

The Meeting of the Board of Selectmen held on Tuesday, March 30, 2021 began at 5:30 p.m. Remote participation due to COVID-19.

Members Present: William Rosenblum, Chairman, Derek Debarge, James Gennette, Antonio Goncalves, and Manny Silva.

First Order of Business: The Pledge of Allegiance

**Moved by Mr. Goncalves, seconded by Mr. Debarge to appoint Mr. Rosenblum as the Chairman. Vote 5-0. All in favor.**

**Moved by Mr. Silva, seconded by Mr. Gennette to appoint Mr. Goncalves as Vice Chairman. Vote 5-0. All in favor.**

**Visitations:**

**5:35 p.m. – Fire Chief Pease/Sgt. Belanger – HVAC Unit – approved up to \$525K**

Chief Pease explained that an airflow study had been done on the HVAC Unit at the Public Safety Complex, which was given to the Board for their review. There a lot of issues with the current unit, as it is 25 years old. There was some ductwork completely missing. The first quote is for dampers and controls to get the inside of the building functioning properly. The second quote was to replace all of the heating units on the roof. We are hoping to use some of the Cares Act funds to replace this system.

Ms. Villano brought this project to Capital Planning, which is going to cost approximately \$500,000 and they would like to have the Board of Selectmen weigh in to see if the Town should go out to borrow. If you decide to go out and borrow, the Selectmen would have to open the warrant and insert another article. The Town Treasurer to be aware of how borrowing will affect our credit rating. The Treasurer would rather use other money if possible, rather than going out to borrow. The Town will be receiving money from the Federal Government through the Cares Act; however, we are limited to \$150,000 for any HVAC work. We are hearing that the limits may expand a little bit. After pulling all of the invoices for the HVAC system from 2018, 2019, 2020 and half of 2021 and the Town has spent over \$120,000 in repairs and maintenance. In 2019 and 2020 we had roof top units fail.

Sgt. Belanger explained that in 2020 when the roof top unit failed, it took three months to get the parts in to repair the unit in the middle of winter.

Ms. Villano explained that a few businesses in town were kind enough to lend some portable heaters in order to keep the building warm until the work was completed. Suggesting that the Board of Selectmen uses the money coming from the Federal Government for the HVAC unit.

Mr. Debarge stated that the health and wellbeing of the staff should be number one. Mr. Debarge is not in favor of going out to borrow if it can be avoided. However, he is 100% in favor of using the Federal money for this project.

Mr. Goncalves asked if this has gone out to bid yet?

Sgt. Belanger explained that it has not gone out to bid as of yet, but it will.

Chief Pease asked that if the Selectmen do vote to use the Cares Act money for this project, if they go a little higher than the \$500,000 just to be on the safe side.

Mr. Silva asked why we are putting a number on it if it hasn't gone to bid yet?

Ms. Villano explained that Corcoran came in and did the full study and explained that it cannot go out to bid unless you have the money authorized.

Mr. Silva is shocked by the cost of this project.

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Mr. Debarge stated that this is why there needs to be a Facilities Manager in this town.

Chief Pease also added that he is not an expert in HVAC and it takes a lot of time away from our jobs as Fire Chief and Sergeant of the Police Department.

Mr. Rosenblum agreed with Mr. Debarge's statement and knows that it has been discussed at the Capital Planning meetings on several occasions.

Mr. Silva asked if Corcoran had mentioned what the savings would be after completing this project?

Sgt. Belanger stated that currently the system cannot pull fresh air from outside but the new system would allow that and therefore they would not be heating or air conditioning when it's 70 degrees outside and that would be a savings. The motors will have...on them so that will save money. It's computerized so it will only run when we need it. Also, all of the space heaters, fans and air purifiers will be gone as well which will be a savings as well.

Ms. Villano explained that is why they are asking for a little more money than what the project costs because you need an engineer to look at the project and we will need to advertise for the bids as well.

**Moved by Mr. Goncalves, seconded by Mr. Silva to approve the Fire and Police up to \$525,000 to be funded through the Federal Cares Act Awards to be granted to the Town for the purpose of installing a new HVAC system at the Safety Complex. Vote 5-0. All in favor.**

**5:50 p.m. – Gary Blanchard, IT Manager – Classification Plan Change Request**

Mr. Rosenblum: Okay our next visitation, I need my glasses, at 5:50, Gary Blanchard IT Manager, Classification and plan change request.

Mr. Blanchard: Evening.

Mr. Rosenblum: Good evening. Who's on the line right now? Is anyone on there right now.

Mr. Goncalves: No.

Mr. Debarge: Not right now.

Mr. Rosenblum: Okay.

Mr. Goncalves: Carrie Ribeiro, is she on there?

Mr. Debarge: No, she's...

Mr. Rosenblum: Okay, Mr. Blanchard, I know we've got a couple things here. If you'd like to just reiterate what we are umm,

Mr. Blanchard: Sure.

Mr. Rosenblum: go ahead and tell us umm,

Mr. Blanchard: Sure.

Mr. Rosenblum: what you are looking for again and just kind of do a brief overview.

Mr. Blanchard: Absolutely and I did bring a cheat sheet for the new guy since he wasn't around.

Mr. Gennette: Thank you.

Mr. Blanchard: If you guys want one too, I can do that. Basically, we are here looking at three different things that we discussed over the last few times I've been here. Number one, was that I came up with a new job description. The old job description was dated 2007 so I created one that reflected the duties

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of the current position. I think most of you had a chance to look that over, considerably more duties since that was written, obviously. Umm, the second thing of course in for redoing the job description my request obviously was to get the job reclassified to a newer pay scale because there had been salary surveys done over the last year showing that the average salary for IT Manager's, both across the state and locally is approximately \$16,000 higher than I am currently making. Umm, the last time that there was any reclassification for salary change for this position was 9 years ago. There were the cost of living raise were included in there but all the other IT people in the area have since gone up and I am way below the norm as far as most of the salaries go and I'm looking what's included in your packet was the classification plan for Manager's. I am currently grade IV, level VI and I'm simply looking to go to a grade V, level I which is, you know I'm not looking for anything crazy just umm come July I will move up to a II and it will probably take a least 3 years before I even get up to what the average people are making now but I'm not looking for anything crazy. I, you know, I'm happy here, I'm doing my job, I'm trying to keep everyone happy. I'm not looking to make a million dollars, I understand that. I'm just trying to get something that's appropriate for the work that I do. Umm, and then the third thing that we had on the agenda was umm, when I rewrote the job description, I included in availability and compensation basically a comp time line. You guys actually had some discussions about that, so I actually pulled that out and turned it into a Department agreement so that all full-time employees in the IT Department would sign this, this plan. Umm, which was basically time and a half for any work, if anybody was called in for an emergency call on the weekends. Nothing that happens on a regular basis, a couple of times a year. I'd say three times a year would be the max ever in the 14 years I've been here. So, time and a half and one of things was how long that time would stay. So, we were talking a rolling sixty day umm, so you can't just rack up hundreds of hours as you go. So, those were the three things and if there are any questions, feel free to ask.

Mr. Gennette: Mr. Chairman, may I?

Mr. Rosenblum: Yes.

Mr. Gennette: This is a salary position, right?

Mr. Blanchard: Yes.

Mr. Debarge: Mr. Chairman.

Mr. Rosenblum: Mr. Debarge.

Mr. Debarge: Third times a charm, right?

Mr. Blanchard: I hope so.

Mr. Debarge: Okay, so umm, so we have everything explained I think where everybody can understand it easily. I know the umm, the grade level increase, monetary value is set. Umm, you request the comp time. The only thing that I wanted to ask about the comp time was umm, is it agreed upon umm as far as opinion with you and Ms. Ribeiro, is it after 8 or is it after 40,

Mr. Goncalves: 35.

Mr. Debarge: where you start to accrue, 35?

Mr. Blanchard: Umm, really, we are talking, I believe it's written in here, after scheduled hours. So, that would be at night, you know if I get a call at 10 o'clock at night that's past the scheduled hours of 8:30 to 4:30 and if there's something that you know, if I'm here working on something and I stay over an hour, it's not a big deal but I'm more concerned about the calls on the weekends that a long time it was something that happened a lot. You know Saturday, Sundays.

Mr. Debarge: Sure.

Mr. Blanchard: People are, you know things of that nature, so I don't think that's the answer you're exactly looking for but I'm not looking for something that can be abused. It's just something so that they're not abusing my time, is more like it.

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Mr. Debarge: No, and I totally get what you're saying Gary. I totally get it. Umm, I think more for probably after you and more for umm, the written word, policy wise, I think it will need to say that it will be either on or after your daily 7 ½ hours or 8 hours or after 37 ½ or 40 or 35 ½. Umm, so I just want to get the language cleared up, whatever that's agreed upon and I'm ready to move forward on the rest of it. Obviously to yield back to everybody else, once we clear that small portion up and again just language.

Mr. Blanchard: Sure.

Mr. Rosenblum: Did you have something Ms. Villano?

Ms. Villano: I did sorry. I'm getting an email question in from a resident forgive me. So, after the last meeting that we had, you did ask the HR Manager to do a comp study of all the other contracts and where everybody is. So, I think to make mention of umm, the comp time, I think that this comp time plan is for the Department, but I think it's more for the non-managerial positions. Not stating that Mr. Blanchard shouldn't be entitled to comp time. Managers are exempt, they work whatever hours has to be done to get the job done. There are normal working hours and then there are hours that you work and then the is the calling hours. So, certainly if Mr. Blanchard gets called in on a Saturday or a Sunday and he is spending 10 hours in here fixing a problem then I would think that there would be no issues what so ever with him taking a comp day off or two as a result that. But, we also need to kind of decide what we are going to do for the staff that have to be on-call as a result and you know if Mr. Blanchard goes away on vacation for a week then he's going to have, one of his staff members is going to have to be on-call and that person should be able to be entitled to comp time in the event that he's called in. He may work just a normal 35-40 hours. The average Manager works about 35-40 hours per week. So, once that kicks in, then it's, I think he should be entitled to a certain amount of comp time but again, I encourage you to read the memo that Ms. Ribeiro did because it does kind of outline some departments that have comp some that don't have comp.

Mr. Debarge: Yeah, well I, Mr. Chairman if I can. I read that, that's why I asked if there was some kind of a mutual thing you know. I believe in a let's keep things simple type thing. So, I'm more inclined to let's do the after the 37 ½ hours but that's me. Umm, so,

Mr. Rosenblum: And to your point Ms. Villano it's also discretionary to yourself as to when and how and when they use it as well because now it's not necessarily you going to Ms. Villano because you know if we thought this was for your end but it's more that they are coming to you so you'll be able, at your discretion, to use it when you see fit for them. I mean personally I don't have a problem with it. The only thing is I had said last time is I was looking more at the time of usage and the time you could accrue just because I didn't want to see it go for six months and accrue 40 hours and basically take a week with a week type of thing.

Mr. Blanchard: Sure, sure.

Mr. Rosenblum: Which again, I know that it's not going to happen, but I just don't want it to come to a point that it every got abused so.

Mr. Blanchard: Sure, and to his point in all the years I've been here, you know, yeah there's been some Saturday's but those are things that I schedule. I come in and do some networking work, I probably wouldn't have ever worked more than three hours on one of these type of calls on any individual time anyway but you're right we do have to look forward to anybody else that signs this contract not just me. So, I do understand that.

Mr. Rosenblum: And to your point last time you were in you also did say that it's very rare that it gets, that you would even been using it so, but it is something that since other departments do have it and,

Mr. Blanchard: Yes.

Mr. Gennette: Mr. Chairman.

Mr. Rosenblum: Yes.

Mr. Gennette: How do you justify your work time? So, like umm if you had to come in on a Saturday what are you doing on that Saturday, how are you reporting that?

Mr. Blanchard: Umm, the only time that I would ever normally work on weekend is if there's major networking equipment that needs to be swapped out. So, I would need to do it at a time when no one is in the building. I would say that 99.8% of my work is done during the normal work day. Swapping out machines even updating networking, most of that can be done while there's people here. It's been three years probably since I worked a scheduled Saturday to come in and swap out equipment.

Mr. Gennette: My question is how do you record that's what you were doing for that amount of time? So, I know a lot of companies and stuff like they'll put in tickets and ticket-tracking and stuff like that. So, how do you guys justify what you're doing?

Mr. Blanchard: We, we do have a ticketing system that's just being implemented actually, we are in the works right now. But as far as tracking the time, up until this point there was not comp time and it was basically I came in, worked the time and there was no need to track it because there was nothing, I was being paid salary no matter what happened.

Mr. Gennette: Thank you.

Mr. Blanchard: Your welcome.

Mr. Debarge: Mr. Chairman if I may, one more thing. I just want to say one thing about the grade level and the monetary change. I do want to say this so everybody, just in case this is brought up, umm, so Gary has been at least we've been talking about an increase for quite some time and I think the numbers show that he's in the bottom part or bottom percentage of his profession in other areas around us and let me say that for the time frame of this and I'm talking about the time of the year which I was a little concerned with umm and I expressed that to Ellie and I had mentioned it in conversation with Gary as well that umm, with contract negotiations, the financial situation that we're in with everything going on here. I do want to say that we are getting into new contract negotiations with other Unions as well so this about the time we do this for the next fiscal year. So, I am comfortable with doing this because this is the time that we normally do this. So, I just want to get that part out.

Mr. Goncalves: Mr. Chairman can we listen to what Carrie has...

Mr. Rosenblum: Sure.

Mr. Debarge: Okay.

Mr. Silva: She's not here.

Mr. Goncalves: Oh, Carrie's here?

Mr. Rosenblum: No, she's here.

Mr. Blanchard: She's in the hallway.

Mr. Silva: Oh, okay I thought she was on the phone.

Talking over each other.

Mr. Goncalves: Oh, there she is.

Ms. Ribeiro: Hello.

Mr. Goncalves: Hello.

Mr. Debarge: Hello. Hello.

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Ms. Ribeiro: How are you?

Mr. Goncalves: Wonderful, you?

Ms. Ribeiro: Pretty good.

Mr. Goncalves: So, what do you make of all this? Mr. Chairman is it okay... how are you feeling about this taking a step-in grade now and then going up another step in July? 11% total, we are talking about in a three-month period.

Ms. Ribeiro: I'm not sure that we've ever given an 11% increase in a 3-month period. I mean I do like Mr. Blanchard but I'm not sure we...that. Umm, I thought we were talking about something effective July 1, not a step now and a reclassification in July. So, I'm not sure exactly the conversation before I walked in. Is that what you're talking about?

Talking over each other.

Mr. Rosenblum: No, it actually does say to the next pay period would be a reclassification and then July 1<sup>st</sup> would be the next and I think Mr. Blanchard said it himself he would be up to a step II.

Ms. Ribeiro: So, the step, so it would be effective now, the reclassification in line with the current step you have now, at a IV and then July 1 he would get an additional step?

Mr. Goncalves: Yeah, I believe he would go from 82 to 91 between now and July with all vacation at 87. Is that right Gary?

Mr. Rosenblum: Change the grade and level from GL4 Step 6 to GL5 Step 1 effective next pay period, April 4, 2021.

Ms. Ribeiro: Okay, well I know from the last meeting that we had I know I had called in because I couldn't physically be here and I did say as far as a reclassification that because we are in the middle of, well we aren't in the middle of it yet but as soon as things start opening up and we can get people into this building we are going to be completing that non-union compensation/classification study. Umm, my recommendation was to wait to see what the results of that were. Now that certainly doesn't mean that an increase couldn't be given to Mr. Blanchard at that time but because we are looking and very close to completing that study; my recommendation is to hold off on any type of reclassification and deal with the salary separately. I think that was something that Ms. Villano and I disagreed about how we could do that. I think we discussed that a little bit at the last meeting and that's when the employment agreement was talked about. We were told that we could not pay him out of the steps. That was clarified by Legal.

Mr. Goncalves: We couldn't pay him,

Ms. Ribeiro: Out of the current steps he's at now. So, he's in a Management scale at a level IV right now and he's maxed out. So, there's no more steps.

Ms. Villano: Correct and there's not a mechanism in place to give him an increase unless you give him a contract agreement...separate contract agreement.

Mr. Goncalves: When we do this study, are we going to be looking at the School Department also?

Ms. Villano: No.

Ms. Ribeiro: No, it's Town, all non-union Town positions. So, it's about 30 positions were talking about. No union positions just all the non-union positions.

Mr. Goncalves: Are they contract or union over there?

Ms. Ribeiro: The school?

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Mr. Goncalves: The IT people?

Ms. Ribeiro: The IT Director is contract, is an employment contract and the techs, they call them support techs, they're all union.

Mr. Goncalves: They are union.

Ms. Ribeiro: They are.

Mr. Goncalves: So, it wouldn't make sense maybe to try to include them in here just because we have an overlap of the same position basically between the two departments that we can try to sync everything,

Ms. Ribeiro: Well, we couldn't include them in the classification study we're doing now, we've already gotten quotes on it and the positions are already set.

Mr. Goncalves: Yeah, see in my mind either Gary's isn't getting paid enough or that the people over there are getting paid too much. At the school, I mean the head IT guy over there is making probably \$30,000 more than you?

Mr. Blanchard: Yeah, 109 so about,

Ms. Ribeiro: Yeah, it's substantially higher.

Mr. Goncalves: With two assistants?

Mr. Blanchard: More than that actually I think.

Mr. Goncalves: More than two?

Mr. Blanchard: There's like some software people, some hardware people and some people under him that aren't, wouldn't be classified under my department if he was on the town side.

Mr. Gennette: Mr. Chairman. How many people do you have in your department?

Mr. Blanchard: Umm, one and a half.

Mr. Gennette: One and a half. What are their duties?

Mr. Blanchard: Excuse me?

Mr. Gennette: What are their duties?

Mr. Blanchard: Ones the...technician and the other is a part time tech. So, one takes care of most of the hardware/software things of that nature. The other one more of a grunt work. He's work for me in the past, I've known him for years. He does computer work but more of a hands-on pulling of wires, moving things around this and that.

Mr. Gennette: I see okay. Umm, I'm new here. I don't really know the infrastructure yet and the environment and everything like that and no offense I'm inclined to maybe wait until the study comes out, so we can get a better idea what's happening. Maybe we can come up with a harmonious agreement with the IT Director.

Mr. Rosenblum: And just myself is that I did reach out to Finance as to what their view is on this and their also umm, to Mr. Debarge is point I'm not, the timing for it to me while they're in the middle of their review process with all of the other departments. Umm, and also Finance is not recommending any classification changes at this time and the same sense is I would like to see the study goes with non-union but that's just my opinion. Obviously, we are a Board of 5 so that's just my opinion at this time. Mr. Silva do you have anything?

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Mr. Silva: No, no I mean we've been over this, this is the third meeting now we've gone over just about everything. Umm, I mean I think we are all on the opinion we'd like to see Gary upgraded obviously because it seems to me that he's not in the right, I don't want to say upgraded but at least salary graded. We all know that you are at the low scale and we'd like to see something done but how to do it and what's best for the community as far as moving forward in relation to other departments or other things, do we wait or is there, I guess there is no mechanism for salary increase from what Ellie has mentioned so the middle of the road here.

Mr. Debarge: So, Mr. Chairman.

Mr. Rosenblum: Mr. Debarge.

Mr. Debarge: Okay so, umm, so it's been stating okay, so we all understand that he's at the lower echelon if we can't agree to at least...settle here because of an audit coming which is going to take some time, umm then the initial or the first request of the current grade level from a IV level VI to a V level I at least that one you know I wouldn't be opposed to that at all. I don't see you know,

Mr. Goncalves: So, how and I'm going to ask probably a dumb question, is there, do you think, or do you automatically go to a II in July is that what happens here?

Mr. Blanchard: Normally at the beginning of the fiscal year, you move up from the current step to the next one until you're at the maximum.

Mr. Goncalves: So, that's going to happen so,

Ms. Ribeiro: So, the managers get their step increases on July 1 as opposed to non-union and contracted employees that get their step on their anniversary date. So, either they're date of hire or their promotion date.

Ms. Villano: So, if I might Mr. Chairman could I,

Mr. Rosenblum: Yes.

Ms. Villano: I see that he's asking to be at a step I, if the Board was so inclined to move on doing a classification change for him I think that you could just give him the classification change to a level 5 just the minimum. It doesn't really afford an increase right now but come July 1<sup>st</sup>, he would go up to a step I. So, instead of being what an 11% increase,

Mr. Rosenblum: Yup.

Ms. Villano: It would go, giving him a classification change and then giving him an increase at that higher classification change July 1. So, it's almost like a and it will still afford him, come July 1<sup>st</sup> an increase that will be a little better than the 2% but it also fits him into the reclassification program or the study that we are going to do because we are all thinking that based on all of the studies we've done from a lot of other communities, he is underpaid. This is like giving him the classification change without giving him a raise immediately and then,

Mr. Goncalves: And then setting him up for July, he would go up 5 1/2% there and then,

Ms. Villano: Thank you.

Mr. Goncalves: we'd see after the study.

Ms. Villano: that could be an alternative to what you want to do.

Mr. Silva: Mr. Chairman. Do we know the time frame that we are expecting these, this study done or finished yet or no?

Mr. Debarge: No.

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Ms. Ribeiro: Do we know? It will happen this spring, I mean if we can have people in the, I just spoke to them,

Mr. Silva: So, we are still waiting on this COVID issue and when they can sit down and talk to people.

Ms. Ribeiro: Right they physically need to come in and speak to department heads, speak to employees yes. Some of it can be done with a zoom format but not the entire study.

Mr. Silva: So, we're thinking it could take, I don't know, five, six months if things go well.

Ms. Ribeiro: They told me about 8 weeks.

Mr. Silva: That's only 2 months so,

Ms. Ribeiro: Thirty positions, thirty non-union positions.

Mr. Silva: Well, if they started then by July 1 we could probably have something.

Ms. Ribeiro: I'm hopeful that by July 1 we will have something, yes.

Mr. Silva: Okay that's what I was wondering. So, on July 1 umm it could be that this study shows that he, instead of going to let's say a V step II, it could be that you're warranted a III or IV you know.

Ms. Ribeiro: It very well could, yes. That's why I'm saying, I think we should, if this is going to be effective July 1, the study will probably be effective you know done and completed around the same time.

Mr. Silva: Right.

Ms. Ribeiro: Umm, I think we should, that's my recommendation, I think we should wait and see what the study does or if any change or anything...can be contingent on the results of the classification and compensation plan as well. I mean I don't we don't want to also move him here, move him there. I think we should just do it all in one shot. But you're right it could show an even you know bigger underpayment you know under...

Mr. Silva: Yeah and to Mr. Debarge's point, we are going to be negotiating. Everything is going to be effective July 1 for the new negotiations, right Mr. Debarge?

Mr. Debarge: Yeah. So, right so that's my whole point of saying that. Umm, so we do these separately then.

Mr. Rosenblum: I would do three different motions.

Mr. Gennette: Mr. Chairman, I have one more question.

Mr. Rosenblum: Mr. Gennette.

Mr. Gennette: Umm, how are these steps awarded? So, umm, is it still an application process or is it an automatic renewal like year in, year out, it's going to go up every step? What's the process for raises?

Mr. Blanchard: Umm, it, yeah go ahead.

Ms. Ribeiro: It's basically based on performance. The department head will approve it and there's a rate change form that gets submitted to my department. I approve it, make sure that there's no, there hasn't been any discipline or performance issues. Talk to the head about it if there is but most of the time it's based on the department head and their approval or you know denial of that staff and then it comes to HR for final approval and then it gets submitted to Accounting and Treasurers. So, unless there's any major performance issues or discipline issues, individuals do receive their annual step increase.

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Mr. Silva: Yeah, time, I think to your point Mr. Gennette it's time, if I may Mr. Chairman, it's time-wise. So, you're here a certain time after a year you should go to the step and you will get it if you get a good review.

Ms. Ribeiro: Every twelve months, yes. Most, most positions are every twelve months. We do have some in town that are six-month intervals but not many.

Mr. Gennette: I see, thank you.

Mr. Rosenblum: Ms. Ribeiro do we have a formal performance review for departments. I mean I'm just asking.

Ms. Ribeiro: Not at this time unfortunately. It's one of the first things I brought up when I came back six and a half years ago and I'm sitting at this table with a group of department heads and when I brought it up, I had daggers and looks that could kill. Nobody wanted to do performance evaluations. The belief that I think a lot of department heads unfortunately have in town is that you know we are very heavily unionized and people don't believe in performance evaluations because you know they're going to get their step anyways, which I completely 100% disagree with. Performance evaluations should be completely separate from pay umm, and I really, we do have some departments that are doing them on an annual basis but it's really an area that we really, really need to improve upon. Department heads should be doing performance evaluations. Even, even on a new hire basis, doing a sixty, ninety-day review of new hires, it should absolutely be done.

Mr. Rosenblum: That was just a question in general, it's not to reflect on anything,

Talking over each other.

Ms. Villano: So, if I might Mr. Chairman.

Mr. Rosenblum: Yes.

Ms. Villano: I do have one that I use. I had one that I didn't like and I kind of updated it and I use it umm for the department heads usually and Gary will attest that he probably has had quite a few evaluations done by me.

Mr. Rosenblum: Okay.

Ms. Villano: So, if it's consistent, this past year the pandemic did not create a consistency there,

Mr. Rosenblum: Understandable.

Ms. Villano: umm, but to what Ms. Ribeiro is saying, this is an evaluation process that needs to be done from top to bottom and bottom to top. You know there is an evaluation, formal evaluation form that the Board uses when they do my evaluation. So, there is one that I use that has not really been a town one, it has been working well.

Ms. Ribeiro: It's a sporadic process, like I said it's inconsistent. Like I said, there's some departments that do them and there's other's that don't. We really need to move forward to everybody is expected to do them at a certain time of year. I mean a lot of departments only have two or three employees.

Mr. Rosenblum: Yup.

Mr. Goncalves: And it can create issues if there's something that needs to come from discipline if there's some type of consistency.

Ms. Ribeiro: Absolutely.

Mr. Goncalves: It's an...problem waiting to happen.

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Mr. Rosenblum: So, umm, we have three separate issues well not issues, three separate things that we need to address here. Umm, I would probably say we do a motion on each one individually.

Mr. Debarge: Mr. Chairman.

Mr. Rosenblum: Mr. Debarge.

Mr. Silva: For discussion just for a minute. Move to Step I on July 1<sup>st</sup>, now umm we have to remember if there is a study done and it warrants a further classification rather than Step I because if we are doing Step I on July 1<sup>st</sup> then he's, I think he's held to that because we took a vote. So, I think we want to put, we might want to put a Step I,

Mr. Debarge: Pending, pending the audit.

Mr. Silva: Yes.

Mr. Goncalves: Can I just, what if we were to make this motion a minimum, that's a pre-step I correct or no? Because I'm looking at it and the \$82720,

Ms. Ribeiro: That's the minimum, that's the start, that's his minimum steps, yes Step I.

Mr. Goncalves: So, if we were to do, if we go there, is that what your intention was Mr. Debarge?

Mr. Rosenblum: Or going right to the,

Mr. Debarge: No, he's going to,

Mr. Goncalves: or are we just saying the Step I effective July 1<sup>st</sup>?

Mr. Debarge: Step I effective July 1<sup>st</sup>, exactly what Ms. Villano said.

Mr. Goncalves: I think they're saying that could be an issue.

Mr. Debarge: No.

Mr. Goncalves: No.

Mr. Debarge: No, that's not going to be an issue.

Ms. Ribeiro: The minimum step of the salary scale of what you're looking at is equivalent on the, the VI is equivalent to where he is at maxed out on IV.

Mr. Debarge: To where he's at.

Mr. Goncalves: A dollar less actually. You would take a pay cut.

Mr. Debarge: So, so yeah so, I said it right.

Mr. Gennette: Mr. Chairman.

Ms. Villano: Correct, except for...

Mr. Gennette: What happens if the study comes back and says that the department is over paid and he's over paid and we've already increased his step. We've changed his classification.

Mr. Silva: Well, Mr. Chairman if I might. Well, we're not in that position whether or not it comes in at a less, at a less... I mean we've all sat here and discussed this for three weeks now knowing that he deserves a raise and he deserves something. If the study comes in at less than we are going to have to override the study and still give him that, that increase, which is something that I wouldn't be opposed to.

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Mr. Gennette: I don't doubt that he probably deserves it and everything, but you know I'm just wondering, we are all assuming that the study is going to come and it's going to be all rainbows and butterflies you know.

Mr. Silva: True.

Mr. Debarge: Plus, we've done comparisons too so I'm confident with it. Did you have something with the motion?

Ms. Villano: If I might Mr. Chairman; Mr. Goncalves did ask if there was a problem with the, I think it was raised that if you reclassify him to the minimum what happens with the Step I effective July 1. What happens if the study comes in and he needs to be at Step II or Step III. So, I think you just,

Mr. Goncalves: Right.

Mr. Debarge: I said subject to the audit.

Ms. Villano: well,

Mr. Debarge: Subject to the increase of the audit.

Ms. Villano: I just don't want, I think you need to make that more formal and have it your second,

Mr. Debarge: Okay you want me to amend my motion.

**Moved by Mr. Debarge, seconded by Mr. Goncalves to reclassify Gary Blanchard, IT Manager from a level IV to a level VI so that on July 1<sup>st</sup> it moves to a step I minimum pending the outcome of the classification study. Vote 4-1.**

Mr. Rosenblum: We will move onto the second one. Well, that was the second one, but we will go to number one then. Approve the updated IT Manager's job description.

Mr. Debarge: So, I was going to leave that for last because my question was, is that going to be, does that need to be amended with any of the other motions that were going to make?

Ms. Villano: No.

Mr. Debarge: No, okay.

Ms. Villano: What the job description, no you are just going to approve it.

Mr. Debarge: So, the comp time motion that is going to be made doesn't need to change in the job description?

Mr. Blanchard: It's been removed.

Ms. Ribeiro: It's been removed from the job description.

Mr. Debarge: Okay.

**Moved by Mr. Debarge, seconded by Mr. Goncalves to approve the updated IT Manager's job description. Vote 4-1.**

Mr. Rosenblum: And we have one more.

Mr. Debarge: Mr. Chairman.

Mr. Rosenblum: Mr. Debarge.

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**Moved by Mr. Debarge, seconded by Mr. Silva to approve the IT Department's availability and compensation agreement where it states that comp time will be awarded at the rate of one and a half times the hours worked in excess of 40 hours. Vote 5-0. All in favor.**

Ms. Ribeiro: Forty, forty FLSA.

Mr. Goncalves: Discussion. Does that make sense to you Carrie?

Mr. Debarge: That's why I looked at her.

Ms. Ribeiro: Well, it's are we talking about because I know I had given you the results of the comp study that you asked me to do last meeting for the school,

Mr. Debarge: Yeah, that's what I was looking at.

Ms. Ribeiro: so, are we talking about everyone in his department or are we just talking about,

Mr. Debarge: Yeah, yup.

Ms. Ribeiro: okay, so including Mr. Blanchard?

Mr. Debarge: Yes.

Ms. Ribeiro: Okay.

Mr. Debarge: That's why I thought the 37 ½ hours was right so,

Ms. Ribeiro: It would have to be after 40,

Mr. Debarge: Okay, okay.

Ms. Ribeiro: because they're non-union.

Mr. Debarge: Okay.

Mr. Rosenblum: Alright.

Mr. Silva: Almost there Gary.

Mr. Rosenblum: No, I think that's it. That's it.

Mr. Silva: No, I don't mean today. I mean as far as,

Mr. Rosenblum: Oh, yeah.

Mr. Silva: progress.

Mr. Rosenblum: Alright, thank you Carrie. Thank you, Mr. Blanchard, for coming.

Mr. Debarge: Thanks Gary.

**6:00 p.m. – Carrie Ribeiro, Human Resources – Business Administrator/DPW – Updated Travel Orders – Update HR Assistant Position to FT**

**Updated Travel Orders:**

Ms. Ribeiro suggested to continue following the States guidelines from Governor Baker regarding travel orders. The memo was given to the Board of Selectmen and the last paragraph on the travel order was brought to their attention because it states 'the Town of Ludlow strongly discourages all employees from leisurely travel. All vacation requests for out of state travel must be approved by the Department

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Head, so that the Department Head may gather more information on the travel destination and assess whether it is feasible for the employee to be out of work upon return as this might have a negative impact on Town services’.

Mr. Goncalves asked if this would need to be redone if another vaccine comes online.

Ms. Ribeiro stated that things keep changing so it may need to be.

Mr. Goncalves stated he would like to leave that last paragraph in the travel orders.

Mr. Debarge stated he does not like that paragraph, especially the last sentence. The Department Head should approve vacation time but not where they are going.

Mr. Goncalves stated that it’s a good idea because it could become a problem for a smaller department if someone comes back and spreads the infection amongst them.

Mr. Debarge asked what if the location you are going to is not in the red, but the Department Head still doesn’t approve it, what happens?

Ms. Ribeiro stated then it is not approved, and the employee cannot go.

Mr. Silva agrees with Mr. Debarge and does not like it either but understand what Mr. Goncalves and Ms. Ribeiro are saying as far as getting other’s infected during a pandemic.

Ms. Ribeiro believes it is an extra layer of insurance because there are employees out there that are reckless and careless. There has been out of state travel throughout the pandemic. Most employees have been forthcoming with their Department Heads and followed the guidelines but now that it is an advisory and not a mandate this is just an extra layer of insurance.

Mr. Debarge would rather have something in the advisory stating that the employee could be sent home if they have symptoms then telling them they can’t go somewhere. This could cause trouble for the Town.

Mr. Gennette agrees with Mr. Debarge that this violates some privacy and the rest of the memo outlines the guidelines enough for employees to know.

Mr. Goncalves suggest putting something in the memo stating that if the employee visits a state that the positivity rate exceeded 6 or 7% they would need a test before coming back to work.

Mr. Rosenblum stated that the Town can definitely be under the guidance of the State advisory but still have its own mandates for employees.

Ms. Ribeiro stated that this is standard language that other communities are using.

Mr. Gennette is asking to clarify the language because it’s now an advisory not a mandate.

Ms. Villano suggested to change the last sentence to “must be indicated to the Department Head”. This will make it easier for the Department Head to manage the department.

Mr. Rosenblum suggested the threshold language and a test to be done before they return.

Ms. Ribeiro reminded the Board that if the employee returns from travelling with COVID symptoms and has to quarantine, they will have to use their own time.

Moved by Mr. Goncalves, seconded by Mr. Gennette to approve the travel order memo as submitted except the last paragraph to be changed as follows: “As a result of the Governor’s Travel Advisory, the Town of Ludlow strongly discourages all employees from leisurely travel to red areas. All vacation requests for out of state travel must be submitted in writing to the Department Head, so that the Department Head may gather more information on the travel destination. In the event the employee

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has traveled to a red state or area, the employee must take a COVID test upon return prior to returning back to work". Vote 4-1.

**Business Administrator/DPW Update Job Description:**

Ms. Ribeiro stated that the job description for the Business Administrator position at the DPW was updated. It had not been updated in probably thirty years. It was approved by the Board of Public Works last week at their meeting. Ms. Ribeiro highlighted some areas that were updated. The position is going to be a non-exempt position going forward. It was classified in the Management scale as an exempt position but should be a non-exempt salary position. The salary will remain the same. It will now be under the Business Administration scale versus the Management scale. A 2% increase will be effective July 1, 2021.

Mr. Goncalves asked about the salary rate jumping 50% from the minimum to maximum and why such a large increase?

Ms. Ribeiro explained that there are seven steps to go up.

Ms. Villano explained that will take about seven years.

Mr. Goncalves stated that's about 8% a year either way.

Moved by Mr. Silva, seconded by Mr. Debarge to approve the job description for the Business Administrator at the DPW as noted by our Human Resources Director. Vote 5-0. All in favor.

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**HR Assistant Updated to a Full Time Position:**

Ms. Ribeiro stated that it is currently budgeted as an 18-hour per week position, however, it is nearly impossible to do this job with 1 ½ people now. The average HR Department has 3-4 employees. Ms. Ribeiro's position has changed quite a bit over the last few years. The HR Department has re-written thirty job descriptions over the last six months and posted internally and externally over 26 positions and some of those were posted multiple times. It takes roughly six weeks from when a vacancy becomes available until it is closed out. Every time there is a vacancy, the job description is re-examined in order to make any necessary changes. Every application is examined with a fine-tooth comb and at the end every person knows if they are hire or have an interview or not. Another large part of this position is the Chapter 41 claims, the worker's comp claims. All of these claims have to be reported to the insurance company immediately. In order to do this job effectively, a full-time employee is needed. This position is already a benefited position. The breakdown was given to the Board of Selectmen.

Mr. Silva asked if it would be a 35-hour position?

Ms. Ribeiro stated that it would be 35 hours. The HR Assistant is currently working 18 hours for HR and 10 hours for the Veteran's Services but is getting paid 28 hours from the Human Resources budget.

Mr. Silva asked if the Veteran's Services position would still be there at 10 hours/week?

Ms. Ribeiro could not speak to the Veteran's Service's needs.

Mr. Debarge stated that he spoke with Eric Segundo, Veterans Services about this issue and he will need the 10-hour position once the pandemic subsides a bit. Mr. Debarge also agrees that Carrie needs a full-time HR Assistant.

Ms. Villano stated Ms. Ribeiro needs the additional hours in her department and may even need a part time position in the future.

Mr. Silva asked for the update on the numbers.

Ms. Ribeiro stated that currently at 18 hours/week, the annual salary is \$21,172, 28 hours is \$32,934 and 35 hours would be \$41,158.

Mr. Silva asked what the additional cost to the Town will be.

Mr. Goncalves stated it is \$8,233 additional.

Moved by Mr. Gennette, seconded by Mr. Debarge to approve the Human Resources budget increase from a part-time to a full-time employee. Vote 5-0. All in favor.

**6:45 p.m. – Jodi Zepke, Senior Center**

Ms. Zepke explained that the Senior Center would like to start to open their doors by appointment only for now. She would like to open the exercise room and then try one activity that happens once a month. They have received good feedback from the Secretary of Elder Affairs who is on board with the Senior Center soft opening as long as they follow the Governor’s guidelines. Eight to ten people by appointment and they will have to wear masks. Only two people in the exercise room at the same time. The Senior Center is very short staffed. The Board of Health is on board with this as well.

Mr. Silva agrees with this and thanked Jodi for doing this.

Ms. Zepke stated that they are expanding the transportation schedule to five days as well with limits on how many people can be in the van at once.

Mr. Goncalves agreed with Ms. Zepke as well. He had a tour today and is very impressed with the facilities. The Senior Center served 254 meals today.

Mr. Rosenblum agrees with Jodi as well and is impressed with what the staff has done during this pandemic.

Ms. Zepke stressed that the Senior Center is not open to the public yet. This will only be by appointment. They will continue the grab and go meals. The building is very COVID-friendly.

Mr. Debarge stated that he is very pleased with everything that has been done at the Senior Center thus far. A soft opening would be great to get started again. He is very grateful for Jodi and her staff.

Ms. Gennette agrees with this as well and agrees that Jodi is the best person to make this decision.

Moved by Mr. Debarge, seconded by Mr. Silva to approve the Senior Centers soft opening by appointment only set forth by Jodi Zepke, Senior Center Director. Vote 5-0. All in favor.

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**CORRESPONDENCE**

52. Cynthia M. Pasquini – requesting the Board to utilize Veteran’s Park School for other Town departments stead of demolishing the building and to forward this request to the Long-Range Planning Committee.

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

53. Andrew Gilbert, President of Exit 7 Players – inquiring with the Board what impact the Senior Center move may have on the Exit 7 Players Theater operations at the 37 Chestnut Street location; also, their lease expires in June and would like to discuss its renewal.

Mr. Gennette suggested having a meeting with Mr. Gilbert to discuss further.

54. Dennis P. Guistra, Principal Engineer, GRS Environmental – notifying the Board that an Immediate Response Action (IRA) Plan for Interstate 90 West, MM 53.8 has been submitted to the Massachusetts Department of Environmental Protection (MassDEP).

Moved by Mr. Silva, seconded by Mr. Debarge to file. Vote 5-0. All in favor.

55. Copy of letter from the Police Department relevant to an unkept property and disturbance at 118-120 Highland Ave, Ludlow.



Mr. Fournier who lives at 124 Highland Ave, next door to 118-120 Highland called in to advise the Board that since COVID hit the tenants let the property go and it's a shame. There are currently five unregistered vehicles on the property, on the front lawn. The washing machine is on the back porch and draining down the driveway into the road.

Mr. Silva did reiterate to Mr. Fournier that the Police did send correspondence to the landlord and the Building Inspector will be involved as well. The Board of Selectmen cannot do anything about this, however, it is being addressed by the proper departments and thanked him for calling in.

Mr. Debarge also thanked Mr. Fournier for calling in and letting them know what is happening there.

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

56. John R. Maher, Director of Governmental Affairs, Charter Communications – notification of upcoming channel line-up changes.

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

57. Kim M. Batista, CMMC, Town Clerk – notifying Boards and Committees to reorganize after the Town Election held on March 22, 2021 in a timely manner.

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

58. Board Reorganizations – School Committee, Board of Health, and Planning Board.

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

59. John W. Parsons, Esq. – notifying the Board of a Temporary Order of the Public Employee Retirement Administration Commission (PERAC) issued to the Hampden County Regional Retirement Board (HCRRB) on March 23, 2021.

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

60. Beth Elam, Assistance Scoutmaster with Troop 180 Girls – requesting the approval of the Board to host a recruitment event at the River Walk for the Cub Scout Pack 180 on April 17, 2021 from 9:00 a.m. to 3:00 p.m.

Moved by Mr. Silva, seconded by Mr. Goncalves to approve the request from Beth Elam, Assistance Scoutmaster with Troop 180 Girl scout to host a recruitment event at the River Walk for the Cub Scout Pack 180 on April 17, 2021 from 9:00 a.m. to 3:00 p.m. Vote 5-0. All in favor.

61. Jodi Zepke, Ludlow Senior Center Director – requesting feedback and approval of the Board of to schedule various classes/activities by appointment only at the new Senior Center.

62. Christopher W. Bruce, Crime Analysis Consultant to the Massachusetts Gaming Commission – Report: *Assessing the Influence of Gambling on Public Safety in Massachusetts Cities and Towns* – March 15, 2021.

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

63. Antonio E. Dos Santos, Attorney for Ludlow Country Club, Inc. – Right of First Refusal Request – Sale of Lot 59 Stevens Street – Notice of Intent to Sell (\*needs action by Planning Board, Conservation Commission and Board of Assessors).

Moved by Mr. Debarge, seconded by Mr. Goncalves to table this pending action from the other Boards. Vote 5-0. All in favor.

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64. Letters from the Executive Office of Energy and Environmental Affairs (EEA) addressed to Senator Lesser and Representative Oliveira inviting the Town of Ludlow to apply to join the Municipal Vulnerability Preparedness Program (MVP) for a grant to prepare for climate change.

Moved by Mr. Silva, seconded by Mr. Goncalves to table until a project is found. Vote 5-0. All in favor.

**UNFINISHED BUSINESS**

Board to discuss health insurance. Ms. Villano provided an update regarding the health insurance. She explained that the Town will be receiving a .6% decrease to the overall health insurance. MIIA is offering a bundle package for vision and dental, pending changes to the dental plan. MIIA is also offering a 9.94% reduction to the rates for that plan.

Mr. Rosenblum thinks these reductions are great.

Ms. Villano also explained that in addition MIIA is offering a one month 'holiday' and therefore that month would be free to the Town and its employees. This was offered in 2020 and again in 2021.

Moved by Mr. Goncalves, seconded by Mr. Debarge to approve and sign the Liquor License for Ludlow Country Club, Inc. d/b/a Ludlow Country Club, Antonio Tavares, Manager at 1 Tony Lema Drive. Vote 5-0. All in favor.

Moved by Mr. Goncalves, seconded by Mr. Debarge to approve and sign the Executive Session Meeting Minutes of January 19, 2021. All members present. Vote 4-0-1. One Abstention.

Moved by Mr. Goncalves, seconded by Mr. Debarge to approve and sign the Executive Session Meeting Minutes of February 2, 2021. All members present. Vote 4-0-1. One Abstention.

Moved by Mr. Goncalves, seconded by Mr. Debarge to approve and sign the Executive Session Meeting Minutes of March 2, 2021. All members present. Vote 4-0-1. One Abstention.

**NEW BUSINESS**

Board to discuss the HCRRB Audit Report and recommendations from other communities. See item #59\*

Moved by Mr. Silva, seconded by Mr. Goncalves to take no action and wait for further communications. Vote 5-0. All in favor.

Board to discuss the reopening plan for the Town Hall.

Mr. Debarge stated that the Board of Health needs to take the lead on this and set up the guidelines for reopening. He spoke with Ms. Llamas and she had plenty of ideas already.

Mr. Rosenblum agreed with Mr. Debarge and would like to have the Board of Health set those guidelines as well.

Moved by Mr. Goncalves, seconded by Mr. Debarge to approve and sign the contract with Ockers for fiber to the new school. Vote 5-0. All in favor.

Board to discuss the Board meeting schedule for April, May and June.

Ms. Villano explained that normally the Board meets on the second and the fourth but because of Town meeting, a meeting will be needed next week on the 6<sup>th</sup>. Therefore, the schedule will change to the first and the third for the next couple of months. The Selectmen are in agreement.

Board perused the Selectmen Meeting Minutes of February 9, 2021.

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**MISCELLANEOUS**

Chairman approved and signed 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. Gennette thanked everyone for being elected and looks forward to working with the Selectmen and offering his best to Ludlow.

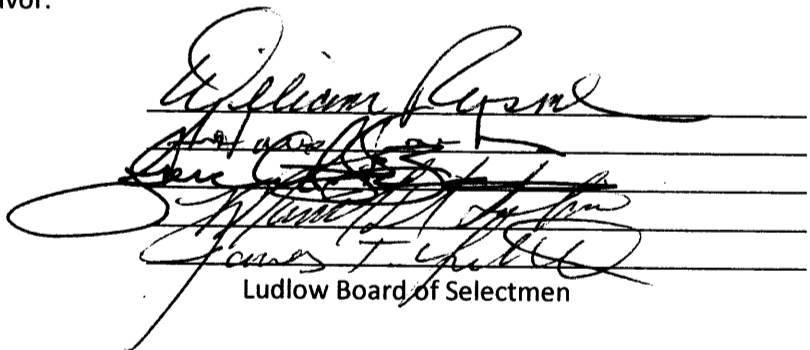
Mr. Silva thanked the voters of Ludlow also but wished that more people would get out there and vote. Those for voted for me, thank you. Those who didn't vote for me, I hope I can change your mind over the next three years. Stay the course and don't get lax on COVID.

Mr. Goncalves reiterated the scams that out there especially with the stimulus checks and tax returns/season. Remind residents that if you are dropping off your kids at school to please stay to the side of the road so cars can still get around you. Mr. Goncalves has observed this congestion in front of Chapin Street School almost every morning.

Mr. Debarge congratulated Mr. Silva and Mr. Gennette for your elections. Congratulations to everyone who was voted in. However, he is very disappointed on how many voters turned out for this election. He was in favor of the ballot question passing but it did not. Mr. Debarge did comment on a post on social media regarding the ballot question as well. He believes we need a serious change in this town with all the overlap between departments. There are not enough precinct members either.

Mr. Rosenblum also congratulated everyone who ran and got involved. Congratulated Mr. Silva and Mr. Gennette. He agrees with Mr. Debarge with that a lot of people take to social media to complain about things but then do not come to any meetings to ask questions. Also, reminds residents there is a spike with the COVID at this time and to be sure everyone continues to follow the CDC guidelines.

Moved by Mr. Goncalves, seconded by Mr. Silva to adjourn this meeting at 8:38 p.m., and not return to open session, and to enter Executive Session for the purposes of discussing the deployment of security personnel or devises or strategies with respect thereto; and to discuss strategy with respect to litigation if an open meeting, may have a detrimental effect on the litigation position of the public body and the Chair so declares. Vote 5-0. All in favor.

  
Ludlow Board of Selectmen

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