The Meeting of the Board of Selectmen held on Tuesday, April 18, 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, William Rosenblum and Manuel Silva.

First Order of Business: The Pledge of Allegiance

VISITATIONS:

5:35 p.m. – Elsa Barros – Treasurer/Collector Interview

Mr. Gennette explained that they are having an interview with Elsa Barros at 5:35 p.m. for the Treasurer/Collectors position.

Ms. Barros stated that she is honored to have the opportunity to take on this role. She also explained that it is not going to be an easy task, but she will give it 110%. Fred did a wonderful job, and she will try to fill his shoes.

Mr. Silva asked Ms. Barros if there are credentials that Fred had, that she will now have to get as well? He also asked if she was bonded?

Ms. Barros stated that she is bonded, and she is a certified Treasurer. Fred was a certified Collector so she will have to take those courses.

Mr. Silva asked if Ms. Barros thought this would be difficult for our community? He asked if it would be a lot more involved or entailed?

Ms. Barros stated that it's going to be a lot of updating and modernizing the office. Ludlow has a lot of taxpayers that like to come in a pay their taxes in person. Since the election, there are stacks and stacks and stacks of bills.

Mr. Silva asked if some tasks could be moved to other offices, like the DPW. He asked if the DPW could collect the payments and then send the deposit over to the Collector's office?

Ms. Barros is already looking into that and that would eliminate a lot of traffic in the Collector's office and they're down two people already. She is trying to streamline things, she is looking into getting a check reader, which you run the checks through the machine, and they go directly to the bank.

Mr. Silva stated that he spoke to the ladies in the Collector's office and was told that the trash bill was very cumbersome for them. It also causes confusion for the residents because they go to the DPW, and they won't collect it there and I don't understand why. He suggested having someone at the DPW bonded as well.

Ms. Barros said they would definitely have to be bonded in order to collect payments. Some jobs will need to be shared.

Mr. Rosenblum asked what the biggest challenge was going to be.

Ms. Barros stated that trying to change things in order for her to do both jobs will probably be the biggest challenge. She has to bring that office up to the 20th century. She understands that people do not like change, but she does not have a choice because it's very overwhelming right now.

Mr. Rosenblum asked if we could go to paperless billing?

Ms. Barros stated that Ludlow has a large elder population who like to come in person and pay their bills with cash still and she feels she has to respect that.

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Mr. Rosenblum understands that but over time he believes you will see more and more people doing that.

Ms. Barros agreed with Mr. Rosenblum. She is also looking into having the bills printed by a service and that will lessen the burden on the staff.

Mr. Silva stated that a lot of other communities use companies to send out billing and it seems to work well.

Ms. Barros has spoken with People's Bank who will process the payment with the check, but they will need a barcode on the bills first. She believes that would be a MUNIS thing and she's not sure if it's an extra cost but that would be very helpful as well.

Mr. Goncalves thanked Ms. Barros for stepping up and taking the role. Fred was great but he probably didn't change too much in 39 years. Trying to do no cash is very difficult, residents get very upset with that. Mr. Goncalves asked about the trash bills for the condominiums because some of the owners of the condo's cannot get reimbursed for the trash bill because it's not in their bylaws or in their trust and they need the supermajority at a board meeting in order to have it changed. He would like to know if the town can bill each condo owner instead of the property owner or the homeowner association.

Ms. Barros said they are working on getting the condo's billed correctly and stated that it is in MUNIS, however it's not on the right module. This year they had a bill number, in years past they did not.

Mr. DeBarge agreed with Mr. Goncalves and is very thankful for her. He is glad that she has ideas on how to make things better.

Mr. Gennette believes the check scanning should be easy to overcome. He suggested having a PC at the Senior Center and Veterans Center where the senior citizens could pay their bills that way.

Ms. Barros stated that on-line paying is already available for residents but agrees that putting a PC at the Senior Center or Veterans Center would be helpful.

Moved by Mr. Goncalves to appoint Elsa Barros to the Treasurer/Collector's positions, seconded by Mr. Rosenblum. Vote 5-0. All in favor.

5:45 p.m. – Jamie Tomas – DPW Director Interview

Mr. Tomas explained that he has been with the town for 13 years. Most of that was with the DPW. About 4 months ago he accepted the Facilities Director position and is enjoying that. He believes the DPW needs some help and guidance to be more efficient and provide a better service for the taxpayer. There is a good group of people at the DPW that are willing to work and get the job done but morale needs to be brought up because it's been down for quite a while.

Mr. DeBarge thanked Mr. Tomas for his interest in the position. He wants to put a Director in the DPW that knows the town well, knows the job and can communicate with the employees in order to accomplish the mission of providing the community with the services that the DPW is supposed to provide. Mr. DeBarge believes that the employees respect Mr. Tomas which is a big plus. The employees at the DPW are great workers and they want to come in and do their job and not have the issues that they had before.

Mr. Goncalves agreed with Mr. DeBarge and also loves the fact that Mr. Tomas still wants to work here after 13 years.

Mr. Tomas believes Ludlow is a great town and the DPW is a good department.

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Mr. Goncalves feels that now that the town is combining positions like Mr. Tomas and Ms. Barros, the town will be more streamlined and also save a lot of money in the long run. Mr. Goodreau is also going to help Mr. Tomas get things running.

Mr. Tomas stated that Mr. Goodreau knows the back end of the DPW and will be a great help to him. Mr. Batista will also be a great help to him as well.

Mr. Goncalves believes the DPW will be a great department with Mr. Tomas there. He knows there was a lot of confusion before.

Mr. Tomas wants to sort that out and move forward with the department.

Mr. Rosenblum explained that the Board of Selectmen does not want to run the DPW. They want a director to do the day-to-day stuff. Mr. Rosenblum is excited and believes this is going to be a great thing for the DPW and the town.

Mr. Tomas stated that the office staff is also great and believes they are going to get this together.

Mr. Rosenblum stated that sometimes just saying thank you to the staff helps with morale.

Mr. Tomas agreed with Mr. Rosenblum.

Mr. Silva stated that he has spoken with a lot of people at the DPW, and they all said they are happy. Mr. Silva knows that Mr. Strange wanted to divide the DPW into three different divisions but would like to know what Mr. Tomas thinks about that?

Mr. Tomas believes the DPW works fine the way it is because now all the employees will be trained the same and can do anything, not just the highway or just the sewer, etc.

Mr. Silva asked specifically about having different foremen for each division?

Mr. Tomas stated that's the way it was when he first started there, and he doesn't think it's a bad idea.

Mr. Silva asked if Mr. Tomas sees any issues with working with the employees who have been there a long time?

Mr. Tomas said he does not see any issue working with anyone.

Mr. Silva asked if Mr. Tomas needs any certifications?

Mr. Tomas said he does not believe so.

Mr. Silva asked about having an in-house engineer because the director in the past was an engineer also.

Mr. Tomas does not believe they need an in-house engineer because that's big money and by using an outside firm, someone else is taking on the liability if something goes wrong.

Mr. Silva stated that he was driving by Whitney Park and the tennis nets were hanging on the ground. He feels that it doesn't take that much to repair some of these things and make the town look good.

Mr. Tomas agrees with Mr. Silva, and he will take care of that.

Mr. Gennette stated that before he became a selectman, he heard horror stories about the DPW workers hanging around at Whitney Park and guys just sitting in trucks not doing anything. He asked Mr. Tomas how he would handle that and keep employees motivated.

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Mr. Tomas believes that the employees are motivated, but they need to know what to do and where they are going. He believes because they are so shorthanded, the days of guys hanging out at Whitney Park are long gone.

Mr. Gennette spoke at the Town Meeting about how the Board of Public Works was managing the day-to-day, and they didn't pay attention to what the long-term strategy was or what the big plan was? Mr. Gennette hopes that Mr. Tomas will be able to work well with Lori and Marc and be able to manage the day-to-day stuff. He is very happy that Mr. Tomas was interested in this position and looks forward to the future with him.

Mr. Goncalves asked what Mr. Tomas is going to need for employees and what types of qualifications they will need?

Mr. Tomas stated that they need bodies! A PW1 only needs a driver's license and a DOT card so they can drive the bigger trucks. The PW2's need a CDL B.

Mr. Goncalves asked the public if they know anyone who is looking for a job and has a driver's license to reach out to the DPW. It looks like it's going to be a great team going forward!

Mr. Silva stated that he speaks with a lot of residents and whenever he had mentioned working at the DPW in the past everyone would decline. They wanted nothing to do with it.

Mr. Tomas stated that he would like to get the DPW to where people start to give them kudos and people want to work there.

Mr. Silva asked when Mr. Tomas will be leaving the Facilities job to begin as the Director.

Mr. Gennette stated that he will be doing both.

Mr. Strange explained that the facilities work will be absorbed into the DPW.

Moved by Mr. DeBarge to appoint Jamie Tomas as the DPW Director, seconded by Mr. Silva. Vote 5-0. All in favor.

6:00 p.m. – John Moll – Historical Commission re: Rood Monument

Mr. Moll explained that the Rood Monument in front of the First Church and the Meeting House was struck by a person or person's unknown and spun off its base and the overlift that it sits on, which is a four-foot piece of granite, fell. It was held in place by a couple of pins. The Ludlow Police tried to locate the person responsible but were not successful. There are no cameras in that area either. So, they do not have anyone to go after for the responsibility there. There is insurance to repair the monument in place, however, the location is precarious. It sits up by the Civil War Monument which was also struck and had to be repaired. If you are driving down Center Street, it is right on the corner as you turn right onto Church Street. This was put up in 1903 so you didn't have vehicles then. They have looked into a couple of different things to do with this monument. One would be to repair it in place. The other option would be to move it across the street to the grounds of the Meeting House. The town does not own the land in front of the First Church either. He has two estimates, one for $2,800 to repair it in place and there is a $1,000 deductible that the town will have to pay. The other one is for $9,850 to relocate it to the right of the First Meeting House on Church Street. They have already met with Mass Water Resources to be sure they would not be sitting on the line that comes down from Quabbin and goes up Nash Hill and they verified that it would not interfere with that at all. They would also have to rent a crane to move the granite, which will probably be about $2,000 more for that. He looked into grants or funding from the US Park Service and the Mass Historical, however, there

was nothing available. The Mass Historical only gets about $700,000 annually and they have a tremendous amount of requests. Mr. Moll also spoke with Mr. Batista at the DPW, and he feels that they have the capabilities to reposition it at its present location. There are two pins that hold the obelisk in place, and he contacted Bartel Monuments, and they are concerned with drilling those pins out and fracturing the granite. They are going to take a look at it to determine if this can be done. Mr. Moll asked if the town has a Grant Writer now?

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Mr. Strange explained that it depends on the type of grant and stated that he does not feel that the Mass Historical grant will probably not be a good fit because they usually like to restore historical buildings and things of that nature.

Mr. DeBarge stated that he is in favor of moving the monument to the grange.

Mr. Gennette asked if the Historical Commission or the US Park Service will have a problem with them moving the monument?

Mr. Moll explained that the town's historical commission would rather see it moved across the street.

Mr. Gennette asked if the US Park Service oversees the town's historical commission and whether or not they are in favor of moving it?

Mr. Moll stated that he has not inquired about that part, but he doesn't see why they would have a problem with it.

Mr. Gennette doesn't want to pay to have it moved and then find out there's a problem with that.

Mr. Moll stated that they can repair the monument in place and then get the funds to move it across the street in the future as well.

Mr. Gennette also suggested maybe moving it to the new cemetery?

Mr. Rosenblum agreed with moving it also to alleviate it happening again.

Mr. Silva asked what was going to happen with the grange because there were talks about selling the property off and things like that because there is a lot of work that needs to be done to that building.

Mr. Moll explained that the roof has been replaced and it was painted but probably needs that again. The alarm system was upgraded. It does need a lot of work in order to be ADA compatible, etc. They did go to the town meeting several years ago to get appropriations to take care of that building and it was defeated. It is one of the oldest meeting houses in Massachusetts too.

Mr. Silva stated that when he was in high school, they would have senior nights there and things of that nature and he would like to see that building restored.

Mr. Moll explained that it is a tremendously historic building and it's the roots of the town.

Mr. Goncalves agrees that it should be moved across the street. He asked Mr. Strange if procurement will have to get involved? He also mentioned that there are a lot of companies in town that would help out with this as well.

Mr. Moll stated that some of the businesses did help with the 911 monument, and he would hope they would do the same with this one. The house at 196 Rood Street was the home of the individual this monument is for and there was a water trough that was put there for the plumbing and there was also a spigot for individuals.

Mr. Silva verified if the DPW could move it?

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Mr. Moll was not sure the DPW could move it across the street, but they could stand the monument up on the site it is currently on.

Mr. DeBarge does not believe the DPW could do that because they don't have a crane. He also stated that the Civil War Monument has boulders around it to defend it and landscaping still needs to be done to finish that whole project.

Mr. Gennette asked Mr. Strange how much is left in Chapter 40R.

Mr. Strange stated that there is enough money to cover this project.

Mr. Gennette asked what the next step is for the monument.

Mr. Strange asked if there are two different pieces to the project, one moving it and one repairing it.

Mr. Moll stated that resecuring the obelisk should not be difficult other than being able to bore out the holes for the pins.

Mr. Strange just needs to know if there are going to be two different costs for billing purposes?

Mr. Goncalves asked if the cost to move it would be under $5,000?

Mr. Moll stated that it is going to depend on how much prep work the DPW can do for that. They will have to pour a pad or put down crushed stones because it has a large base.

Moved by Mr. Goncalves to appropriate $9,850 from our 40R funds for the purpose of repairing and replacing across the street, the Rood Monument, seconded by Mr. Rosenblum. Vote 5-0. All in favor.

6:15 p.m. – Nira Flatley – Ludlow Cultural Council Community Market Activities

Ms. Flatley explained that she is the Secretary for the Ludlow Cultural Council, and they are having their 3rd Annual Community Market on September 30th and October 1st from 11 a.m.-3 p.m. at Memorial Park. This market is designed to highlight local artists and crafters. They have entertainment, music, and children's activities and this year they are considering hiring a chainsaw carver who will do demonstrations of their craft. They wanted to present it to the Board because of the noise and possibility of some wood chips being left behind at the park. They wanted to be sure the Board was okay with everything before proceeding.

Mr. Silva asked if the carver was going to do a lot of carvings and then just leave a large pile of woodchips?

Ms. Flatley explained that because this is the first time doing this, they are not sure how it works. She knows the DPW has come up the last two years and helped with cleanup afterwards too.

Mr. Rosenblum stated that they should put that in the scope to leave the park as it was.

Mr. DeBarge would be very happy to have the Chainsaw carver.

Mr. Rosenblum asked if Police or Fire needs to be contacted for that?

Mr. Strange asked Ms. Flatley if they have conferred with the DPW, the Police and Fire in the past.

Ms. Flatley said they do and once everything is set in place, they will let the Board know. They also do concerts at the gazebo in the summer.

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Mr. Gennette requested that she definitely follow up with the DPW, the Police and Fire.

Moved by Mr. DeBarge to approve the Ludlow Cultural Council to pursue their quest in procuring a chainsaw carver for their future event, seconded by Mr. Goncalves. Vote 5-0. All in favor.

6:30 p.m. – David Eisenthal – Unibank to discuss bonding.

Mr. Eisenthal explained that Mr. Strange requested he come in and talk about the town's outstanding debt, the debt exclusions that town has approved, the possibility of bond redemptions or refinancing and the upcoming financing that the town is looking at. The town has three current loans through the Massachusetts Clean Water Trust, the most recent one was 7 years ago, and all of these are supported by the town sewer enterprise fund. The town also has three outstanding general obligation bond issues all done within the past three years. The earliest of those geo bond issues was issued in November of 2017. There is about $1.1 million left out of about a $3.9 million issue. What is left is the land acquisition for Center Street, building remodeling and the refunding of the school addition, which was originally done in 2004. These are optionally redeemable beginning in 2026. Beginning in 2026 the bonds that are due on or after 2027 are callable in 2026. The next issue was in 2018 for Harris Brook School and the Senior Center. It was $4 million original issue and $3.1 million left. Bonds are redeemable beginning in 2027. The bonds due in or after 2028. A year later, Harris Brook, Senior Center and East Street School also optionally redeemable beginning in 2027. The bonds are due in 2028. $30,350,000 was the original issue, just under $29 million is still outstanding. In addition to that the town has $9.6 million of bond anticipation notes that mature on September 15, 2023, for the Harris Brook School of just under $5 million and then the radio communications project for $4.6 million. Unless the MSBA completes the project audit uncharacteristically fast, he is recommending that the town renew the Harris Brook bans in September and possibly do a permanent financing of the radio communications project, which would be $4.6 million. Including the short-term debt, the town as of June 30th, will have just under $45.3 million of debt outstanding. Most are for Harris Brook and the Senior Center both of which are debt excluded. Not including payments that are not yet called for, it's about $2.37 million is what is expected for FY24. Most of that is debt excluded debt so it will be raised on the tax rate.

Mr. Goncalves asked what the average rate is on these loans.

Mr. Eisenthal explained that the 2019 bonds were about 2.9%, the 2018 was about 3.7% and the 2017 was 2.2%. The town hit the market pretty well with these. The market is in a funny place right now because short-term rates are much higher than long-term rates. Rates are definitely higher than they were in 2019 when the town was selling that large bond issue. $35.9 million of the total outstanding for Harris Brook School and the Senior Center are the debt excluded pieces. For the current year, a little under $1.8 million in debt service with a little bit, $35,000 in short term interest, .72 cents on the tax rate, $198 on the average single-family house. Going forward, the final financing of Harris Brook, which will happen when the town is notified about the MSBA project audit. Once that's settled, I would expect a final financing of Harris Brook to proceed. The debt excluded that's outstanding is generally for the next 20 years at about $1.7-$1.8 million. Its level mortgage-like payments drop after that for a few years to about $1.5 - $1.6 million. Looking at the possibilities for refinancing or redeeming bonds, there is nothing that is immediately redeemable. The town has basically refinanced everything that was callable. The most recent one of those refinancings was in 2017. The bonds from the 2018 and 2019 issues are first redeemable in 2027. There is a method to escrow funds to reduce the debt service that's charged to the taxpayers. He chose two principal payments from the 2018 issue totaling $435,000. If the town transferred $450,000 it could reduce annual debt service by $17,400 for about 18 years and then much more in 2042 and 2043. He's not excited about that option. If the rates fall by 2027 the town might have the possibility of redeeming some of these bonds much more economically than now. Next is the 2023 fall issue; you have the Harris Brook Schools

bans and the radio communications bans coming due. He would imagine the town is going to renew Harris Brook School and the radio communications, but he will speak to Elsa and Marc in more detail about that. If the town meeting approves the public safety HVAC we would possibly be looking at a ban, a short-term note issue to finance that. Based on the radio bond issue in September 2023, doing bans for the public safety HVAC and then the town hall HVAC potentially in September 2024, the non-excluded debt going forward, the debt that's not raised/excluded from the tax rate. These are dollars that are competing within the tax levy operations. The schedule for this would be to confirm terms in the next several weeks, probably having sales of the bonds and notes at the end of August. After Labor Day we can discuss how that sale went. Settlement would be on September 13, 2023, with the maturity of the bans being on September 15, 2023. State qualified bonds, Chapter 44A of the Massachusetts General Laws have allowed municipalities to issue debt where the debt service is paid out of the local aid by the state treasurer. Something that has changed with this very recently is the S & P upgraded the program rating for state qualified bonds from AA to AA plus. The town's current rating is AA minus. In the past, Mr. Eisenthal did not see much advantage in pursuing state qualified bonds for Ludlow. Typically, Holyoke and Springfield issue state qualified bonds because their rating is far lower than the AA range. Now that they're looking at an AA plus program rating for the state qualified bonds, he wanted to give the Board a heads-up because they may ask for a vote from the Board to authorize the Treasurer to make an application to the municipal finance Oversight Board of the Commonwealth.

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Mr. Goncalves asked what type of a rate differential they will see with that.

Mr. Eisenthal is not sure because it is so new, and he doesn't know if they are going to rate them the same way. He just wants them to know it's a possibility. AA minus is still a very good rating, and the town has had good market access at the AA minus. He is trying to get the town every advantage that he can. He also understands some towns do not want to do this because of political reasons.

Mr. Goncalves asked if the town has ever been in the advantage whereby making the installments themselves, they were able to put something on hold to know that they have money coming in from the state. Then if they could delay a payment for a couple of months and use that money versus having to come directly and have no control over it. It never hits the books, and they are forced to pay at that time.

Mr. Eisenthal stated that the town will never want to be delaying debt service payments at all. You would have to see what the effect on the cash flow would be when you're doing qualified bonds. The town gets Chapter 70 monthly, and you will probably see it hit every month up to the time of the debt service as opposed to at the time of the debt service payment. He is not making a recommendation yet, but he does want to explore it more and be prepared to either come to them with a proposed vote or pass it by. The cash flow issue is a concern he wants to address.

Mr. Gennette asked is Mr. Eisenthal thinks the town is over leveraged or under leveraged?

Mr. Eisenthal explained that he wouldn't necessarily say the town is overleveraged with the equalized valuation is about $2.4 billion and $45 million does not raise red flags. To some degree it's a policy issue, if this Board, the Finance Committee and Town Meeting feel there are unmet needs, you have to weigh those against what the numbers look like. Especially because most of the debt is debt excluded which shows the town's voters are willing to step up and support the debt. It is not a big concern for him given there is a $2.4 billion tax base.

Mr. Goncalves stated that it is a little over $2,000 per resident, which isn't bad compared to the Federal Government, which is about $75,000.

Mr. Eisenthal explained that it's part of the credit analysis they do that leads up to this. He does not feel that the town's debt position is of particular concern.

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Mr. Gennette asked if there was a certain percentage that Mr. Eisenthal would like to see towns stay under or a warning area?

Mr. Eisenthal explained that he will send the criteria for S & P to Elsa but 10% of the credit score is based on debt and what they look at is net direct debt, your total indebtedness that is supported by the tax base compared to the governmental revenues. Then they look at debt service as a percentage of expenditures. He believes if a town is under 8% debt service as a percent of expenditures, that's considered really good. He will give that information to Elsa and Marc also.

Mr. Gennette was just wondering how close they are getting there. Million-dollar projects add up quickly.

Mr. DeBarge explained that the HVAC system for the public safety complex and for the town hall is desperately needed and that is a $5 million project. That would be $125,000 in new money in 2025, $370,000 in 2026 and $372,000 in 2027. These numbers scare him the most. Debt exclusion will not work for these projects and that's a large number.

Mr. Eisenthal explained that it is competing with the operating budget as well.

Mr. DeBarge stated that he is optimistic about where they're headed with new businesses in town with new money, but he just isn't sure if they should do one and just hold onto the other for now. It's difficult when they're both needed.

Mr. Eisenthal explained that it is his job to make things clear for the decision makers, which is the Board of Selectmen in this case.

TOWN ADMINISTRATOR'S REPORT

Accounting Department Update: We have hired a new Accounts Payable Clerk, who will be housed in the Accounting Department. Her start date is May 16th. This person will be responsible for paying all bills for Town Hall departments initially, but we would like to consolidate all bill-paying with this person. Right now, each department pays their own bills, which delays the process. Having one person be the point for bill paying will free up more time for administrative staff and make the process more efficient. Cindy Minie—the Assistant Town Accountant—has also announced her retirement date will be May 12th.

Trash Discussion: In light of the continued budgetary issues with the town and the schools, we are looking at any and all possible ways to bridge that gap moving forward. One area that could provide budgetary relief is trash collection and disposal services; so, we have scheduled Eric Weiss to make a presentation to the Board on June 6th. Eric works with PVPC but was formerly chairman of the board of the Springfield MRF; so, he should be able to provide options for the Board to consider.

Vets Center Opening: The ribbon cutting for the new Veterans Center will be Saturday, April 29th at 1:00pm at 487 Holyoke Street. An Open House and Conference Room Naming Ceremony are planned.

CORRESPONDENCE:

50. Jennifer Wright & Christopher Harkins – requesting to be appointed to the Commission on Disability.

    Moved by Mr. DeBarge to appoint Jennifer Wright & Christopher Harkins to the Commission on Disability, seconded by Mr. Silva. Vote 5-0. All in favor.

51. Commission on Disability – Reorganization Chart.

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

52. Polish American Citizens Club – Annual Beano Report.

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

53. Chief Valadas – request to charge off medical expenses and lost wages to Chapter 41, Section 111F for an injury sustained by a Police Officer as a result of an incident that occurred on April 6, 2023.

Moved by Mr. Rosenblum to approve to charge off medical expenses and lost wages to Chapter 41, Section 111F for an injury sustained by a Police Officer as a result of an incident that occurred on April 6, 2023, seconded by Mr. DeBarge. Vote 5-0. All in favor.

UNFINISHED BUINESS

Board to close Annual Town Meeting Warrant.

Mr. Strange explained the articles. Article 1 is about the reports on the town officers. Article 2 is about outstanding committees. Article 3 expands the way the Board of Health can raise revenue for their revolving funds. Article 4 sets the spending limits for the revolving funds. The CPR training has been increased to $25,000. Article 5 would raise and appropriate $5,000 for the Celebrate Ludlow Committee. Article 6 would raise and appropriate $4,900 for the Commission on Disability, that was $3,500 last year. Article 7 would raise and appropriate $25,000 to pay for a municipal government expert to help the town navigate through the town charter committee process.

Mr. Silva will not support Article 7. Spending $25,000 on that is unnecessary.

Mr. Gennette stated it doesn't necessarily mean they will use the entire $25,000.

Mr. Strange stated that it does not but after reaching out to a few different places they said to budget for $20-25,000. The attorneys also said they can help with this, which may save some money.

Mr. DeBarge disagrees with Mr. Silva because it is grossly necessary.

Mr. Strange explained that Article 8 would accept the State's Chapter 90 funds, typically this is submitted by the Board of Public Works but this year it will be submitted by the Board of Selectmen. Article 9 would vote to authorize a Board of Selectmen to enter in a contract with MassDOT for the construction and maintenance of public roads. This also was submitted by the Board of Public Works in the past. Article 10 is the Capital Improvements article. The letter that was sent up from the CIPC to the Board of Selectmen and will be an attachment in the background so people can see the projects. Same for Article 11.

Mr. Gennette asked if the cart lease was approved?

Mr. Rosenblum stated it was approved as a separate article because it's under an enterprise fund.

Mr. Strange stated Article 11 is the Golf Course Capital Improvement. Article 12 will raise and appropriate $100,000 for FinComm reserve fund. Article 13 would raise and appropriate $100,000 for the Building Infrastructure article. That is a separate fund that can be used to pay for repairs and maintenance of municipal buildings. Article 14 would raise and appropriate $1,000,000 for the stabilization fund. It is currently at $5.1 million, and the target is $7 million.

Mr. Gennette stated that it is 9% of the budget and the minimum is $450,000 each year.

Mr. Strange stated Article 15 would transfer $250,000 into OPEB. OPEB liability is around $95 million and there is $500,000 in the OPEB fund. Article 16 would fund new firearms for the

Police Department. The estimate is $76,000 for Glocks gen 5 models. Article 17 is the four-year lease for the golf carts. Article 18 is the budget article, and we are currently $89,000 under levy capacity. Article 19 would repurpose $645,000 in previously authorized but unspent bond proceeds. The town would reallocate those funds to pay for the work that's going to be done in town hall next summer. The roof project, air gap barriers, the asbestos ceiling tile remediation, and some other work. There is $300,000 approved through Capital plus the $645,000 will get us $950,000. Article 20 is the HVAC bond. Article 21 would authorize the Board of Selectmen to enter into a 10-year lease for the Veterans Center, currently it is a three-year lease. The annual cost is $62,700 and if it is extended to 10 years, it would go down to $57,000. Article 22 is to amend the general bylaws of the town of Ludlow by removing the prohibition on marijuana establishments.

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Mr. Gennette would like to remove Article 22 from the warrant.

Mr. DeBarge stated that it does not have to be sent to the floor at town meeting. However, it affects the next two articles.

Mr. Strange stated that would affect the next four or five articles. They are also related to marijuana and submitted by the Planning Board.

Mr. Gennette does not agree with this article, and he does not feel the Planning Board did the back-up work. They said they would provide data on the financial benefit this was going to have to the town which they didn't do. Also, there are already places closing down and they are oversaturated. This was on the ballot a while back and did not pass with the voters. He does not feel that this should be pushed through when the community did not want it in the first place. He does not agree with this at all and feels the Planning Board should provide better information.

Mr. DeBarge stated that when he first came onto the Board, they had a company that came in and wanted to occupy a 60,000 square foot building for cultivation and distribution of marijuana and the meeting had to be moved because of the amount of people that came in. The public was very upset. Ludlow has a Cares Coalition that is focused on drug addition to help kids and parents, and this would be a slap in the face to them. These places are everywhere, and people can go to other towns to get it if they want it.

Mr. Goncalves explained that early on cities or towns cut deals with the marijuana facilities and there was big money involved but now he does not feel that it would generate that type of income. There are a lot of places shutting down also. He does not feel that the financial benefit outweighs the potential hazard of having that type of facility in town.

Mr. Silva agrees that he was against it as well. However, very few people do not use marijuana at this point and most use it for medicinal purposes. He does not feel that people should have to go to Springfield or Northampton to get it and does not feel that just because one facility shuts down in another town that a facility won't make it in Ludlow. He would like the public to decide and would like it to move forward at the town meeting.

Mr. Rosenblum agrees with Mr. Silva that residents should make the decision. They initially thought it would increase crime but after speaking with officers in other towns they said it has had zero burden and zero increase in crime. He would like it to go to the town meeting as well.

Mr. Strange stated that he received a call from a realtor that has a client interested in putting in a dispensary in Ludlow if the town votes for it.

Mr. Gennette stated that another issue with these businesses is the fact that they have to carry cash because banks will not allow them to have accounts with them because marijuana is not legal on the federal level. This is why these facilities have to have security. He also stated that he does not want anymore bars, liquor stores or pawn shops because Ludlow is only one step away from being Springfield. What is the plan for our town? If the Planning Board can explain what Ludlow is supposed to look like, then maybe he will consider this.

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Mr. Strange stated that Article 22 – 26 is all related to marijuana.

Mr. Goncalves asked if this would require a 2/3 vote because of the zoning bylaw.

Mr. Strange is unsure, but he will check on that.

Mr. DeBarge stated that we don't need a dispensary in Ludlow, there is Theory right on Shawinigan Drive in Chicopee, which is a 4-minute drive, but he will let this go to the town meeting as well and let the voters decide.

Mr. Strange stated Article 27 would amend the zoning bylaws to add self-storage facilities to the table of uses.

Mr. Goncalves explained that this will help clear up the issue with the description of a self-storage facility too.

Mr. Silva stated there is some litigation coming forth with this as well.

Mr. Goncalves stated that someone that owns one in the industrial zone is saying that it's not right for there to be anybody in the moderate residence because the self-storage facilities weren't specifically designed anywhere except industrial by precedent. The bylaws do not speak to allowing them anywhere.

Mr. Strange stated that Article 28 creates a requirement for parking at those facilities and Article 29 creates a definition. Article 30 is a zone change from res B to industrial A on Russell Street. Article 31 would change the membership of the capital planning committee by removing the Board of Public Works member, changing the school superintendent to a member of the school committee and reducing the private citizens from two to one. Article 32 authorizes the Board to acquire certain land or rights in land for the Piney Lane bridge project and also would authorize expenditures of up to $50,000 to defray the costs. Article 33 would allow the town to raise funds to pay for the West Street Bridge and the Cottage Street bridge project. Right now, the estimate for West Street is $500,000, which Ludlow will be sharing with Springfield, Ludlow's half will be $250,000. The Cottage Street bridge project is $600,000 and Ludlow's half will be $300,000. He also explained that there is a job description for the Assistant Town Administrator/Human Resources Director that needs to be signed. Also, he received the House Weighs and Means numbers for the budget, and it was an additional $80,000 for the town.

Moved by Mr. DeBarge to approve the new Assistant Town Administrator/Human Resources Director job description as stated in front of us, seconded by Mr. Goncalves. Vote 5-0. All in favor.

Moved by Mr. Rosenblum to close the warrant for Annual Town Meeting, seconded by Mr. Silva. Vote 5-0. All in favor.

Mr. Strange explained that for the Special Town Warrant, Article 1 is unpaid bills, and Article 2 is police overtime, which is $100,000.

Moved by Mr. Rosenblum to close the warrant for Special Town Meeting on May 8, 2023, seconded by Mr. Silva. Vote 5-0. All in favor.

Moved by Mr. DeBarge to accept the committee liaison positions, seconded by Mr. Rosenblum. Vote 5-0. All in favor.

Board to discuss Maria's Way Stormwater Retention and Street Lighting. (Tabled from 3/21/23)

Mr. Silva is not sure how the town could do this because there are hundreds of stormwater retention basins.

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Mr. Goncalves explained that in order to do a subdivision in the Town of Ludlow a homeowner's association is required. Once that's set up, part of the responsibility of the homeowner's association is to pay for lighting and storm basins. In the past, this Board has taken over the electricity because the balance of the streets in the town of Ludlow are being paid by the taxpayer and it's not fair for the same lighting within a subdivision where they are paying the same tax rate and not getting that service included.

Mr. Silva stated that he is not against electricity but that's how some of these contractors are presenting these subdivisions.

Mr. Rosenblum agrees that only electricity should be the only thing we take over.

Mr. Strange stated that the Planning Board suggested that the town does NOT take over the stormwater basins.

Moved by Mr. Goncalves to take over the lighting for Maria's Way, seconded by Mr. DeBarge. Vote 4-1.

Moved by Mr. Goncalves to table the stormwater retention basin discussion, seconded by Mr. DeBarge. Vote 5-0. All in favor.

Board to discuss John Hanifin, Resident reimbursement of fees for unblocking sewer line. (Tabled from 3/7/23)

Mr. Rosenblum confirmed the amount of $685.06.

Moved by Mr. Rosenblum to reimburse John Hanifin of fees for unblocking the sewer line that were a result of a town side issue, seconded by Mr. DeBarge. Vote 5-0. All in favor.

Board to discuss the DCR Updates for John F. Thompson Memorial Pool. (Tabled from 4/4/23)

Mr. Strange spoke to Debbie and Sean about the pool and was told that multiple people have keys to the pump house, and they are unsure who caused the damage to the pump house. He also spoke to James Esposito from the State, and they contract with RH White and RH White is the one that reported the damage to the pump house. It turned into a she said, he said.

Mr. Gennette asked if there is an estimate to replace the pump?

Mr. Strange explained that they don't have an estimate, the issue is a provision with the contract. There's a provision on the contract that says that the town is on the hook for paying for repairs in the pump house. That was the recreation department's concern. James Esposito indicated that the damage was done on our end and RH White covered it. Every year the state sends out an MOA and part of the MOA obligates the town to make repairs.

Mr. Gennette asked if Mr. Strange will have town counsel to review the contract?

Mr. Strange said he would, but it will not be a priority with the town council. He also stated that part of the problem is they have no oversight over the Recreation Department.

Mr. Gennette asked if Jamie could go over there just to take a look at it.

Mr. Strange understanding is there are not any damages currently as they were repaired.

Mr. Gennette asked if the pool will be open this summer?

Mr. Strange stated that it should be open.

Mr. Gennette suggested just filing it until they can get information from the town attorney.

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Moved by Mr. Goncalves to approve and Chairman to sign change order #25 for the Radio Communication Project, seconded by Mr. DeBarge. Vote 5-0. All in favor.

Moved by Mr. Goncalves to approve and sign the Selectmen Minutes of December 13, 2022, with all members present, seconded by Mr. Silva. Vote 5-0. All in favor.
Moved by Mr. Goncalves to approve and sign the Selectmen Minutes of December 20, 2022, with all members present, seconded by Mr. Silva. Vote 5-0. All in favor.

Moved by Mr. Goncalves to approve and sign the Selectmen Minutes of December 23, 2022, with all members present, seconded by Mr. DeBarge. Vote 5-0. All in favor.

NEW BUSINESS

Moved by Mr. Goncalves to approve and sign the Seasonal Liquor Licenses for Ludlow Fish and Game Club, Gremio Lusitano Club and Ludlow Country Club, seconded by Mr. DeBarge. Vote 5-0. All in favor.

Moved by Mr. Goncalves to approve and sign the ABCC Seasonal Renewal Certification for 2023, seconded by Mr. Rosenblum. Vote 5-0. All in favor.

Moved by Mr. Goncalves to nominate Mr. Gennette as Chairman to authorize all bills, drafts, orders and payroll and sign the approval thereof, seconded by Mr. DeBarge. Vote 5-0. All in favor.

Board to discuss and possibly vote to declare Parcel 14B-13600-19-0 as surplus property.

Mr. Silva explained that any property the town has, has to go to an auction. He believes they should take a look at what property they have and then set up an auction for everything. That's the only way they can do that.

Mr. Gennette asked if it still needs to be declared as a surplus property?

Mr. Silva stated that once they get a complete list, they can do that.

Mr. Strange stated that this particular one came in as a request because it's a landlocked parcel, which is an extension of the Lighthouse parking lot. Two other abutters contacted him today also wanting to buy it and Mr. Strange explained that once the Board declares it surplus, they will be able to do an auction. Mr. Strange also noted that they have a few properties in town with squatters which they are in the process of evicting.

Moved by Mr. Silva to table this matter until they receive a list of parcels that will be put on the auction block, seconded by Mr. Goncalves. Vote 5-0. All in favor.

Moved by Mr. DeBarge to allow Board of Selectmen members to sign documents electronically, seconded by Mr. Rosenblum. Vote 5-0. All in favor.

Board to discuss options for Town Hall Friday hours.

Mr. Strange explained that the current town hall hours are 8:30 – 4:30 which does not provide the opportunity for residents to stop in after work. In order to do that, they would have to elongate hours every night or pick a night and then shorten the Friday hours. A lot of towns are doing this.

Mr. Gennette asked if LATOSS was going to have a problem with it.

Mr. Strange stated they would definitely have to work through it with LATOSS beforehand.

Mr. Goncalves asked if overtime was paid over 8 hours.

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Mr. Strange believes it goes by the week, not hourly.

Mr. Silva believes that labor laws do not allow that, and employees would have to work a split shift.
Mr. Gennette is okay with it if Mr. Strange thinks it's a good idea.

Mr. Goncalves stated that this should be done on a trial basis first.

Mr. Strange stated that he wants to start with the summer.

Mr. DeBarge thinks it's a great idea. The Veteran's Center is also going to do this. They are going to be open late on Tuesday's and on Friday's 9-noon.

Mr. Strange asked if anyone has any suggestions for the hours.

Mr. Silva stated that he thought several years ago on Tuesday's the town hall was open until 7:30 p.m.

Mr. Goncalves stated that the building department and Board of Health used to be in late on Tuesdays.

Mr. Gennette agreed that Tuesday would be good.

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 just reiterated that he always felt that the people need to have a say on big items like the marijuana article.

Mr. Silva stated that now that there is a new DPW Director hopefully things will get better in that department. There are a lot of eyesores in this town that need to be addressed. He would also take another look at pickleball because that is huge now. He would like to see the Riverwalk cleaned up too. He reminded Mr. Strange that the Board of Public Works members were also on other committees and that needs to be addressed now that it falls under the Board of Selectmen.

Mr. DeBarge wanted to remind everyone about Sergeant Josh Desforges pre-race pasta dinner on April 28th at the Elks on Chapin Street from 5-7 p.m. On April 29th is the Josh Desforges walk/run challenge at the high school and you can register online at www.runsignup.com. On April 29th at 1:00 will be the ribbon cutting/grand opening at the Veteran's Center. On May 2nd they will be replacing flags at the cemeteries. On May 6th starting at the gazebo is clean-up day. He added that he was a little disappointed with the comments made from the school committee meeting. He thought the joint meeting with the school committee went well but then the school committee stated otherwise. Also, one of the school committee members stated that the town is not doing a service for the children yet they taught how so many people move to our town because of our schools and the programs that they offer. Mr. DeBarge was very upset with the comments because during the budgetary process, every department is coming in and asking for exorbitant amounts of money. In order to care for the children, the town must ensure that the Police, Fire, DPW and the School Department all have a budget they can work with. When the other departments are told they have to work within their operating budget, there's not a lot of backlash like the School Department has given. The Chairman of the School Committee also

made a comment that it doesn't seem like Ludlow is a community that really believes in education. They also commented that over the last 4-5 years they have been given money under budget and that's why they require such a high number to be level funded now. This is just disappointing to him.

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Mr. Goncalves reminded residents that the DPW is in need of employees. As far as the School Committee wanting us to be like other communities and give them 49% of the budget but Ludlow is stretching it as it is. He would also like to know where all the money in the school is going? Reminding everyone town meeting is in 3 weeks. He hopes to see more people come out to town meeting also.

Mr. Gennette stated they need to hold ALL departments accountable. The school should not be exempt from being held accountable. Reminds the young drivers to be careful driving with the nice weather starting.

Moved by Mr. Rosenblum, to adjourn this meeting at 8:28 p.m., not return to open session, seconded by Mr. DeBarge. Vote 5-0. All in favor.

Chairman

Ludlow Board of Selectmen

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