: It was advised they not be present.

Mr. Goncalves: By who?

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2023 JUN -7 P 4:07
TOWN OF LUDLOW

Mr. Gennette: She can't really say.

Mr. Goncalves: I just want to make sure it wasn't one of us.

Mr. Silva: For me personally, I don't like boards coming in here and they're sending their subordinate, maybe you're not a subordinate, I don't know, and they don't show up. Somebody should be here with you quite honestly. That's my feeling. It has nothing to do with the position by the way.

Mr. Strange: What would a competitive salary be for a 2nd nurse? Can we all agree that 50 is not?

Mr. Gennette: It depends. Obviously not for a RN. But she's talking about a medical assistant. So, what's the wages for a medical assistant?

Mr. Strange: I don't know. We have a nurse right now; we don't have a medical assistant.

Mr. Silva: In the job description, does it have the RN in there? Are we sending out these advertisements to get somebody that's got their licenses or whatever. Have we tried to get, like she said, maybe an assistant that doesn't have such credentials?

Mr. Rosenblum: I asked this question before. Is having a combined position that can do nursing, help out with it, but also can do what a public health coordinator would do.

Mr. Goncalves: That's where I'm having a problem.

Mr. Rosenblum: That's what I'm saying. I was told the amount of money for that position if it's a registered nurse or medical assistant it might not be as much. The funding might be less. I'm not going to profess to know what the funding is. I have a daughter in nursing, and I know what she's going to make when she gets out at the minimum, and it's nowhere near what we're paying. Do you go 70 and have someone that can do what Angela does and help out with that stuff and add to that service and then also do what you were doing previously in the position of public health coordinator?

Mr. Strange: From my perspective, considering how tight the budget is, it's hard for me to see $50,000 just sit there for no purpose. If we're not going to be competitive at a $50,000 salary for a nurse, it seems wasteful to me to keep it in there. Or, if we want to actively solicit nursing applications, we should increase it. It seems we're nowhere with that.

Mr. Gennette: If we had to move the money, where would we move it?

Mr. Strange: I wouldn't move it anywhere; I would just cut it. You could raise Angela's salary to make it competitive so that salary once Angela's time is done is competitive.

Mr. Gennette: I've already given away one more position than I want this year with the way we're looking in salaries. I don't know how you guys feel, but I don't want to increase anything. We already handed out money for the director's position. Maybe next year we can talk about it again but…

Mr. Strange: You can just cut it; you can increase Angela's salary to make it competitive.

Ms. Matusik: Or we can leave it because I have to request another however much, plus that $50,000 I just lost. You're already eliminating a position, giving me a position.

Mr. Strange: It's been in there all year, and nobody's touched it.

Ms. Matusik: Because we don't know what we want to do with it.

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TOWN OF LUDLOW

Mr. Goncalves: You don't get that right though.

Ms. Matusik: I can't decide that.

Mr. Goncalves: It's a nurse's position. That's my problem. If that money stays, there it's not going to be for a nurse. Your board said it on tv, anybody can watch it. This is where I'm having an issue.

Mr. DeBarge: In the end something is going to need to be done because $50,000 is not sustainable for a nurse. I've been saying that for quite a long time. Marc said it. It's just not sustainable. I think the idea of, and I don't have a problem taking a little more time with this because I'd actually like to hear an option of having an LPN or medical qualified person that maybe is in the career change. They're retiring. We can bump the salary up; we can do something. I don't want to lose that either.

Mr. Gennette: We need a motion.

Mr. DeBarge: Hang on a second. We have not voted to approve the directors position? We have not voted to unfund the public health coordinator?

Mr. Rosenblum: With the current budget numbers you gave us that's including the director and the fire?

Mr. Strange: Yes.

Mr. Rosenblum: 517 at 3% for the schools?

Mr. DeBarge: If the vote goes to fund a director position while unfunding the coordinator position, then what tomorrow morning? We begin the process of advertising for a director? Does the board appoint?

Mr. Strange: We would post it, Paulina would apply for it. Other people might apply for it. The board of health would do interviews and they'd pick a director.

Mr. DeBarge: They'd do the same thing interim?

Mr. Strange: Sure.

Mr. Goncalves: Did you guys come up with a description?

Mr. Strange: She's actually the interim director right now.

Ms. Matusik: I thought I got emailed the director position.

Mr. Strange: You guys approved the job description.

Mr. Goncalves: So, it's just the additional money, right?

Mr. Strange: In terms of the nursing positon?

Mr. Goncalves: No, the difference between the public coordinator and the director.

Mr. Strange: It was $5,000.

Motion made by Mr. DeBarge to approve the new director position for the board of health and at the same time, to unfund while keeping the position.

Mr. Rosenblum: I'd make them separate.

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2023 JUN -7 P 4:07
TOWN OF LUDLOW

Motion made by Mr. DeBarge to approve the Board of Health director position. **Mr. Rosenblum second. All in favor. Motion passed 5-0.**

Motion made by Mr. DeBarge

Mr. Strange: I don't think you need to make it because we're just unfunding it. Once you vote for the budget, you're just voting to unfund it because that's part of the budget.

Mr. Gennette: Do you have anything else?

Mr. Goncalves: My position is clear. You guys are going to own this one.

Mr. Gennette: Moving on, let's finish this up. Oh, Chief Pease is here.

Mr. DeBarge: You're not on my calendar.

Mr. Strange: As we've discussed, we added in the firefighter/paramedic to the most recent version of the budget and Ryan showed up to make sure if you had any questions, he could answer them.

Chief Pease: We just had a thing going on at the fire station, so I came here right after, and I was kind of watching on my way. Some of the questions you had about Paulina's position. I'm not here to advocate for a specific position, but I'm here to say that way back before Covid hit we had a town nurse who was very proactive with emergency management and very proactive with helping me and police and fire do what we need to do. I sent you guys an email through Marc a while ago. I would just say I caution you that we need somebody to assist in that very important position. Since Paulina has stepped into that board, she's been a huge advocate and a very competent person in performing roles I illustrated in that email. During the interim we had other people filling other positions and I'm going to tell you that it wasn't a comfortable feeling for me because we didn't have competent people in that position. Whether it's a nurse or a director or somebody in that department, somebody has to be able to fulfil that role. She's done a great job so far with that and been very proactive with it. Back in 2011 when we had to open an emergency shelter, we have to be prepared for, Francine Rusiecki was down there. She was a nurse, and she was very competent in operating that shelter because we can't do it. I don't have staff to do it. When those types of emergencies hit, we're all about town responding to emergencies and there's nobody left for the towns people. One way or the other it's up to you guys to decide but somebody needs to be there to fulfil that role. If you have somebody that can fulfil a dual role, I guess it's more bang for your buck. Somebody needs to do it. We need to support that role in one respect or another. Even setting up for an emergency dispensing site, which for a nurse is part of the dispensation and part of running it. Although you mentioned that nurse's salaries can be fairly competitive at this point in time. I don't have the answer for you exactly, I just want you to know somebody needs to be in that department and somebody needs to cognizant of the fact that they need to be willing to run it, able to run it and it's got to get done one way or another. You did mention we did have 3 nurses at one time and a larger department down there.

Mr. Goncalves: We didn't have a department head or anything else?

Chief Pease: And you guys hear from all the constituents what they want for services; however, I want to say it's a very important role that we need and you all witnessed during Covid we did not have a very proactive response, especially when that one person we had who was a rock around here, and I can say that, left because of reasons I won't say.

Mr. Goncalves: The person that didn't show up during Covid that was supposed to.

Chief Pease: Again, I'm not here to provide any more clarity to your decisions, I'm just here to let you know that's what the town needs. That sort of support.

Mr. Gennette: Thank you. Is that it?

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Mr. Strange: While I'm here.

Chief Pease: I'm not going to hide it. I'm here answer any questions you may have because I know we went around on this before. I showed you the numbers that the ambulance has generated in the last 7 years or so. I think you guys all had that number. It was an increase of $263,000 the last fiscal year. I'm struggling to keep people there. I'm not asking for another supervisor or anything like that. I'm asking for another boot on the ground responding to these calls and we can't rely on people coming from home as much as anything else anymore. I can't run it like a part time department and we're busier than we ever have been. When you're looking at 120% increase call volume over 20 years that's a substantial increase. If I don't have guys to send out on calls and provide fire coverage, unfortunately a town resident isn't going to see an ambulance from Ludlow responding. We cannot count on mutual aid as much as we used to because our sister cities and towns are very strapped for personnel and their increased demand for service is just as much as ours is.

Mr. Gennette: How many vacant positions do you have now?

Chief Pease: Zero and we are very lucky.

Mr. Rosenblum: This position here is something that he has someone that can come in and actually fit into his budget for the remainder of this year. At the same time, we're going to be able to run 3 ambulances pretty much full time, close to it.

Chief Pease: Pretty easily. It takes 6 guys if all 3 ambulances go out, and it happens more than you probably know. Unfortunately, you were on the back end of that one time.

Mr. Goncalves: On a Sunday morning in Wilbraham, 3 ambulances went out.

Mr. Rosenblum: This position is going to generate the revenue to pay for this position.

Mr. Goncalves: Hopefully it's going to save lives too.

Mr. Rosenblum: We go back to the point of saying we're not funding positions. We just had the discussion we just had and we're trying to be leaner. We cut $800,000, but this position in particular adds to the services we have right now, but also is going to generate the revenue to pay for itself. That's why I would advocate for this position because we've talked. We went to the Chief's breakfast together. The Chief believes he could fund it, he could start next Monday or whenever and he would be able to most likely fund it for the remainder of this budget.

Motion made by Mr. Goncalves to approve the firefighter/EMT position. **Mr. DeBarge second for discussion.**

Mr. DeBarge: All I want to say for the 6 of you watching is it's our responsibility as the budget overseers to take advantage of situations that can help our community out. This is an advantage we can take because this person is already trained and can go out on the street right away. It's a no brainer. I am 100% in favor of this. I can defend this all day long to anyone who watches our numbers for that simple fact. This is what we have to take advantage of. We can get this person without training, without time and get them in there. It's a department that makes money. It's hard to argue with that. I'm in favor of it.

Mr. Silva: No argument, just a question. Marc, you sent out and email that we have 11 firefighters to interview.

Chief Pease: That's for lieutenants.

Mr. Silva: It's part of the position, but I'm just wondering, 11 for how many?

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TOWN OF LUDLOW

Chief Pease: You guys approved this last year. That was for 4 lieutenants, which is a mid-level supervisory position who will also be on the ambulance responding. If we respond to a fire and I'm lucky enough to see people on duty, they're working in a very dangerous environment. The supervision ratio cannot be 1 to 7. There's no way one supervisor can keep track of 7 during an active fire scene. We added the level of lieutenant. The 11 candidates we had go for that position are all internal Ludlow firefighters that are seeking promotion. Four. One for each shift.

Mr. DeBarge: Four plus one so you must have ties.

Chief Pease: And they weren't new positions, they were just new supervisors to the department. We didn't add 4 firefighters to the department.

Mr. Silva: That was part of my question. I saw 11 candidates and said do we have a committee that somewhat helps out to make our decisions better? And only have 3 top candidates. I like 3 top candidates for 1 position. I think we can get a qualified person out of the top 3. Now that we have 4, that makes it a little easier.

Chief Pease: We have 4 positions. What I planned on doing in house is doing an interview process to bring some recommendations to you. You are the appointing authority of course, but hopefully I can make your job a little bit easier at that point.

Mr. DeBarge: This is over 2 nights. They get 10 minutes each.

Chief Pease: Knowing full well we plan on spending a whole day interviewing them and coming to you guys with recommendations. I know your time is valuable and that's a significant amount of time to give up for that.

Mr. Silva: To me it's not even time. When you get a slew of candidates, you get confused. This one is great at this point; this one is great at this. I, at least, get confused. When it's 3 it's a lot easier.

Chief Pease: So, getting back to this new position, this particular prospect is a firefighter in a community out east, he's marrying a Ludlow girl. He's got residency in Ludlow right now. His name just appeared on the civil service list. He is at the top of our list at the paramedic level right now and I'm going to tell you that he is a very hot commodity throughout Western Mass to any civil service department. There are vacancies almost everywhere else right now and he can punch his ticket in any other town; however, he wants to work in the town that he lives in. I would like to see him work here. We're not sending him to 10 weeks to the fire academy. I'm not sending him to paramedic training. He can basically walk in with some in-service training.

Mr. Gennette: I have one question, and maybe I'm missing something. If we're moving 4 positions into a lieutenant position, is that going to vacate 4 paramedics.

Chief Pease: No, like I told you before, they are going to be responding paramedics also. I am not adding.

Mr. Gennette: So, we're just changing their titles.

Chief Pease: We're changing their titles, which does add a little bit of cost to it, which I described to you guys last year.

Mr. Gennette: I just didn't want to…

Chief Pease: Now we gotta fill another 4 firefighters. In full transparency, that's not what's going on; however, when I did come to you 2 years ago, I was looking for 4 firefighter positions to be added, one to each crew. The addition of this next firefighter will bring 2 crews up to 9 and 2 crews will still be at 8. My end goal, not pull any punches here, would be to get every crew eventually up to the same level. However, I understand with budget constraints…I'm here to do whatever we

can to move forward here. I did show you all the staffing studies that were done and we are understaffed when it comes to surrounding departments and the number of responders I have in my department.

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TOWN OF LUDLOW

Mr. Gennette: We have a motion and a second.

All in favor. Motion passed 5-0.

NEW BUSINESS

Board to approve and Chairman to sign the WestMass ElderCare FY24 Contract – Non-Federal Match for the Town of Ludlow.

Motion made by Mr. Goncalves to approve the contract for WestMass ElderCare FY24 and that we authorize the Chairman to sign on behalf of the town. **Mr. Rosenblum second. All in favor. Motion passed 5-0.**

Board to discuss Selectmen liaison positons.

Motion made by Mr. Goncalves to table.

Mr. Gennette: Really, I worked hard on that.

Mr. Goncalves: You already did it?

Mr. Gennette: It's reorganized.

Mr. Goncalves: We didn't get a chance to look at it.

Mr. DeBarge: I'll say this about the liaison positions. Normally we talk about it quite a bit. I actually like the set up. I'm perfectly comfortable with it.

Mr. Gennette: I went out of my way to try to make sure that it kind of matched everybody.

Mr. Silva: I vote that Mr. DeBarge's stays where it is and we deal with ours next week.

Mr. Rosenblum: You got the parking ticket agent.

Mr. Goncalves: I came to 4 meetings, and they extended it because the person didn't show up.

Mr. Gennette: Marc, we're going to table the liaison positions.

Board to approve Elsa Barros as Interim Treasurer/Collector.

Mr. DeBarge: Is there anything to cover on this Marc?

Mr. Strange: The long and the short of it. Town Meeting the voters voted to combine treasurer/collector, so right now technically Elsa is still the treasurer. She's going to resign from her treasurer position. When she resigns from her position, that position goes away and she's the acting interim treasurer/collector. She's coming in on the 18th. You guys can interview her, ask her questions, formally appoint her at that meeting and then she'll be on her way.

Motion made by Mr. DeBarge to appoint Elsa Barros as the interim treasurer/collector. **Mr. Goncalves second. All in favor. Motion passed 5-0.**

Board to approve and Chairman to sign the Affirmation of Community Commitment between the town of Ludlow and PVPC for the District Local Technical Assistance Program (DLTA).

Motion made by Mr. Goncalves to approve, and the Chairman sign the Affirmation of Community Commitment between the town and the District Local Technical Assistance Program. **Mr. DeBarge second. All in favor. Motion passed 5-0.**

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TOWN OF LUDLOW

Mr. Strange: I do have one more contract that's not on the agenda that you guys need to sign.

Board to approve and sign the contract between the Town of Ludlow and F & G Recycling, LLC for Municipal Solid Waste Disposal and Recycling Services Agreement.

Mr. Silva: Marc, this contract for the solid waste we're signing and approving, I thought this was a 3-year contract previously already signed, no?

Mr. Strange: This is recycling. It's not trash.

Mr. Silva: It's not trash. I think we have a year and a half.

Motion made by Mr. DeBarge to approve and sign the contract between the Town of Ludlow and F & G Recycling, LLC for municipal solid waste disposal and recycling services. **Mr. Goncalves second. All in favor. Motion passed 5-0.**

Mr. Strange: We still need to accept the 2022 MVP and HMP plan update.

Board to vote on accepting the town's 2022 Municipal Vulnerability (MVP) and Hazard Mitigation (HMP) Plan Update.

Mr. Silva: So moved. Mr. DeBarge second. All in favor. Motion passed 5-0.

Mr. Strange: I just want to read off one of the points on my report because I think it's important. As we know, the town voters decided to transfer the BPW's authority to the Board of Selectmen last week and as we look forward to the future of the DPW, we're looking at reorganizing the organization. Pending available resources and a discussion with the new DPW director, we'd like to create 3 separate divisions within the DPW. A facilities and grounds division, water and sewer and also a highway division. Each division would be overseen by a foreman who would then oversee PW1's, PW2's and PW3's within those different divisions. We'd also like to have a DPW director, deputy director and operations supervisor to oversee the entire department. Once the new DPW director is appointed, we'll have a discussion with him on that but that's a pretty good baseline to start on reorganizing the department.

Mr. Silva: Marc, are we going to be advertising for this?

Mr. Strange: It's already posted.

Mr. Silva: What do you expect the timeline that we'll have candidates come in?

Mr. Strange: The 18th.

Mr. Silva: We did it for a 2-week period?

Mr. Strange: Yes.

Mr. Gennette: Is that just a director's position?

Mr. Strange: Yes. The thought was to redo Jimmy's position and make it a deputy director position, which, as a practical matter, that's kind of what he's doing now.

Mr. Gennette: I'd like to hear more about the structure of the other one because we're fighting Board of Health for a position.

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TOWN OF LUDLOW

Mr. Goncalves: We're not actually creating any positions there. Just titles.

Mr. Gennette: I just want to hear more about it. I'm not trying to take a hard line on anything. Can you give me a little clarity on this? This is the one that wasn't on the agenda?

Mr. Strange: Yes.

Mr. Gennette: This is the contract between the town of Ludlow and Sentry Uniform for $13,500. The contract is for the purchase that includes installation and set-up of…Marc, can you provide some clarity?

Mr. Strange: I'm not sure.

Mr. Gennette: Fees and reimbursement costs combined shall not exceed $13,500.

Mr. DeBarge: Is that Sentry Uniform? That's got to be a flagpole. Is that a flagpole?

Mr. Strange: I'm not sure, Lori came in to day and said can you have the Board of Selectmen sign this tonight? I said yes, I will. It's not old.

Mr. Gennette: I wish it said exactly what it was for on the top. We can't sign this. We don't know anything about it.

Mr. Silva: Is this something that's got to be done right away, Marc?

Mr. Strange: No.

Mr. Silva: If you're not comfortable, lets get some clarity on it. I've been here a while; I don't remember one of those.

Mr. Gennette: We're covered with everything else on the agenda, right? I think we got everything.

BOARD UPDATES/MISC.

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

CLOSING COMMENTS

Mr. Rosenblum: I'm good tonight.

Mr. Silva: I just want to thank the public, the voters of Ludlow for going out and actually exercising their rights. I want to thank them for thinking about our comments and concerns. We have a DPW and voting for us taking over and hopefully we can straighten this out and make it work more efficiently and better. I want them also to know that it's going to take some time. It's not something that's going to be done overnight. We'll be working on it month after month. Let's see where this goes, and I honestly believe it will be a much better position that we'll be in over there.

Mr. Goncalves: I'd like to again thank the voters. I wish we had 20-22% show up, not 9 or 10. Every election is very important. That being said, people who are watching today, like Derek said, all 6 people, a lot of moving parts. It's budget season and money is becoming tighter and tighter. It's tough on the taxpayer, it's tough on all the departments to try to tighten their belt a little bit. If anybody out there thinks that there's a lack of service somewhere or too much service somewhere and want to give us some ideas, feel free to share your comments with us. It can get a little heavy. We're talking about $80,000, $100,000 at a time and it doesn't seem like much in the grand scheme of things. We're cutting the schools request by hundreds of thousands of dollars so when you pick up a little here and a little there, it can make big difference. That's it. Everybody stay healthy, stay safe. I think we meet next week again. Next Tuesday for your viewing pleasure.

Mr. DeBarge: In the corners that I travel in town there's kind of a breath of fresh air after the election with the ballot questions. Not only because of the smart move of merging both offices where it saves us a little bit of money and most importantly streamlining our government a little bit, but the DPW. Obviously, I talked to a lot of people about the election and after the election. I tell them that I am exceedingly optimistic about the plan we have. The plan. We're just put out about an actual structure of departments within the department. A foreman for each one. Training of foremen if needed. All of this so we can bring that Department of Public Works up to a place where it needs to be. Most importantly, where we can bring this town visibly, aesthetically where it needs to be because we are much better than how we look. If you walk, ride, do anything, I'm telling you this community is much better than it looks. We're going to be able to work on that and I'm very confident that we'll be able to make great strides in that. A couple other things I want to make sure. I know we're having a meeting next week, but I just want to put this in. Our new Vet Center will have our grand opening on the same day as the Sgt. Josh Desforges run on April 29. The run is in the morning and the grand opening of our Vet Center at Ludlow Crossing on West and Holyoke will be at 1:00 on that same day. Big goings on for that and a big open house, so please come down and check it out. The other thing I'm hearing about quite a bit, and I know we're working on this so this is why I want to bring it up to all you ladies and gentlemen out there, is the town signs. A lot of people talk about the town signs. Most importantly the Sportsmen's Road sign and how terrible it looks. We know, we're working on it. We actually have a couple ideas and hopefully we'll be moving on that super quick. I'll finish with, I just want to give a shout out to our admin assistant Sandy Leecock, who left on Friday. I don't know how many people call our office on a daily basis. I know that since I've been a selectman, since Sandy has been here when I was on the police department and the Board of Selectmen, anytime I've asked for anything as a selectman she was right on it. She knew how everything worked here. I will miss her dearly and her work ethic as well. I'd like to welcome Amy into our office. I told her today she'd be having a lot more fun in our office than the one that she left. That's a joke everybody, relax.

Mr. Gennette: I just have a little bit of appreciation. For one, I agree, Sandy, thank you for everything you did, and we appreciated you here and we are going to miss you. It just won't be the same without you. The other thing is, I'm actually going to surprise you guys, I would like to thank Steve Santos, Alex Simao, Keith Ouellette, Matt Goncalves and Dan Soares. I want to thank you guys for the service over the years that you guys have given us. We know you guys really tried to do what you could, and you really put your heart and soul into it. It really meant a lot to you. From the community to everyone, we really appreciate everything you did do. We know we were kind of at odds a little bit but from my perspective to you guys, thank you for everything you've done. Actually, I want to thank you guys for the opportunity over the past couple years to sit here with you and you actually vote me in as Chairman. That says a lot to me that you guys think that I'm…

Mr. DeBarge: We got your envelope yesterday.

Mr. Gennette: You guys are good, man. I appreciate it.

Motion made by Mr. Rosenblum to adjourn the meeting at 8:29 p.m. **Mr. Goncalves second. All in favor. Motion passed 5-0.**

Chairman

Ludlow Board of Selectmen