The Meeting of the Board of Selectmen held on Tuesday, September 19, 2023, began at 5:30 p.m. in the Board of Selectmen's Conference Room.

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

Members Absent: None

First Order of Business: The Pledge of Allegiance

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VISITATIONS

5:30 Sean McBride, Chairman – Recreation Department, to discuss and possibly make changes to the reclassification request for the LATOSS II Admin at the Recreation Department – Tabled from last meeting.

Mr. McBride: I believe you received my letter requesting reclassification of Debbie Gates from her current position of LATOSS II to a LATOSS IV Step I. I know that you had some questions concerning that and I'm here to provide any sort of insight that I can.

Mr. Goncalves: The obvious question, why are we going up 2 steps?

Mr. McBride: The Recreation Department is a department of 1. Debbie handles a lot of responsibilities beyond what I think a LATOSS III would. Secondly, back in 08 when they did the reclassification and they eliminated the O/A positions and created LATOSS positions she was reduced from a III to a II. It resulted in a pay raise but it brought her down to a II. She's the only LATOSS II employee according to the treasurer in the town. Why would we move her up to a IV Step 1? It's $53/week over what she's making now as a II Step V. It would bring her from $24.22/hour to $25.76/hour. Her responsibilities include she's a certified pool manager that's 1 of 2 positions in Town. I don't know if the person at the Boys & Girls Club still has their certified pool operator manager's license. If they do then she would be one of two. She takes care of all the chemicals. She's called on weekends. She reports to the pool on weekends to test chemical levels, she makes decisions on when to add chemicals or reduce chemicals, when to add water to ensure the pool is safe for public use. Not a responsibility that any other LATOSS employee in town would have. Certainly, none of them are working on weekends or on call or are getting calls at all hours concerning status of the pool. Additionally, she is a licensed agent for our before and after school programs. She ensures that all of the regulations that we have to follow from the state are complied with, including being there for inspections. She has a lot of responsibilities that are greater than what even a traditional LATOSS IV would have. As the sole person in our department, she's also responsible for putting the budget together, all job responsibilities that would fall under a LATOSS IV. We're talking about adding a hybrid position that would serve the golf course and recreation department. If she's to stay at her current classification or even if she was to move to a LATOSS III, quite possibly if somebody internally were to be selected for this new position, Debbie could be responsible for training and providing guidance to somebody who's making more money than her. That still might be the case if somebody who's a LATOSS IV Step V would apply. At least this puts her at some level of footing where she's getting paid commensurate for the responsibilities that she has.

Mr. Goncalves: The amount of overtime that's happening. It seems it's pretty consistent throughout the whole year so if there's no fields and the pool is closed, etc., what's picking up the overtime?

Mr. McBride: You're still dealing with the before and after school program if the director for the before and after school program is not there. It would require her to come in early. It's open at 6 and closes at 5. These are problems you have when you have a department of 1. She takes her role and her job very seriously. As opposed to calling 25-30 parents and saying you can't bring your kids to the program you're going to have to figure something out she takes it upon herself and obviously in communication with us to ensure that the before and after school program stays open and provides a service that it was intended to provide. Some of those overtime responsibilities will probably diminish with this hybrid position. Some of the overtime that incurs around camp sign up and before and after school sign up and things of that nature we should see some of that overtime diminish when we fill this hybrid position. The idea is that a 35-hour/week position would be

somewhere around 15 or so hours at the golf course entering bills and correspondence and agenda items, which can be done anywhere with very little need to be at the golf course. The balance of that time would be with the Recreation Department ensuring that the office is staffed or when Debbie takes time off that we're not closing that department and forwarding phone calls here to the Board of Selectmen's office. These are the issues you have when you have a department of 1. It's not conducive to provide a public service. In the wintertime when the golf course is closed the overtime would disappear with the hybrid position.

Mr. McBride: I think you'll see it diminish throughout the year. You're going to have an additional set of hands for 20 hours a week. One can reasonably assume, unless there's a ton of issues that would just require Debbie, for instance pool related issues where there's chemicals. We can reasonably assume if we're bringing somebody else on board for 20 hours or so where they're dedicated to where there's going to be towards the recreation department that it will help lower some of those overtime costs.

Mr. Goncalves: Who's supervising, who does she answer to, who's signing off on her payroll, who's watching all that?

Mr. McBride: The chairman of the commission. If she's looking for time off she usually shoots me a text or email and lets me know that in advance.

Mr. DeBarge: Thanks for coming in Sean, I appreciate the information. I understand the bump in the level simply because it's a 2. I understand it's a department of 1. The increase monetarily is not large in the grand scheme of things. You have the budget for the increase?

Mr. McBride: Yes.

Mr. DeBarge: My concern is the same as Tony, as I'm sure everyone else's. The only question I have for you about the overtime is I've noticed a significant increase in overtime from 22-23. Any idea why it's gone up so much in the last year or 2?

Mr. McBride: It could be a number of issues. Can I point it towards one? No, but generally when we have lifeguards at the pool and we have turnover of co-directors at the park that require a greater level of supervision there's a greater reliance on having an adult in the room making sure things are running the way they're supposed to run. That's probably a good portion of it. We were making the switch, with the assistance of Marc, from a paper application system to an electronic enrollment and payment system. I think there's a little bit of a learning curve. I think some of those issues contribute to that.

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Mr. Rosenblum: I would be more comfortable with going up to a LATOSS III instead of IV only because you're kind of setting a precedent of skipping over. Personally, I wouldn't want to get into something where other people are going to say we already did this once, we're going to do it again. I have a concern over the overtime. I think if she went into a LATOSS III she would come in at Step V based on the percentage increase. She'd end up going up about $1/hour. Each year she would go up a couple more steps to put her at the end of LATOSS III and be up for LATOSS IV in a couple years. I'm more comfortable with LATOSS III than I am LATOSS IV.

Motion made by Mr. Rosenblum to increase the director, Debbie Gates, from a LATOSS II to a LATOSS III, which would put her at Step V. **Mr. Goncalves second.**

Mr. McBride: I don't have a crystal ball here but you have somebody who has taken on the responsibility of obtaining a state license and is a certified pool manager. I can't guarantee that she's going to continue to maintain that license and if that happens you're either going to close that pool or you're going to be paying somebody somewhere in the neighborhood of $35-$50/hour all summer long to provide chemical support for that pool. Do what you want. It's ultimately your decision but you're doing it at your own peril. That pool is going to be closed and people are going to be sent here. They're not going to come to me because I'm just going to send them right to you guys. That's a reality of what may happen, it may not happen. I think you're running a risk. You have somebody that is dedicated to doing that job. It's penny wise and pound foolish for $.50/hour to not take the appropriate steps. At our request, she had gone out and received this licensing, takes a test every year to ensure that she continues to have it. I think we're cutting our nose off to spite our face for $.50/hour. When we look at other people outside of union folks and we look at folks

in management positions who received bumps 2 steps above, there wasn't this robust discussion about cost. Right now, you are making, in my opinion, a grave mistake over $.50/hour. If that's the decision you want to make you're certainly entitled to do it, but I think it's foolish.

Mr. DeBarge: Sean, who pays for the certification of the pool license?

Mr. McBride: We do.

Mr. DeBarge: How much is that a year?

Mr. McBride: $100 to take the test.

Mr. Rosenblum: The problem I have is, is the overtime going to go down? With the bump in pay the overtime goes up as well.

Mr. McBride: Right, but you have a department of 1 person. It falls on your lap. You're either going to expand the department or not. If you expand the department, one can reasonably assume that if you're adding an additional person that's going to be supporting that department for 20 hours/week there would be some reduction. The work isn't going to increase, you're just increasing the staffing. One can reasonably assume the overtime is going to come down when we increase that department. The department needs to be increased, it's a department of 1 person. You either eliminate the department or staff it appropriately. There's a cost associated with that if you don't.

Mr. Gennette: I'd like to add that it's also covered under the budget.

Mr. DeBarge: There's not an increase to the budget. He has it in his budget.

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Mr. Silva: I'm abstaining.

Second withdrawn from Mr. Goncalves.

Mr. Goncalves: I get the $.50. If we gave every employee here $.50/hour we're going to need a 2 ½ override. It's not a little bit of money. We have to be careful. The next thing is going to be we gave $.50 to Debbie. From that standpoint…

Mr. McBride: Take the person out of the mix here. We're looking at the position. You gave other management here 2 steps in the reclassification on the management side. There wasn't even a discussion about it. There was not a scintilla of conversation about how that would impact budget.

Mr. Goncalves: That was something that was analyzed and brought to us after a long period of time by our HR person and doing a comparison to every community around us. We found that we were lagging a lot. It wasn't something that was decided one week and passed the next.

Mr. McBride: I would certainly encourage any other department that is bring somebody in, ask them what they have for certifications and what sort of value that provides. You have to be looking at what value that adds to the town. I'm telling you right now what a certified pool manager will cost you for 10 weeks during the summer is a heck of a lot more than what $.50/hour. You guys don't even have to worry about it. It's covered in our budget. We feel comfortable enough to come here and say we can cover this. We have a person who, for whatever reason, has been woefully undercompensated for years and we have an opportunity to make it right here. It's your job. It's what you were elected to do. It's not much different than what I was elected to do on our side. It's to advocate for employees to appoint where it's reasonable. If I really wanted to go crazy I'd say she should be a LATOSS Step V. That's unrealistic. We're talking about $.50/hour that's going to come out of our budget. I think that it's fair and reasonable, I think it's long overdue, and I think we're cutting our nose off to spite our face and we're going to potentially be looking at the closure of a pool for $.50/hour. That's penny wise and pound foolish.

Motion cannot be withdrawn. Mr. Goncalves second. Motion denied 0-4-1.

Mr. DeBarge: I'm going to say this before I make my motion. I feel like it's a threat, Sean, that if she doesn't get IV she's going to dump her pool recertification. I don't like being threatened to give somebody something. I agree the position itself with what we have been doing over the last

year or so with department heads. I agree that position should have a salary increase. I think it's too low. I just don't like feeling like I'm doing it because I think we're going to lose a pool. I really wish you hadn't said that.

Mr. McBride: Derek, I'm just being honest with you. I'm putting all the cards out on the table. I haven't had any conversation with her. I don't know that she would do that. My sense is maybe she wouldn't because that's not the type of person she is. I also don't want June to roll around and she says I don't have that qualification anymore. Now we're looking to fund a position for $35-$40-$50/hour as a pool manager.

Mr. Goncalves: What if we put in the position description that the person will maintain that certification.

Mr. DeBarge: Rec is already paying for it. She doesn't pay for it out of her own pocket.

Mr. McBride: Now you're taking a position and you're going to negotiate that in. So, you're going to say every LATOSS III has to have a certification.

Mr. Rosenblum: The hybrid position, how many hours would it be?

Mr. McBride: 35 hours.

Mr. Goncalves: That should eliminate the overtime so I don't have a problem with the IV Step I.

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Motion made by Mr. Goncalves to approve LATOSS IV Step I. **Mr. DeBarge second. Motion passed 3-1-1.**

5:35 p.m. School Committee & Finance Committee – FY25 Budget Kickoff Meeting

Motion made by Mr. Laing to call the Ludlow School Committee meeting open.

Mr. Laing: I would like to thank everyone here for allowing us to come. If you remember, we had some miscommunication years ago. It's great whoever thought of this to make sure we are continuing to meet throughout the year. Hopefully things can be the most transparent as possible.

Motion made by Mr. Sanches to open the Finance Committee meeting.

Mr. Tiano: Thank you so much for having us here today. I appreciate the continuous work working with the town administrator, Marc Strange, and his team. I had an opportunity to meet with Shawn this morning, along with Kathy Demetrius. As Mr. Laing said, communication, transparency between the boards and for the community is absolute key. Our school year has gotten off to a really good start. Two years past Covid we seem to be grooving right now. That being said, as we're putting together our budget timeline and working with our committee in terms of our budget priority, we're starting to move forward and I'm looking forward to working with you folks.

Mr. Strange: I passed out some projections that Shawn, our new town accountant, put together some projections for FY25. I'm happy to run through these quickly to give people an idea where we're starting from. What we typically do is we assume level revenue. If you look at our new growth and state aid and local receipts those are all level funded to be conservative in our approach. A 2 ½% increase over last year's levy would increase the town budget totally by 1.2 million dollars. Moving down the page we increase the Assessors overlay account from 310 to 350, per the Assessors request. In terms of the town and school budget we assumed 3% increase for both. That puts us at about 80-million-dollar total budget. With level revenues that puts us at $500,000 deficit, which is to be expected because obviously our revenues will increase in terms of how that deficit is going to work itself out. Our local receipts are likely to go up. They typically go up by $200,000-$300,000/year. MMWEC built the largest solar array in the state in Ludlow, which came online this year. We're working on a pilot with them so that will be counted towards our local receipts. Our state aid between fiscal 24 and fiscal 25 went up by a net of $650,000. That was on the educational side. In terms of fiscal 25 compared with fiscal 24 I don't know that it's going to increase that much because we had a new Governor with a new agenda. That remains to be seen. Maybe it does increase that much, that would be great. In terms of new growth, the Mill 8 project the way it works is on January 1, 2024, or thereabouts, our Assessor will go out and take a look at

how much Mill 8 has been built, assign a value to that and we will be able to derive some additional tax revenues from Mill 8. We'll really see the impact of Mill 8 in fiscal 26 once it's fully built out. Lastly, in terms we can make up for that deficit is we talked about this previously is doing an across-the-board evaluation of our fee schedules to see how we compare to other towns and maybe make adjustments on that front. That's not going to be a huge revenue generator but it's something we can do. That's the very high-level overview of where we're starting from.

Mr. Sanches: Last year we had monthly meetings with the Chair. Are we going to bring that back?

Mr. Strange: Shawn & I meet with Frank & Kathy every month to make sure we're communicating and on the same page. In addition to those meetings, we also have chair meetings between the Board of Selectmen, Finance Committee and School Committee. We're happy to coordinate those meetings again this year. It depends on people's availability. We could certainly do teams calls if people can't get out of work. That's up to Tony, Jeff, and James.

Mr. DeBarge: Obviously, early budget season, 3% town, 3% school, any idea what your projected ask for percentage will be?

Mr. Tiano: We don't have a projected ask. We do have a fixed costs that we know. For example, Kathy ran some preliminary numbers for our staffing next year. As you folks know, we have contracts where our 500 employees get a cost-of-living increase. On our professional staff, there are steps, which are an additional percent. And we keep track of staff who are getting either another degree which moves them over a lane, and so forth. Our preliminary estimate right now for salary increase is about 1.7 million dollars.

Mr. Goncalves: What's the total salaries of the budget?

Mr. Tiano: I don't have those at the top of my head.

Mr. Gennette: Kathy, do you know that number?

Ms. Demetrius: I didn't bring my computer. I thought our meeting was going to be short based on the agenda.

Mr. Silva: Last year there was a lot of talk of layoffs and all that and obviously we were short on the budget side for the schools. Do you have a number of how many people who actually are less from last year to this year?

Mr. Tiano: We reduced 20.4 positions. For some of those positions people retired. One or two weren't filled. If you follow the news at all there's a staffing shortage in every industry. We still have several positions unfilled and we're working to make do with that. The actual bodies, we had folks who resigned to take jobs in other districts as well so we were able to pull back people who were being riffed. I don't have the exact number of people but it's 20.4 positions less than we had last year.

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Mr. Silva: Obviously, this budget you're putting together are less all those positions. You're not looking at putting back some more positions.

Mr. Tiano: We're starting where we started last year in terms of providing a level service budget.

Mr. Goncalves: You're including the 20 people?

Mr. Tiano: No.

Mr. Goncalves: At the beginning of last year, you had those 20 people and you couldn't fill them?

Mr. Tiano: I'm sorry if I were not clear. Mr. Silva asked how many people we reduced last year from FY23 to this year FY24. We reduced 20 positions. That doesn't always equate to 20 people. We budgeted for last year, you have 20 budgeted positions that we've reduced so we could meet our target for FY24. For example, in our libraries we have 4 librarians; we have 2 this year. Class size, we were able to maintain our class size. It's right on the edge. Reductions next year, obviously next year our class sizes would go up. We were unable to provide, we've reduced a language at

the middle school, we reduced French. In the absence of finding a Spanish teacher at the middle school for example, literally for a year and a half we had a sub all last year we changed that to another elective. To your point, it's 20 positions left.

Mr. Silva: How is enrollment last year vs this year? Is it static?

Mr. Tiano: Overall, looks fairly static. We wait till October 1st when we certify our enrollment. We match that with our enrollment October 1st last year to October 1st this year. Twice per year the state has us certify, in October and March.

Mr. Silva: Special needs is always a big issue.

Mr. Silva: Quick math based off your salary increase would put us anywhere from 4-4 ½ %.

Mr. Strange: the 3% is just a starting point for our budget. I think we ended up 4-4 ½ % last year for the schools. We also met with MIIA this year about our health insurance increases. Last year we were lucky. Our health insurance only went up by 3%. The average was almost 6% for MIIA communities. This year, MIIA is running another 3% above that so they prepared us to expect not 3% but 6%. A 6% increase in our health insurance would mean about $350,000 increase or so for the whole town. That number could certainly go down. Our loss runs early are high for some reason so if our loss runs even out and they get less then obviously our increase will be less.

Mr. Goncalves: If we went GIS would that save us any money.

Mr. Strange: I'm not sure. MIIA is pretty good just because they have so many communities and that typically lowers the rates. You, being the insurance person, would probably know better than I would.

Mr. Goncalves: It's just a matter of retrospective of just us or part of a group. The idea with the rating and Marc was saying with the loss runs if there's severe losses the rate goes up. I was asking if they were just isolated to our community or mixed in with any other communities in the region. A lot of times they'll put a group of similar towns together or similar sizes.

Mr. Strange: It's a trust. So, all these communities that pay into the trust in the event that a town is 105% they're able to take that 5% from the pool.

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Mr. Goncalves: Our enrollment numbers, what do they look like at the beginning of last school year vs this school year? What do we certify to the state?

Mr. Tiano: We haven't certified yet to the state and I don't have those enrollment numbers in front of me.

Mr. Goncalves: How about last year to the year before?

Mr. Tiano: Trending down. I presented to the committee last fall as well as in our budget documents that our overall students have been declining. A number of special ed students have increased and we talked about the number of non-English speaking students coming into the district. That's been declining. We've talked about this before. If you're down 40 students, that's not 40 students from 2nd grade reduced by one class. That's spread out throughout.

Mr. Silva: Where are we with spending per pupil? I know you see that a lot in other communities. Are we close to other communities?

Mr. Tiano: We are below the state average. The state average based on 2021 numbers is $19,062. For 2021 Ludlow we were at $18,069. So, we were below the state average. When you're working through DESE, the comparable districts are not necessarily our neighboring districts, so they put together a list of districts that were comparable. For example, Abington, we spent $18,000 Abington spent $16,000. Agawam who is a comp for Ludlow schools they spent $19,690, so they spent over us. Winthrop spends less than us, South Hadley spends less than us, Rockland spends more than us. Woburn, Hudson, Attleboro. This is right from the DART information. They look at different enrollment statistics.

Mr. Silva: This is the point I'm making. You hear people out there saying we don't give to our students. It's kind of heartening to hear that stuff. The Selectmen don't care about the students. That's just not true. We do everything we can. We're about to do a contract for the new school, I mean the new track. That's almost 5 million dollars. It's just something that the conception out there people should realize we do everything we can.

Mr. Tiano: We've had these conversations that it's one pot of money. Where you want to invest your money, in terms of schools and fields, there's a lot of decisions to be made. When you look at your per pupil expenditure it's more than just this number because there's a lot more that goes into it, in terms of population that you serve and so forth. Where we look at it from is I walked in last year and this is where we are so we have spent all of last year putting together a strategic plan and a district improvement plan that has really focused our efforts to where we feel is going to move the needle forward for raising student achievement. That's where we're going to allocate our resources. We've made that and shared that with a lot of community input. We feel good about the direction in which we're headed. In order to provide a level service there are fixed costs. We have salary increases, we know our transportation will go up at least $225,000, we know this will be the last year of it we have ESSR money still built into our operating budget, roughly $400,000. And we've worked hard last year and this year to make sure that we try to take as much of that grant money out of our operating budget as we reduced so we don't have that hit next year. You've seen my graph before, if we were just going to start at 0 we're going to start minus $400,000, then a 1.7 million for salaries, transportation, other fixed costs, and that brings us to that level service. Level services is we're going to provide the same number of teachers, buses. We overhauled our budgeting system last year, which put a burden on our principals, but it was a good, forced reflection for where we spend our money and we were able to save. We shared that with every line item in the details publicly. We're anticipating not the process to be easier, but our team is more experienced so we're going to continue to take how we spend the people's money and we're confident in our ability to do that.

Mr. Goncalves: Conceptually, when you got the ESSR money, you hired 20 sum odd positions, including janitors with a declining enrollment. It's not fair that we were trying to look to fund those 20 sum odd positions you hired with money that you didn't have or wasn't the taxpayers. Two years ago, we went through that where we were expected to pick up those positions from the first batch of hiring from ESSR when Mrs. Nemeth was here. I think people are still looking at that and saying we can't take those positions and keep carrying them forward with a declining population in the district. I think we're going to be looking at that with your $400,000, what did you do with the $400,000 and to say now let's get that $400,000 and keep it going, which we didn't have 4 years ago.

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Mr. Tiano: It's not as simple as that. I'll start with the declining enrollment. As I was saying, we could be down 100 kids next year...

Mr. Goncalves: It's maybe 1 teacher and may not even effect...

Mr. Tiano: You still have your overhead; you still have what you're paying. That, oftentimes, is a misnomer. If you're minus 10 kids at $19,000 you can bang out $200,000. That's just not how that works, respectfully. The piece around the ESSR money, that was baked into operating budgets, I don't have my history, but I do know that as instead of reducing their budget, the school committee opted to use ESSR money to fund positions that they otherwise would have reduced. We talked a little bit about this last year. That last year created almost a 2-year reduction because they saved it the year before I got there.

Mr. Goncalves: Those positions didn't exist before the ESSR money.

Mr. Tiano: I don't have that level of information in front of me and we can have this conversation tomorrow, only so that I don't want to speak out of turn, but we went back through everything. I don't see 20 positions created for ESSR. Yes, a few custodians were added and they were removed and a lot of it was special education staff. It's not like there's 20 extra people or 10 extra people or 5 extra people just hanging out.

Mr. Goncalves: I'm not saying that. You could reduce size, a lot of things could be happening, you could have a lot of 2 on 1 or 3 on one you didn't have a couple years ago. I won't hold you to it, but if anybody at the table has that number, how many of our special needs don't live in Ludlow?

Mr. Tiano: I have that number but I don't have that sitting right here.

Mr. Goncalves: What percentage of school choice is special ed?

Mr. Tiano: I don't know that off the top of my head.

Mr. Goncalves: Those would be good numbers I'd love to have to see at what point does it not make sense.

Mr. Tiano: In terms of the school choice process, we're a school choice district and students who want to come here to our school, they apply, our school committee votes open seats, maybe 5 seats grade 5, 6 at grade 7 and so forth, those students come. Automatically, whether they're on an IEP, doesn't matter, they just come to us.

Mr. Goncalves: If you had 5 grade 5 positions you would take 5 of the ones that apply. Is there ever a limit on the special needs?

Mr. Tiano: No. That would be illegal.

Mr. Goncalves: It's a lottery but is there a limit?

Mr. Tiano: No.

Mr. Goncalves: In other words, if 15 want to come, 5 would be for the 5th grade. I'm asking special needs.

Ms. Bowler: They're all 5.

Mr. Tiano: Just to be clear, we do know the percentage of school choice students who are special needs, I just don't have that.

Mr. Goncalves: So, at the beginning of every year, you'll have 3 fifth grade openings. Six people apply and you have a lottery. Is there a fixed number of special ed? So, no matter how many apply that are special ed, we're taking that many. As opposed to the 3 available in 5th grade. You guys know what I'm asking.

Mr. Laing: We're not discriminating against the special ed students.

Ms. Demetrius: Only the 3. So, if 6 people apply…

Mr. Goncalves: I'm talking about special needs.

Mr. Laing: We don't ask. That's not a question.

Mr. Goncalves: It's a grade thing no matter what.

Ms. Demetrius: Once they come to us, we pull them out and if they're sped they're sped, if they're not they're not.

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Mr. Tiano: All of our students, whether they need services or not are students.

Mr. Goncalves: And it's the same lottery system.

Mr. Tiano: Absolutely.

Ms. Bowler: There are actually kids in our district who do school choice who are special education who go out of district to get their special education services. Some kids, and I know for a fact, returned to our district who has for the last 2 years been going out of district to get their special education services. It can be a wash depending on how many kids are going out of district or coming back into district.

Mr. Sanches: Why do we continue to use the word positions vs people? If people don't equal positions, why do you say positions?

Mr. Tiano: We're talking about full time equivalents. It's easier to do the calculus in terms of how many positions we actually have. We do it a few different ways. We may employ 100.4 FTE's of teachers and that most likely will translate to 100 and a half time teacher or it may turn out to be 111 teachers, if you have .5, .5, .5. It's how many positions do we have. When we are working at reducing or adding positions, we talk about standardized FTE's. Each individual person has a salary. Then we overlay the salaries as we're looking at the cost to run Ludlow High School, for example. Or we could look at a cost center like what is the cost to run our special education. We could look at; we know it's 42 FTE's and it costs 3.2 million dollars. The FTE's has reduced them. People retire and so forth, so we're talking about losing people, it's the position we would have hired for and we couldn't hire for that is being lost there. Sometimes that gets forgotten when we reduce our budget, or an entity reduces its budget, we've reduced by 5 positions but 3 people retired so 2 people lost their job. No, there's 5 positions next year that are not available to provide services for our students and their families.

Mr. Gennette: Thanks for coming in. It's always good to see you again. I'm glad we can have good conversation. Next time we'll go see you.

Motion made by Ms. Bowler to adjourn the meeting. **Mr. Laing second. All in favor. Motion passed.**

Motion made by Mr. Sanches to adjourn the Fnance Committee meeting.

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6:15 p.m. Brandon Kunkel (Weston & Sampson) – East Street Conceptual Designs

Mr. Kunkel: I'm Brandon Kunkel. I'm with Weston & Sampson's design practice. I'm the practice leader. With me tonight is my colleague Lindsay Abbott. She's been doing the heavy lifting on the project. I'm just coming in to take the credit for all her hard work. We're hoping to put on a good show and let you folks know where we stand at this very moment. Our initial thoughts and takeaways from the corridor and what are the next steps. How do we get to a revitalization strategy master plan over the next month or so. As I mentioned, we want to step in and give an update as to where we are and what we've accomplished to date. Sort of frame up some of our initial thinking, our takeaways, some of the feedback we've gotten from the community as it relates to their own input and experiences on East Street. And ultimately, as I mentioned, frame up how we proceed forward and ultimately what we plan to deliver to you folks as a preferred master planner, revitalization master plan corridor and overlay district. As I mentioned, I'm here with my colleague Lindsay tonight. She was juggling some soccer practice earlier this evening, so she's going to listen in. A quick refresher, or if you're not familiar, we were engaged in the early spring of this year by you folks to come up with a master plan, revitalization overlay district assessment and ultimately some preferred options how we might be able to revitalize this corridor. Ultimately, the goals are to be able to return pedestrians to the street. We'll get into the details on that a bit more but within the entire corridor there's various breakdowns and whether or not it's a commercial block or 2, residential block or 2 or mixed block or 2. We want to get people out to the street, out of their cars onto the sidewalks, activate the streets and get them into the businesses. We'll share some of our thoughts on that. As I mentioned, getting people out of their cars will help improve opportunities for the local businesses by increasing foot traffic on the sidewalk, whether it's a hair salon or restaurant or barber shop or breakfast place. Right now, given the width of some of the parts of the street vs the width of the sidewalk. The cars do dominate the corridor. It's really a pass through. Some of it encourages high speeds and we'll talk about that a bit. We want to reduce the scale of it a bit to help reduce the speeds potentially. We want to give it more of a village feel and help it blend into the neighborhood. There's a few taller, multi-story family houses along the corridor. They're not necessarily dominating but there is a mix of businesses as well as residential within the area finding the balance between the 2. We want to help liven it up and get people excited. It could be considered a bit dated. Some of the architecture. We think we can help liven that up a bit. Make it feel a little bit more fresh with pops of color and vegetation. I'll talk about green infrastructure and what that means. We want to help make it feel special. We want to give it a sense of arrival and let people know they are within a special part of town. We know there's a lot of developments going along some of the other just off of the corridor off of the mills development. You've got the riverwalk as well. There is a lot going on in the area and we want to build upon that and encourage this smaller, more walkable feel. We think part of that is creating

gathering spaces for people to run into folks along the businesses, whether or not it's a restaurant, café, coffee shop or at the beauty salon. But create a place where people do want to gather and get out of their cars. We want to freshen up the site furnishings, places for people to sit. That includes shade trees. Make it feel a little bit more comfortable. We want to provide amenities for future predicted uses in collaboration with that mill development. There's going to be an influx of housing and people living there. We want to give them amenities to go outside and beyond and help revitalize this corridor. Whether or not it's making use of businesses or just going out for walks and enjoying the neighborhood itself. We know the culture of the neighborhood and Ludlow in general to be able to provide opportunities for festivals or special events. Friday night events where people can come down and hang out with some music. Bring back that small neighborhood feel where people want to gather and hang out and share their stories of the week and create a sense of community. We know there is a strong sense of community already. We just want to build upon that and hopefully encourage and bring a bit of refresher to the businesses in the area. We went out in the early spring, as soon as we were given the notice to proceed, and we walked up and down the corridor. Made several observations. This is just a few of them but the highlights. It's got some really good strong views up and down the corridor. Whether or not it's up the side streets or towards the mills themselves or town hall. It's anchored at one end by the bank or credit union, but there's also a mix of cultural centers. You've got the Polish Club. There are some dining opportunities but they do lack outdoor dining spaces or even the parking to support that. There does seem to be a strong vibe with the local shops and restaurants. From our observations there could be some opportunities for some better lighting in the corridor, whether or not it's street lighting or specialty lighting to help support some of the outdoor spaces that could occur. As I mentioned earlier, given some of the widths of the sidewalks or some of the orientations of the businesses, there's these nooks and crannies where there could be some opportunities for some gathering spaces or outdoor dining spaces or event spaces. Given the geometry and overall connections of the neighborhood, there are some areas where sidewalks will just stop on one side and you'll have to cross over to continue or varying widths of sidewalks, some are narrow some are wider. It feels very car dominated. I would feel nervous about riding a bike in the street. It's wide enough for cars and parking but you throw in somebody riding a bike and it feels a little narrow. Down towards the credit union side and golf side where the street is wider we notice at the first 3rd of the corridor there's definitely a feel of higher speeds and that's most likely caused by the wider streets. As you get closer to the central core business area where the street gets narrower the traffic does calm down a bit. We took quite a catalog of photos documenting the architecture where there may be some opportunities for gathering spaces. Some of the feelings of corridor, it's dominated by pavement. There are some trees here and there but in general it's pavement, sidewalk, and parking lots. On those warm summer days, there's not a lot of refuge from the sun, particularly walking along the sidewalk. These are just our takeaways. We encourage you to have your own feedback. We can have that conversation at the end if you like but coming in as an outsider and professionals these are takeaways as our first perception of this corridor in general. Now we're breaking down what sort of use zones within the actual corridor exist. You're anchored by 2 commercial zones, whether or not it's a golf course and credit union, or the diner and mills at one end with a few smaller shops, and then there's a mix of residential with some commercial at the first half. In the center you're a commercial business zone. There's restaurants and beauty shops, nail salons and cafes. There is a good residential zone with a mix of some civic and commercial but mostly residential. As we start to break down the scale and what that means, we'll dive into that further. Here you can see sort of at the lower part how the sidewalks are different widths. There's a variety of treatments along the edges and whether or not it's bollards or trees or no trees. Narrower sidewalks. You have utility poles. At the top there's some street views where you can see parking followed by the double lane or driveways. Once you start to add that up you do have large stretches of continuous pavement from edge to edge. It's not really broken up. It lends itself to being hotter in the summer months with very little refuge, which is going to not encourage people to want to walk, and rightfully so. Diving into the current street furnishings, it rungs the gamut from light poles to bollards to benches. There's some really cool features. Love the clock. Classic. It brings that little pop of historic architecture piece. The street signs are great. Another classic touch. You've got some cast in place planter boxes with a bench. You've got some vegetation that you could potentially take advantage of by abutters that are along the corridor. That's related to the residential portion itself. You have some neighbors that have some really great shade trees. There are some planters in the wider parts but there are stretches where you have tree pits that have no trees in them. I know from past conversation those were taken out for one reason or another and haven't been replaced. You also have a scale of trees. There are some newer trees that have been planted in the last 5-10 years. You have some trees that are more seasoned in the 10–15-year range. There is a hodgepodge or inconsistent scale of features

and fixtures as well as trees and vegetation along the corridor. Existing trees we've highlighted. This is doing our do diligence and cataloging what's out there currently. The north side would be the side of the Polish Club, the south side would be opposite side of that. Along the entire corridor you have 12 existing trees. You have 3 dead or empty trees and 12 trees that are on the abutter properties. In general, you only have 24 trees. On the north side and the south side, you have 12 existing trees again. A series of tree pits that have no trees in them. Six dead trees or failing trees or bad health and again 12 trees that are on abutter properties. In total you're only looking at 24-25 total street trees along this corridor. That's on the thinner side as it relates to the scale of the corridor. Between hedges or trees, from a vegetation perspective, the abutters have approximately the same. You're looking at approximately 57 street trees along the entire corridor. It takes a 22-minute stroll at a consistent pace, not too fast not too slow, to go from one end of the corridor to another. In conjunction with us doing our own on-site evaluations, we reached out to the community. We did an online survey. Marc was great at reaching out to some of the businesses to get their feedback. In total we had 148 respondents, which is great. 48% of them were business owners and 52% were residential or near-by neighbors. One of the biggest things that was discussed over and over again within the survey based on the questions within the free comment of the survey, people are encouraging additional parking. They don't believe there is enough parking now to either support going to events or restaurants or just being able to go on a Saturday morning and get a cup of coffee or have breakfast at the diner. Parking is one thing people definitely want to see more of. This is a breakdown of when they think there's not enough parking. Monday – Friday 8 am – 5 pm – normal business hours, Saturday mornings when people are running their errands, Saturday in the afternoon. Friday and Saturdays, the peak business hours for restaurants. That makes sense based on what we're hearing from the community. Some of the other comments were, as I mentioned, the sidewalks are stop start where they'll end in a block and you have to cross the street. People would love to see more crosswalks to encourage slowing of traffic. More traffic signs to let cars know that people are crossing. Whether that's through flashing signals or crosswalk signals, that can all be discussed. 48% of people would like to see more street trees to provide shade and help reduce urban heat island. People would like to see more seasonal plantings and whether or not they're attached to baskets on the light poles or planters. Something that will bring a fresh seasonal feel throughout the year. Some of the top comments for improvements from the public would be consistent paving along the sidewalk. There's different types of paving, whether or not it's asphalt, concrete, or some brick inlay. There's portions where there are street tree pits. There are a lot of portions where there are not. To help revitalize and bring some excitement, a pop of freshness to it, some of the accessories, banners, flags, lighting, things along those lines. We did also start to analyze what does it really mean to traverse this corridor and what is a reasonable amount of time. In all reality, I've got to be honest, I'm a suburbanite. I'm hard pressed to walk 22 minutes. That's a good stroll. That's a lot to ask of someone. Some folks are just not able to do that, whether they're mobility challenged or finding the parking. So, we broke it down into 5-minute increments. 5 minutes is perfectly reasonable. What you see here are 2 circles and we really started at the central core district I highlighted a few slides ago. A few are blocks of restaurants or cafes. Other business types that were centralized and it spreads out from there. We broke it down into 2 five-minute walks. The first circle is 5 minutes, the second circle is an additional 5 minutes, or 10 minutes. From there what we're starting to look at is we're really hearing people are saying they would like to see more parking. Where could there be some opportunities for either a collaboration or agreement with an abutter or the town purchases land if that's something that's feasible. That's big picture, longer discussions that need to happen. We're very limited about finding additional on street parking within the corridor. There's already that and that doesn't seem to be enough. We can't make the street wider without impacting sidewalks. It's going to be hard pressed to find working within the immediate corridor so we start to look just beyond that. There's opportunities where perhaps sharing time with the businesses in their off hours. If it aligns with high peak hours the use of the corridor could there be an agreement where there's shared parking, whether or not it's a church parking lot or the Polish parking lot or is there an opportunity to purchase some land. We quickly roughed out, and these haven't gone beyond conversation, what these particular spaces may provide for additional parking. It's intended to spark a conversation. What we did summarize on the side are quotes from the survey. Approximating the current parking on the north side there's approximately 113 street parking spaces, there's 77 parking spaces on the south side for a total of 190 spaces. People are saying that's not nearly enough so we start to talk about how do we find new parking. That's what will encourage people to get out of their cars. We've started to digest along the corridor the various sidewalk widths and where there might be some opportunities in just existing sections. We'll talk about how they start to frame up in the next steps. You have sidewalks that range from 5' with parking on both sides and drive lanes in the middle. You have sidewalks that are wider and no

parking and parking on one side and narrower sidewalks. You have 9' wide sidewalks, 5' wide sidewalks. We are starting to focus on where are the key moments along the corridor where we could make significant improvements or really start to make this corridor special. We've identified potentially 4 key locations based on the available space within that area without really impacting the corridor. These are intended to be meaningful spaces. By the bank, over by the diner, the central core district and potentially the Polish Club. We'll talk about what could be in these spaces. Focusing in on the diner, there's a lot of pavement, there's a lot of opportunity to capitalize on that to help reduce the amount of pavement and potentially create this gateway into the corridor coming right on to East Street bring in community terrace seating with planting behind it where people want to gather and hang out. They could either have some outdoor dining as part of the diner and spills over to this common area green space. There's some great people watching so maybe there's some high-top benches where people are outside working underneath the trees watching people walk up and down the sidewalk or hanging out on a Friday night taking in what is happening along East Street. If the community wants, maybe there's a softer edge or community garden within this space, whether or not they're planting their own plants or own vegetables. It's a great way to get people to come together and have a gathering space for relatively low cost overall. Ultimately there's additional trees or picnic tables, just a softer edge by that corridor because there's sidewalk. You can see there's no break between the sidewalk and the pavement of the parking lot. It's become this sea of asphalt and it does become quite inhospitable during the hot summer months. Nobody wants to spend time in those spaces. We want to soften them up, bring some shade to them. Really create a sense of arrival into the corridor from this side of East Street. Going to the opposite end towards the credit union, you have the golf course which is amazing and beautiful. This was a photo we took while we were out there. The vegetation is amazing. It's a nice view to look at from across. We thought this was a great opportunity to introduce potentially some art or vertical element to indicate a sense of arrival for people and cars. Highlighting perhaps the history. We know there's a lot of mills and a lot of factories that are within the neighborhood and probably the reason for the neighborhood to be developed. There's ways to pay respects to that, whether it's sculptures or signage, but make people aware that there's something new and exciting going on here, let's get out of our car, maybe we can walk around a bit and take it in. As we get towards the central corridor district here's some opportunities for people to again get out of their cars. Marc & I have talked about this in passing, are there opportunities where portions of the street can be shut down on a Friday night and people are able to take it over. Restaurants flow out into the street. Maybe there's a band or movie or something to encourage people to come hang out. You've got the great scale of the buildings. They're not too tall, not too dominating. People would feel comfortable. We could introduce some specialty lighting, specialty paving to separate it. During the traffic hours it encourages people to slow down if there's a change in pavement. There's something going on here. It's not just a roadway. It does create a different scale and different vibe within that corridor potentially. One thing to consider related to trying to create more parking in the corridor without having to go beyond the limits of East Street, you could potentially change parts of it to be one way. That would be quite the undertaking but just a thought. Instead of doing parallel parking you could do angled parking or pull in parking and increase the amount of parking in that corridor. In order to do that you would have to take away from the drive aisle. It could be quite the undertaking. I'm not saying it's impossible, I'm not saying it's practical, I'm just saying it's an option at this point. We want to look at the street edge providing a consistent feeling of separation between vehicles and sidewalks and whether or not that's planters and trees and lights and various types of pavement just to encourage people to get out of their cars. It's a much more pleasant walk if you're not walking right up against the street. It also provides an opportunity for shade. Where the street is wider does it make sense to introduce islands so that it's not so expansive but all provide a middle refuge for people crossing the street. You could do raised crosswalks to help slow down traffic. The possibilities are endless as it comes to mitigating traffic without having to do traffic lights or intersections. These are all incremental strategies that could be deployed to help mitigate the perception of high-speed traffic through the corridor ultimately encouraging people to park and walk. Then we started to look at what are our design considerations. As I mentioned, within that same corridor you can keep the same sidewalk at 5', which you guys have now. You can give the street a little bit of road diet, cheat a little bit and narrow up some of the parallel parking, which would also narrow up the travel lanes. These are still within industry standards of travel widths for slower speeds. It provides an opportunity to start to introduce the separation between sidewalk and the parked cars on the street in general as well as introduce street trees and different elements, whether or not they're light poles or various fixtures. It gives you this edge infrastructure that is providing a nice walking experience along those businesses. Where you have wider sidewalks you can still introduce the street trees, have the wider sidewalks as well, which is great. As I mentioned, there's a few areas where there's setbacks the way the architecture

of the building is relation to the street edge provide sort of these nooks and they're adjacent to restaurants, where people could have outdoor dining or café seating. Or maybe they're not associated with restaurants at all, maybe they're just public seating and people can hang out. You can go for your morning walk, grab a cup of coffee, read the paper, meet a friend. Here we're showing where you can start to narrow in the heavier district. You can provide mid-block refuge for people crossing the street. It helps break up that wider width of pavement. As I mentioned, there's a lot of options. There's not just greening it up. There's potential for more permanent installations, whether or not there's swings. Those are tending to becoming more popular. They're industrial, multi person swings where people can hang out. They're the new in thing. Within commercial landscapes we want to look at landscape structures or fabrics. We want to create plaza spaces where people can gather. Again, it all comes down to the details of specialty lighting and creating a sense of a place that's special and unique to East Street corridor and Ludlow in general. As I showed in the other option, whether or not it's artwork or sculptures or signage. The signage itself could be sculptural. This is an example where they spelled out a word in various fonts and letters. At night it lights up. Something fun and dynamic, more interactive. You get to use it both in the day and at night. These are the little details that tell people there's something new and exciting going on here, let's check it out. There's different pavement treatments we could consider. It could be as simple as painting the existing roadway to bring this pop of color. Something a little bit more fresh and more modern. Whether or not the planters are more bold. The canopies are bright fabrics. Even the street furniture. There's a lot that can be considered. Maybe it's a combination of the softer green and the brighter bolder colors. That's completely fine too. In these scenarios where we start to consider planters and seating, you can see here in this section it's really a planter in the middle surrounded by a bench. We would have specialty paving, whether or not it's brick or different material along the street edge, really separating the 2. You could start to play with the widths of the sidewalk. Or is as simple as providing a brighter color crosswalk. In this scenario, large, oversized planters that could support trees that are not in the ground but they're raised up at a higher scale providing that separation from cars and pedestrians. Again, in the nooks you can have opportunities with benches and places for people to hang out. Perhaps there's some opportunities on some of the walls of businesses for some murals to bring that vibe and excitement to the corridor. That's where we're at, at this moment. Those are initial thoughts. I'm going to open up for questions and comments in a moment. I want to frame up. From here, we're going to start to synthesize down to a preferred option or 2. To emphasize what can be done along this corridor to encourage this energy or revitalization and encourage people to get out of their cars and convene with their neighbors and businesses. In conjunction with this particular project, we are just kicking off with you folks the MVP grant. If you're not familiar with it, it's the Massachusetts Vulnerability Something. Ultimately, it's encouraging communities like you to consider potential for climate resilience, and that could be anything from stormwater management, because the storms are becoming more intense and more frequent, to urban heat islands and reducing our heat footprint. The more pavement we have the hotter things are getting, particularly at night because it's all reflecting back and putting that heat back into our environment. If we can provide more shading opportunities that helps cut that down. As part of that grant, this corridor is included within that grant scope. So, we'll be looking at the green infrastructure piece of it and how we can mitigate stormwater through incremental strategies, whether or not they're rain gardens, other LID or low impact development strategies for stormwater management. Ultimately, we're going to be looking at how we can help mitigate the urban heat island along this corridor. These 2 projects are running side by side. Particularly, Lindsay and I are focused on the revitalization piece of this at the very moment. From here, we'll be proposing 2 streamlined concepts based on the feedback from the survey as well as from you folks. We will then be presenting the feedback on those. We would ultimately like to have 1 preferred plan and then some strategies to help you folks implement it over time with basically a report that outlines the strategies that could be put in place. The furniture types, materiality. It sets the framework for future projects to move forward within this corridor. With that I will open it up to you folks for comments and questions.

Mr. Goncalves: In looking at the whole plan, it's exciting and I really like it. I think when you're coming into the whole corridor, anything beyond the funeral home or anything below that sector between the diner and sushi place, you've got not a whole lot going there. I would rather see the concentration, even though it wouldn't be continuous. Maybe more pocketed. More by the diner or mills to incorporate what's happening down by the clock. Then come up by Blue Water, the butcher, Primavera, in through there all the way out to the funeral home. I think that's where you want to concentrate. There's going to be a couple sections where it would be a waste because at 4-5 o'clock they go dead anyways.

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Mr. Kunkel: We will be looking at the entire corridor and I apologize if I didn't make that clear. Based on what we believe are the biggest potential opportunities, the most bang for your buck. There are some areas where there are more opportunities. I'm not saying there's not opportunities elsewhere within the corridor that should be explored but just based on the fact that particularly along the 2 edges is residential. So, we want to tow that fine line of staying within the right of way and balancing that with being respectful to the neighbors and the outside neighborhood. We're not looking to take away land from anyone. We're not looking to disrupt anyone's use of their property or anything like that. If anything, we want to capitalize on the fact that, as I noted earlier, there's some great shade trees along their property edges that overhang the street. We want to make sure we're preserving those. I hear you. Great points. We can definitely take a look at different areas a bit more. We just thought that these areas really provide the most opportunity at this point for the most bang for your buck.

Mr. Silva: What I'm mainly concerned with is the parking. We first have to find a spot, find somewhere. We need the parking here in this small area. To me it makes no sense going down to Frank's because we have parking already for the riverwalk right across the street. We have the gazebo, which is a great area which we could probably make it a little more conducive to walking. We have a lot over there by the library that we should make that a parking lot. It's been there for years. We took a house down and it's doing nothing. We need to find something centrally where we could put a parking lot and maybe enhance it with some seeding and stuff like that. That's the main focus and then beautifying the area. If we could get some kind of low interest loan to beautify some of the buildings, some of them are awful. They do need some work.

Mr. Strange: A couple of comments. There was another slide deck that Brandon & Lindsay showed to us that identifies some areas that we could purchase for parking. I'll be sure to send that to you guys. There's also some more visual elements that you can take a look at. Brandon, can you share this one with me and I can send it to the board? I like how they segmented; they broke up the corridor into different segments. I thought that was really smart because there is more of a commercial corridor that we could focus on initially. I think a lot of the elements are low hanging like raised planters, banners, and some artwork down by Luso. It creates a sense of place that's not there right now. There's all kinds of really successful businesses with loyal patronage. It's placemaking and that's not terribly expensive. I liked how they segmented it. The banners on the lighting, even when you go down now and the flags are hanging from the poles it creates a certain sense of place. I've seen a lot of towns that create something that's iconic on the banners as you're going down East Street that makes you feel you're someplace.

Mr. DeBarge: Thanks Brandon & Lindsay. It's exciting to see. All of us in this room have been talking about changes on East Street. I'd like to see a change from the minute you come over Potts Bridge from the Orchard and take a right onto East Street. It's like a starting line of a race. When you take that right onto East you should be able to see East Street open up into a much different vision than we see now. We see broken trees, sidewalks that are unkept, orange cones everywhere. Inconsistency after inconsistency. I think once we change that, and I love the different features that you're showing. I think that will change not only the atmosphere but the attitude of East Street and the people around it. Parking is essential. We all know that. If you 2 have ever been downtown to Main Street in Ware, I talk about that all the time. The Town of Ware, they just finished it. It's absolutely gorgeous. The hangers. There's no weeds on the sidewalks. The hydrants are painted. The military banners are up. Our Veterans Services Director in our town and myself are working on that for our own light poles. I look forward to seeing a lot of progress on this corridor.

Mr. Rosenblum: I mentioned once before, the Town of Hudson, MA. I have a friend that lives out there and what they did in their town, I think they won some kind of award or got a grant. It's probably a 10-minute walk to get anywhere. They did an amazing job. Not even just on the main street. There's areas even off the street that you can work into like breweries and restaurants. It doesn't just have to be in that main drag if it just pops out too.

Mr. Stefancik: I'm all in on this, especially with the Ludlow Mills and all the additional housing we're going to have down there, up to 100 more housing units and another building. I think it's important to extend out the area. The East Street area is tired and needs some TLC. I think this is the first step in the right direction, having a plan produced. Seeing what we can do to improve the area.

Mr. Gennette: You have influence over the MVP grant and what we're doing and you feel that this fits into that as well?

Mr. Stefancik: I think certain things would, like stormwater, heat islands, trees, green infrastructure, green stormwater infrastructure.

Mr. Strange: Just to be clear, we've communicated to Brandon & Lindsay about how the existing trees were planted and they were much too big for where they were planted. That's why we have to be very strategic about it if we are to plant any trees that they're smaller or they're in raised planters so they're not in the concrete themselves. We're cognizant of that.

Mr. Gennette: I think everybody is kind of excited about your ideas here. We'd love to see where you're going to take them.

Mr. Kunkel: The expectation is over the next month or so we'll be refining and putting pen to paper coming up with some ideas to share with you Marc and then you can share them as needed. Ultimately we want the plan to be endorsed by you folks. From there, whether or not this is implemented through grants or other mechanisms, that's future. This is really just a road map to get you guys set up for success moving forward.

Mr. Silva: You showed us a lot. There's stuff on there that quite honestly I don't think it's possible for our corridor. We just don't have the space or funds right now. If you could cut some of those things out, they're beautiful by the way, but I just think we should concentrate more on things that we can do now that's possible, maybe in the future we can.

CORRESPONDENCE

121. Gloria Fortunato – Leader St. Elizabeth Pack 180 Cub Scouts – requesting to us the field at Veteran's Park to launch rockets late fall or mid spring.

Mr. DeBarge: Which Veteran's Park is she asking for?

Mr. Strange: This one here?

Mr. DeBarge: Is the land going to be…late fall, mid spring. Is it going to be accessible?

Mr. Strange: It should be. They should be done with the demo mid-October.

Mr. Silva: I'd like a little more defined what she's talking about. We have a soccer field over there. If we say she can use the field and she's going to use the soccer field and the soccer field is being used for soccer it's not…we need a little more definition of what exactly she wants to do.

Mr. Gennette: I'd like to know what kind of rockets we're talking about.

Mr. Strange: Rockets you make as a kid.

Mr. DeBarge: They're not supersonic.

Mr. Rosenblum: I would recommend they talk to the Fire Department.

Mr. DeBarge: I hope they already have.

Mr. Goncalves: Maybe as we get closer we can have this group come in and talk to us.

Mr. Gennette: Consider it tabled.

122. Kate Roy, Director of Communications & External Affairs – Massachusetts Municipal Wholesale Electric Company (MMWEC) – Summer 2023 edition of MMWEC's Join Action News.

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

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123. Kara Jorge, Resident – informing the Board about damages to their home, as well as neighbors from golf balls from Ludlow Country Club.

Mr. Rosenblum: Mr. Goncalves and I were actually talking about this one once. Did you ever get a range on that?

Mr. Goncalves: In your packet you will see these photographs. I took it upon myself after seeing this request. I discussed it with some of the boards, some of the people coming into the club and leadership. I went out there. If you look at these, the top one I ran the distance from the senior tees to the back of the house in question. It's only 160 yards. There are some trees running along the 3rd fairway which shelter it. It is possible that the senior tee is the culprit. The regular tees are out by East Street and to clear from the ground to the corner here is 235 yards. For somebody to clear the trees, first they'd have to thread a needle and it would probably be about a 260-yard drive. There are people here that can do it, but it's kind of a rarity to fly a ball 260. I own a driving range and very few people can roll it to the 250, let alone clear it 260. What we suggested to the golf course, and they've already implemented it, was to move the senior tees to the ladies' tees. By moving from the senior tees to the ladies tees you're a lot closer. Anybody that hits the ball 170 is going to be beyond that house and it makes it so it's got to be a much bigger bad shot. What the country club said is, ok, we'll get rid of the senior tees here and we'll go over to the ladies' tees. All over the course there's dual tees where ladies and seniors are teeing from the same area, just to see how that goes. To see if that solves the problem. I worked with the country club and Jorge's and got them paid for the damage. There was a $400 dollar dent in the back of their garage. They're getting paid for that. The neighbor, which is the house down further which would require about a 280-yard drive, one of the fence posts got hit. We're waiting for him to submit a bill and the country club will take care of it. Kara's issue is what if one of her kids is playing in the backyard. I get it. The solution is to put up a big ugly fence, and I don't think she wants that. We saw what Chicopee Country Club looked like after they did that. Eventually they ended up eliminating a par 4 and now if you go down the street over there they're living like it's the ugliest thing in the world. They thought they were getting a country club view and they now look like they're living in a compound. They're isolated from the golf course, not the golf course isolated from them. I think the idea there would be to go ahead with the women's tees serving as the senior tees now. Ludlow does have somebody like Mr. Silva who can hit the ball that far and he's a senior. He can use the senior tees if he wants to. There's a lot of people there, very good golfers, who are a little bit older that use the senior tees who hit the ball that far. The percentage of people that can reach the Jorge's house from the men's regular tees is very small. Plus, there's a line of trees there that you can see. I think it's a great idea to move those seniors to the ladies and see what happens. Maybe the rest of the season or a couple months into the new season. If that doesn't solve the problem maybe we look at something else.

Mr. Rosenblum: There is precedent to this. Out in a club called Indian Pond in the eastern part of the state they have the same thing. The homeowners got a ton of money suing for it. I happened to play that golf course and I saw it for the first-time last year. They have 30' telephone poles with the big black net that you see at the driving range in their backyard. It's the last thing you would want to do as a property owner to look at that. It's probably going to drive their property value down. I wouldn't want to buy it. You guys are real estate, you can tell me about it. I hope it works.

Mr. Goncalves: You're going to get an air ball maybe, but I think the majority of the balls that are going that way are coming off the senior tees.

Mr. DeBarge: I'd like to see the change if it is the senior tee. I don't think it's all the senior tee. They had 78 balls in their yard in one year. Their neighbors are getting more and more concerned. I think technology has caught up with the yardage. Moving the senior tees is ok but the white tees, all of those houses up to the Jorge's and past them are very reachable with technology today. I think the balls are going a lot farther. I think the people there may like the netting. I've gone to that street 4 times in the last 2-3 years with significant damage to one specific house that I've seen 3 different times. I hope the change of the senior tee works. I think the consideration if it doesn't work for netting will have to be considered.

Mr. Goncalves: I'm speaking as a realtor; the netting is ugly and it's going to detract from property values. The golf course was probably there before the home. It's not an issue of anything else of we're going to put up a net now and that's what you're going to be looking at.

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Mr. Rosenblum: Another suggestion I'd come up with without putting a net up is if you move the tee farther over towards the corner property and you angle it out to the left, kind of a small dog leg right. You could also put hedges along the tee box so in order to get it in someone's back yard you'd have to hit it through a hedge. I don't think anybody wants to have a net in their backyard.

Mr. Gennette: If it comes to that, they'll be coming to the table here and trying some stuff, we'll see if it works and we'll go from there. I hope the residents are happy to see what happens with it and if not I'm sure we'll find out.

Mr. Goncalves: Anybody on that side that's had any issues, the country club has been very amicable. Even at the back of the driving range on McLean Parkway there was a ball once that went through a window and they ponied up right away.

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

Motion made by Mr. Goncalves to send a letter to the country club to officially move the senior tees to the women's tees.

Mr. Silva: I don't believe we can request that.

Mr. Rosenblum: It's a private business.

Mr. Goncalves: They've done it already.

Mr. Silva: A suggestion maybe.

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124. Mary Ellen Fish, Resident – suggesting to the Board that the form of Government in the town should be changed to a Town Manager.

Mr. Gennette: Thank you Mary, I think we can send that on to the new committee that's been created to discuss exactly that. I'm sure they'll have some public meetings. They would love to see you there.

Mr. Rosenblum: 6:00 p.m. this Thursday evening, streaming live on Ludlow cable tv.

TOWN ADMINISTRATOR'S REPORT

Vets Park Update: MassDEP is scheduled to issue their non-traditional asbestos abatement work approval sometime this week—if not today. Also, Eversource is likely to be cutting power to the building (hopefully) this week. Once those boxes are checked off, demolition of the building can begin. Loam and overseeding was scheduled to begin in early October. We should know more about whether that target will be met once MassDEP and Eversource clear the way.

LHS Update: Construction bids were opened at Town Hall on Friday, September 15th. The low bid came in around $4.6M, which will consume almost all of the remaining ARPA funds for the town. Nevertheless, we look forward to the groundbreaking for this project and ultimately a brand-new athletics complex that will be another source of pride for the town.

Mr. Silva: Who opens the bids and awards the bids?

Mr. Strange: The way it worked was I was here, someone from Mott MacDonald was here to officially open the bids. We had 3 bidders in the room. They had their packages unopened. Everyone is in the room. The person from Mott MacDonald collects the packages, opens them up in front of everybody, goes through the bids, records them. There were 3 bids. One was 4.64, one was 4.7 and the 3rd was a little over 5 million. There was an alternate and the alternate bid if the town accepts the alternate it replaced one of the original items, I think item #6. Because it was so close, only about $100,000 difference between the 2 low bidders, we still have to do the calculation and make sure the low bidder.

Mr. Silva: Shouldn't those bids come to the Board of Selectmen where they're opened and we're there and then later on we decide and award the bids?

Mr. Strange: It's governed by procurement laws. When I was in Agawam and we did bid openings this is exactly how it was. All the bidders would come and they would be there to witness it and those results would be reported to the City Council and the mayor. It has to go to the lowest responsible bidder.

Mr. Goncalves: Is there bid bonds for these?

Mr. Strange: Yes. Lowest responsive and responsible.

Mr. Silva: It does not have to go to the lowest bid.

Mr. Rosenblum: You still have to vet those and go through the vetting process of the open bids.

Mr. Strange: We're going through that process now.

Mr. Goncalves: For people that are watching and listening, four years ago we attempted to do this and we went to town meeting and eventually on a ballot to raise the money. It would have been a third of the cost. It's a 300% increase. So, everybody that was all squirrely and squirmy about $20/year on their tax bill, basically we've just took 2 ½ million dollars we could have used somewhere else in town and ended up spending it here instead of being able to do something else and that's really disappointing. I hope people in the future look at what if, and if we don't do this what can happen. This day in age it's one door dash from Dunkin or whatever. It seems those people are in town an awful lot.

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Mr. Silva: The other part of my question, once that's done, who's got the authority to award the bid? Does it come to us?

Mr. Strange: You will sign the contract, yes.

Mr. Silva: We will award the bid first and then sign the contract?

Mr. Goncalves: I think Mott MacDonald is going to tell us this is the one we should go with after the vetting.

Mr. Silva: That's not the way it should be done. I know we've had some come through and the bid came through and we didn't award the bid to that because there was issues that arose and Mott MacDonald is not going to know.

Mr. Strange: It goes to the lowest responsive, responsible bidder. Responsiveness means they submitted the bid on time, they checked all the boxes that were required in the RFP. Then the next question is are they responsible. We have to check references and see how projects went with previous towns.

Mr. Silva: The community had an issue with one years ago and they were going to award the bid. Because of that it didn't get awarded. That's all I'm trying to figure out. Who, what, where? If everybody is ok with doing it that way that's fine, but we, as the ultimate authority, should be awarding these bids.

Mr. DeBarge: You mean choosing who we want?

Mr. Silva: Yes.

Mr. DeBarge: I totally disagree with that.

Mr. Goncalves: I think what Manny is saying is after we get all the information, we're talking about the responsible part and all the leg work is done to make sure they're ok.

Mr. Rosenblum: Once it's vetted, then it comes to us. If all 3 bids are good and vetted properly, we can choose the 5 million if we want. You don't have to choose the 4.6 or 4.7. We could choose the 5.

Mr. Strange: You'd have to have a good reason. If you chose the 5 million the other 2 could protest it.

Mr. Rosenblum: Between the ones that are $100,000 apart…

Mr. Goncalves: Ultimately, the contract will come to us. If any one of us for any reason doesn't feel comfortable with it we can speak our minds at that point.

Mr. Gennette: If we knew there was something about the company we didn't like or we had some predetermined notion we could say something at that point.

Mr. Strange: I only have my own experience, not as a procurement officer but as a department head going through this process. I can ask Lori to see what the town options are and get back to you on it.

DIF Meeting: On Wednesday, September 20th at 4:30PM, WestMass Area Development, in partnership with the town, is hosting a public workshop outlining the proposed expansion of the DIF district to include East Street. The public is encouraged to attend and share their thoughts on what projects are most needed in that area, such as repaving Stevens/State Street, building new sidewalks on East Street, and creating better aesthetics through signage, banners, greenspaces, and the like.

Charter Committee: The Charter Committee is meeting for the first time this Thursday, September 21st at 6PM at Town Hall. The public is welcome to attend. The meeting will also be live streamed on LCTV.

UNFINISHED BUSINESS

Board to discuss and possibly vote to allow use of the Community Center for the Ludlow Cares Coalition.

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Motion made by Mr. DeBarge to allow the use of the Community Center for the Ludlow Cares Coalition as specified in the single use rental agreement. **Mr. Goncalves second. All in favor. Motion passed 5-0.**

NEW BUSINESS

Board to acknowledge and approve the Certificate of Recognition for the 100th Birthday of Frank Sepiol.

Mr. Rosenblum: We, the Board of Selectmen, are proud to present this Certificate of Recognition to Frank Sepiol. The Board of Selectmen would like to wish you a special day that honors your 100th birthday and everything you've done to make the world a better place for the last 10 decades. You have experienced many milestones and have witnessed extraordinary changes in the world over the last 100 years. May your memories continue to provide your family and friends with the insight and wisdom that age and experience imparts.

Motion made by Mr. Goncalves to approve the certificate of recognition for Mr. Frank Sepiol. **Mr. Silva second. All in favor. Motion passed 5-0.**

Board to discuss and possibly sign contract for FY24 GIS Web Hosting (Tighe & Bond)

Mr. Rosenblum: Since this is up your ally, is this good?

Mr. Gennette: It's the annual contract, it is good.

Motion made by Mr. Rosenblum to sign the contract for FY24 GIS Web Hosting (Tighe & Bond). **Mr. DeBarge second.**

Mr. Goncalves: Once upon a time, were we looking at something different?

Mr. Strange: We were talking about increasing the information that's in the GIS and updating the information more frequently.

All in favor. Motion passed 5-0.

Board to discuss and possibly sign contract for Millside Drive Bidding & Construction Phase Services (Tighe & Bond)

Mr. Strange: The town got a 3-million-dollar Mass Works grant to construct a new Millside Drive, which is going to be the back 40 acres of Ludlow Mills. Tighe & Bond got the contract to do the design work and that's what this contract is for.

Motion made by Mr. Rosenblum to approve and sign the contract for Millside Drive Bidding & Construction Phase Services (Tighe & Bond). **Mr. DeBarge second. All in favor. Motion passed 5-0.**

Board to discuss and possibly sign contract for Whitney Park Conceptual Design (Tighe & Bond)

Mr. Rosenblum: I know that we talked about our remaining ARPA funds and you had said the possibility of $500,000 that came back from safety complex because we bonded it instead. Was it $27,000. The discussion aspect of it is how much can we do.

Mr. Strange: My suggestion would be to go through with the design and public process so we have a design and see what it comes in at. That could be a small bond we could stretch out over 20 years. It could be, who knows what opportunities. There's park grants available. That's what Agawam used to build School Street Park in part, so I wouldn't want to stop with the momentum.

Mr. Rosenblum: That's what I'm saying. Bringing it up for the discussion aspect of it. We've discussed so much of what we want to do and then getting it out there of saying we want to do this. We don't want to over promise and under deliver.

Motion made by Mr. Rosenblum to sign the contract for Whitney Park Conceptual Design (Tighe & Bond. **Mr. Silva second. All in favor. Motion passed 5-0.**

Board to discuss and possibly make changes to the LATOSS II Admin at the Recreation Department – Tabled from last meeting.

Mr. Gennette: We did this already.

Board to discuss and possibly make changes to the HR Admin position from a part-time LATOSS III to a full-time LATOSS IV.

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Ms. Ribeiro: This is currently the part-time position in my office that is a LATOSS III. It's currently vacant. It became part-time when the HR specialist position was approved last year in the spring of 2022. It has never been occupied by somebody because when the HR specialist position was filled she was training for the position and I wanted Lisa Halpin to be able to train the part-timer. In the meantime, when that was happening, discussions started about possibly myself becoming the assistant town administrator. Then the shared services grant for the Board of Health came up so we thought we might have some additional funding to get a full-time position. It's kind of been on hold. To recruit for a part-time position is very difficult. You get a much better caliber of employee when you're recruiting for a full-time position. That's been the reason the position has not been filled. Per my memo here, it's a domino effect. What's happening now with myself getting pulled in different directions with the assistant town administrator role, it's impossible with 2 full-time people. We support every single department in town. No day is the same. There's multiple issues that come up on a regular basis. To sit in on meetings, to sit in on interviews, there's constant interruption. It's impossible to keep up with everything. With myself in transition, the HR specialist has been taking on more duties. She's maxed out. She cannot take on any more work at this point. We really need to have this position be a full-time position at this point. We have the funding from the shared services grant that we did receive from the Board of Health, which is a great opportunity for us. There was administrative agency fee money in there for support purposes so we were able to use that money. It's a few thousand dollars of what it would cost the town to make this a full-time position with benefits. That's assuming there's even

an increase to the benefits. That's the reason for part-time to full-time. The reason for an increase in the reclassification from a III to a IV is it's just the nature of the work. There's a lot of sensitive matters that come into the office. A lot of confidential information. This person would be doing a lot of research on information and things that are not necessarily made public or will ever be made public. HR is one of the departments that a lot of the information is not public information. I really feel that it needs to be a higher-level functioning position. Compared to all the other classifications and all the other LATOSS IV's that are out there right now, even the one that was reclassified tonight, I really think it needs to be an IV for the nature of the work and the subject matter. You have the shared services grant; I don't know if you have questions on that. The funds have not been distributed yet. I believe the first payment is going to be distributed in January. You have the updated job description and the request.

Mr. Goncalves: What does the shared services thing have to do with this?

Ms. Ribeiro: It's funding the position.

Mr. Goncalves: It's not costing us anything because there's money in this department over here.

Ms. Ribeiro: If you look at the spreadsheet I did, there's a difference of about $4,000. That's including benefits, not salary. It covers salary 100%. Usually the Treasurer/Collector overbudgets for benefits every year so you're looking at $4,000.

Motion made by Mr. DeBarge to make those necessary changes to the HR Admin position from a part-time LATOSS III to a full-time LATOSS IV as requested by our HR director. **Mr. Goncalves second. All in favor. Motion passed 5-0.**

Board to discuss and possibly sign employment contract for Carrie Ribeiro ATA/HR Director.

Mr. Goncalves: Who made this contract?

Ms. Ribeiro: The attorneys made it. It was based off of the Town Administrator's contract and Elsa Barros' contract. It's a standard contract.

Mr. Gennette: Are there any changes in this contract from the last contract?

Ms. Ribeiro: I didn't have a contract. This would be the first.

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BOARD UPDATES/MISC

Mr. DeBarge: Our Veterans center since we've been open in our location there. Everybody knows the kind of stuff we're putting on at the center. The month of August, we distributed 10,994 pounds of food to 447 individuals serving over 200 households. It's an increase of over 2,000 pounds and 60 households from just July. We have a group of dedicated volunteers as well that are there all the time. Jim, Dave, Francy, Kyle, Nick are always there, always helping. We're bringing in dental services. Mobile dental services started this past month. Veterans can receive a free cleaning and exam. Our veterans' lunches are taking place the 2nd Tuesday of each month. It's maxed out every time. For those veterans who are looking to get lunch, you need to call our vet center and make reservations. We are sold out every time. The VFW also has assigned a new claims service officer to cover Western Mass, who holds hours Monday-Wednesday 9-5 at our Vet center. His name is Jeff. He is a retired Master Sgt from the Marine Corp. He assists veterans that Eric doesn't have time with that are outside of our community where Eric deals with mostly our veterans from our community.

Mr. Goncalves: Do you guys have big freezers there?

Mr. DeBarge: We have 2 floor freezers and a big refrigerator.

Mr. Goncalves: So if I bring a big tub ice cream?

Mr. DeBarge: Today, we just took a shipment in of about 50 half gallons of ice cream and 50 pints. Another thing I want to cover for those 8 of you who are watching, tell your children or grandchildren, the Wreaths Across America mobile education exhibit, it's an educational truck and

will visit Ludlow to honor veterans and their supporters. It will be at our vet center, which is at 497 Holyoke Street on October 12th from 11 am to 4 pm so you can come check out how the wreaths are done and what Wreaths Across America is all about.

Mr. Silva: I met with Western Mass Pioneers, LYSA and the Community Center, at the request of Mr. Goncalves. We had a pretty good meeting and I think things are pretty well ironed out. Everybody is on the same page now and everybody left there pretty set on what should be done.

Mr. Gennette: Let's come back to the contract then.

Motion made by Mr. Goncalves to approve and sign the contract as presented for HR for Carrie Ribeiro. **Mr. Rosenblum second. All in favor. Motion passed 5-0.**

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. DeBarge: There's 2 other to cover. The 250th and Jimmy Mazz are joining up to do a Ludlow Legends night. We're going to have Joe Pereira, Lisa Carter, and Jimmy Mazz at the Ludlow Country Club on October 28th from 6pm – 10pm. This is a 250th committee fundraiser. There will be flyers all over the place. They'll be all over town. Grab a flyer and either order a table or tickets. The last thing I have is Friday November 3rd, Ludlow night at the Thunderbirds at the Mass Mutual Center playing the Belleville Senators. $23 tickets.

Mr. Gennette: I only have 1 thing I want to add. There will be more information coming out about this. I had approached a company for software for the DPW, Violitics. They came out and did a demonstration with the DPW. It's to monitor roads. It's supposed to help DPW's perform better maintenance, more accurate. We're looking at that right now. We're hoping that's something we can do. You're going to hear more about it soon.

Mr. DeBarge: DPW is doing a great job too.

Motion made by Mr. Rosenblum to adjourn the meeting at 8:08 p.m. **Mr. Goncalves second. All in favor. Motion passed 5-0.**

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Chairman

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