

The Meeting of the Board of Selectmen held on Tuesday, May 7, 2024, began at 5:30 p.m. in the Board of Selectmen's Conference Room.

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

Members Absent: James Gennette

First Order of Business: The Pledge of Allegiance

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2024 MAY 22 A 11:55  
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## **CORRESPONDENCE**

232. Brian Shameklis, Chairman Safety Committee – Letter requesting to be kept in the loop regarding the East Street Revitalization project.

Mr. Rosenblum: We will.

**Motion made by Mr. Rosenblum to file. Mr. Silva second. All in favor. Motion passed 4-0.**

233. Kim Batista, Town Clerk – Letter informing the Board of the resignation of Joao Dias from the School Committee.

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

Mr. Rosenblum: In Board Updates or Closing Remarks do we want to discuss the procedure going forward?

Mr. DeBarge: In light of what we have coming up in the next 2 minutes that is a good idea. We will go into the process of filling the seat of the School Committee as we get into updates, as it will take a little time for that process so everybody watching can understand that.

**Mr. Silva second. All in favor. Motion passed 4-0.**

234. Lori Belanger, Chief Procurement Officer – Informing the Board of her retirement effective May 31, 2024.

**Motion made by Mr. Goncalves to accept the letter of resignation and thank Lori for her time here with the Town, even though it was short-lived. It's a shame to see her go and good luck to her. Mr. Silva second.**

Mr. DeBarge: Great job when she was here. I will miss asking her questions and getting them answered quickly. I appreciate all she did when she was here.

**All in favor. Motion passed 4-0.**

235. Zoning Board of Appeals Reorganization.

Mr. DeBarge: Manny Lopes Chairperson, Alan Aubin Vice Chair, Joe Wlodyka member, Elaine Hodgman member, Mike Parker member, Valdemar Rodrigues alternate member.

**Motion made by Mr. Goncalves to file. Mr. Rosenblum second. All in favor. Motion passed 4-0.**

236. Safety Committee Reorganization.

Mr. DeBarge: Sgt. Brian Shameklis Chair, Peter Gallager Vice Chair, Ryan Churchill member, Seth Falconer member, Jamie Tomas member, Chris Coelho member, Melissa Graf member, Jeff Lavoie alternate member.

**Motion made by Mr. Rosenblum to file. Mr. Silva second. All in favor. Motion passed 4-0.**

## VISITATIONS

5:35 p.m. – Brenda Marra – Treasurer/Collector Interview

Mr. DeBarge: Unfortunately, we are missing one of our members, but we will carry on without him. Welcome. If you would, tell us a little bit about yourself.

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2024 MAY 22 A 11:55  
TOWN OF LUDLOW

Ms. Marra: I've been in treasury since 2017 with the Town of Lenox and prior to that the Town of Blandford. I had my designation for assessing. I let it run out because I couldn't keep treasury, collecting and assessing. You don't lose the knowledge. I started in a municipality. I was on unemployment and applied because I thought they wouldn't hire me. Surprise they hired me. I went from there into treasury and have been doing that ever since.

Mr. Goncalves: In your dealing in Lenox, what was your typical timeline or chain of events in regards to presenting the budget? Do they have a Town Meeting?

Ms. Marra: Yes, we have Town Meeting.

Mr. Goncalves: How would the typical scenario with the budget go and what would your involvement be?

Ms. Marra: The Accountant, Town Manager and I would meet. We didn't go to Town Meeting. We would decide on things and help them come up with the funding and where we're going to take the money from and he would present it to the Town. The Finance Committee would ask us questions to see where we're at with different things. I didn't have to present the budget.

Mr. Goncalves: Typically, how many levels would you go through?

Ms. Marra: I think we were on our 3<sup>rd</sup> one, but our Town Manager excelled in finance so he would make the budget up and speak to all the Town offices. I would help with the enterprise account when they had to raise the fees. The Accountant and I would do spreadsheets to see where we're at. I didn't have a lot of say. I would say what we want and need and he would go over it.

Mr. Goncalves: How big of a budget is Lenox?

Ms. Marra: I can't remember. I had it in the car and was going to look it up and I forgot. We have the Town, the 2 enterprise accounts, water & sewer. We took over the library in 2017. Prior to that it was its own entity. We have our school budget. All of it is separate. We have 36 bank accounts. We have a lot of funds for scholarships. We have funds for cemetery care. I just finished balancing today for April. We try to balance within the first week of the month. Sometimes it takes a little longer. Thursday when I go in there are 2 things I have to work on with taxes to make sure that's correct.

Mr. Silva: You have all your certifications? Both Collector & Treasurer?

Ms. Marra: Yes.

Mr. Silva: You've been working as a Treasurer/Collector since 2017?

Ms. Marra: Prior to that I was in Blandford but I've been in Lenox since 2017.

Mr. Silva: And before that you were working as an Assessors Assistant?

Ms. Marra: Yes, that's how I got into Lenox. They didn't have a treasury position open so I took that until the treasury opened.

Mr. Silva: Then you moved to Ludlow on West Street?

Ms. Marra: I never lived in Lenox. I lived in Russell.

Mr. Rosenblum: Thank you for applying and meeting with us. Knowing the Town of Lenox is around 5,000 people and we're 21,000. The staff I think you have is an assistant and yourself. Here

we have an Assistant Treasurer and office staff and 2 office staff in the Collector's. Do you see it as a heavy lift to go from 5,000?

Ms. Marra: A lot of the things are the same no matter how many people you have. If you're borrowing and you need to do public disclosure, it doesn't matter if you're borrowing \$1,000 or a million. You're doing the same paperwork no matter how much it is. I did bring up the amount of interest the Town gets by checking interest rates, moving banks, adding to CD's, especially in this time of watching where the rates are. If they're going up or down, putting extra funds into CD's that we're not going to need until the end of the year. We just got a 26-million-dollar settlement from General Electric. That's my responsibility to manage and invest.

Mr. DeBarge: In our office, we have 5 with our outgoing Treasurer/Collector. Five employees that deal with our public here. I don't know what percentage I would give that is negative of the public that they deal with, but lately the systems we've been changing; we have a different mailing system and paying system that has come online and we've been dealing with some negative responses and it's taken its toll. It's easy to see if you pay attention. I understand through looking at your resume that your system in Lenox is not Munis.

Ms. Marra: It's not.

Mr. DeBarge: One of my concerns about this is and my question to you would be coming into an office with 4 employees that know the Munis system, that know the public and have been dealing with this negativity since this new process has been online and some hiccups to this process as well, how do you address these employees knowing they have to train you in Munis and yet you're their supervisor and department head not knowing the kind of atmosphere you're walking into. It's almost a hornet's nest you're walking into. I'm interested in your mindset.

Ms. Marra: I'm good at problem solving and working on new things. When I became the Treasurer in Blandford they had not been able to hire a Treasurer that had gotten bonded. The one that got voted in had a heart attack. Prior to her they hadn't balanced in over 3 years. There was a forensic audit going on in the Tax Collector's office. The auditor told me to start from where you are and work your way backwards to find your errors. I enjoyed solving it. I had never done that system before because I was in the Assessors office. I went to Lenox in the Assessors office. They had not had an Assessor for 6 months so there was piles of forms to fill out so I got that straightened out. I was helping the Treasurer that was there for less than a year. She didn't want to be responsible for this so she stepped down and became my assistant. When I went there they hadn't balanced in 6 months so I had to learn where their mistakes were. I've been there since. We're very organized and we have a good workflow. I'm pretty good at picking things up. It's a bigger Town but it's not like I don't think I could do it.

Mr. Silva: The Treasurer/Collector has a lot of entries she has to do on Gateway. Is that something you did?

Ms. Marra: No, they don't do any of that. The Treasurer has to do the Gateway entries. I do all the entries for debt.

Mr. Silva: There is significant reports and significant things.

Ms. Marra: I've been logging into Gateway since I was in Blandford.

Mr. Goncalves: You were the Treasurer in Blandford. What prompted you to leave to Lenox?

Ms. Marra: We got a new Town Administrator and her degree was in Women's Studies and she never worked in a municipality before. She would tell me to do stuff and I would say I can't do that because of Mass General Law and she would say you're going to do it. I resigned from Treasury and was doing their assessing. She would come into the Assessors office and say you have to do this and I would say I work for the Board of Assessors; I don't work for you. I was hired by the Board and that's who's ultimately over me. She didn't agree with that.

Mr. Goncalves: So, you were in the Assessors office from 2008-2014? Then 2014-2017 in the Treasurers?

Ms. Marra: I was in the Assessors office until I left in 2017. I was in the Assessors and Treasurer's office because they were both part time.

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2024 MAY 22 A 11:55

Mr. Silva: Something you said doesn't jive with me. You said you worked for the Assessors. Quite honestly, Assessors is just a policy board. You would be working for Marc and Carrie. Assessors are strictly policy making, as well as other committees. A lot of committees believe they oversee employees and their offices and that's not fact. I just want to make sure you know that's what goes on here.

Ms. Marra: The Board of Assessors that hired me asked her to come to them first. There was a lot of things going on in the Town.

Mr. Silva: There used to be a lot of that before but with all the employment laws the Assessors have no authority.

Ms. Marra: Because I was hourly she tried to make me stay 40 hours a week but I could only do 20 hours.

Mr. DeBarge: Any closing remarks?

Ms. Marra: No. I know the person who's applying for Building. She used to work in Lenox and she's very good.

## CORRESPONDENCE

237. Lt. Michael Brennan, Ludlow Police Department – Letter informing the Board of Seth Beal's resignation from the Special Police effective April 10, 2024.

**Motion made by Mr. Silva** to accept Mr. Beal's resignation with many thanks for service on the Special Police. **Mr. Goncalves second. All in favor. Motion passed 4-0.**

238. Dan Kinne, Cubmaster for Cub Scouts Pack 1774 – Requesting to use the Ludlow Mills parking lot at the entrance to the Riverwalk for a Mother's Day flower sale on Saturday, May 11, 2024, from 9 a.m. – 2 p.m.

Mr. Rosenblum: Did I just see an email that this got cancelled?

Mr. Silva: Is that parking lot part of the Riverwalk that we own or the Mills?

Mr. Strange: It's ours.

**Motion made by Mr. Rosenblum** to table. **Mr. Goncalves second. All in favor. Motion passed 4-0.**

239. Jennifer Young, Director State Government Affairs Charter Communications – 2023 Annual Financial Report for Massachusetts including the MA CTV Form 200 (Financial Balance Sheet) and the MA CTV Form 400 (Statement of Ownership).

**Motion made by Mr. Rosenblum** to file. **Mr. Silva second. All in favor. Motion passed 4-0.**

240. Linda Collette, Chair 250<sup>th</sup> Celebration Committee – Requesting permission from the Board to use Memorial Park, Veteran's Memorial Park and the lawn area next to the library for June 14, 2024, and June 15, 2025, for the Block Party/Parade as well as October 5, 2024 and October 6, 2024 for the "Fallin into Fun" event.

**Motion made by Mr. Goncalves** to allow the 250<sup>th</sup> to use Memorial Park, Veteran's Memorial Park and the lawn area next to the library for June 14, 2024, and June 15, 2025, for the Block Party/Parade as well as October 5, 2024 and October 6, 2024 for the "Fallin into Fun" event. **Mr. Rosenblum second. All in favor. Motion passed 4-0.**

241. Linda Collette, Chair 250<sup>th</sup> Celebration Committee – Requesting permission from the Board to put lawn signs and banners for all of the upcoming 250<sup>th</sup> events by the entrances to Town and at the bridge and turnpike entrance.

**Motion made by Mr. Rosenblum** to give permission to put lawn signs and banners for all of the upcoming 250<sup>th</sup> events by the entrances to Town and at the bridge and turnpike entrance. **Mr. Silva second. All in favor. Motion passed 4-0.**

## VISITATIONS

5:55 p.m. – Brenda Church – Building Inspector Interview

Mr. DeBarge: Welcome. Tell us a little about yourself.

Ms. Church: I'm a cotton farmer's daughter from Arkansas, a mom of 2 great kids and a Building Commissioner in the State of Massachusetts. I've been working in the State in many different municipalities gaining knowledge to try to be a better Building Commissioner.

Mr. Silva: You have a lot of communities here. Are you still active?

Ms. Church: I've started to give some up. When I started out as a young inspector many years ago, municipalities were part time at best. To have a decent wage as a single mom, my oldest has graduated college and I've got one more left, I had a lot of small municipalities. Some of them were close together. Others were Berkshire Regional Planning Commission. I work for them for ADA consulting. I've started to give up some of those small towns because my goal is to have one municipality.

Mr. Silva: If you were to be hired you would work for Ludlow strictly.

Ms. Church: Yes. I have 2 small towns I'd like to keep because it's so hard for them and I don't have any office hours. It's the Town of Florida and Monroe.

Mr. Silva: I'm just trying to work out how the schedule would be.

Ms. Church: It wouldn't affect Monday – Friday at all. I'm normally there on Saturdays.

Mr. Silva: You're in Northampton. Not a long drive but you're going to commute.

Ms. Church: I've been commuting most of my career. I timed it today and it's not very far at all. I have a 2018 truck with 158,000 miles. I have a lot of energy but I'm starting to get to that age where I'd like to be more focused. Bring the knowledge that I have gained over these years being in the different municipalities and be in one place.

Mr. Silva: You started in 2013?

Ms. Church: Yes. Most of the small ones are when I became certified.

Mr. Silva: All your credentials are all set? We don't need anymore?

Ms. Church: We have to keep 45 credit hours to keep our commission through the State of Mass.

Mr. Rosenblum: Thank you for coming in and applying. Between all the municipalities, how many inspections and permits would you have done in a year?

Ms. Church: 2,000 inspections and twice that in permits. I haven't ever had a local. I wanted to learn this job and that's what I've tried to do. I believe the state adopted building code is a minimal safety code at best. When I first started doing this I saw a model that I really appreciated after being in the military having a chain of command and having that respect. I saw that in the beginning as a young inspector where you had a building commissioner who was teaching that local inspector how to be a building commissioner. You could pass all the state exams but it doesn't teach you how to be a building commissioner. When you become a building commissioner, 70% of it is the code. The rest is politics, people, and the everyday life of it. Somewhere along the way

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we lost that and people aren't signing up to be building inspectors anymore. We're at a shortage in the state. Like my father on the farm, he had a son that he passed it down to and that went away too because life has changed. What I feel like we have out here is inspectors double timing. Instead of it getting better it seems to have gotten worse because we aren't filling that pot back up and I think we have to start looking at that and start bringing people in and getting them interested in this job. It's been made hard and it shouldn't be. I should be working with you and the people of this community who pay my salary. You're hiring me to be your expert here and help you navigate the state adopted building code. I'm not just enforcing it but I should be showing why it's this way. Again, it's a minimal safety code. What I've seen over the years is frustrating because there's a lack of that within the building department. The lack of having that collaborative team effort. It's like this person is on their own and it's been like that for a long time. I think we need to get back to having a building department that is teaching not only bringing up the next inspectors but the public about what it is so they understand it. Through knowledge everyone can learn and it can be an easier process.

Mr. Goncalves: Thank you for your interest. In the communities you work in currently, are you also the zoning enforcement officer for the Planning Board?

Ms. Church: Yes, sir.

Mr. Goncalves: If you're doing a couple thousand of inspections, 8-10 a workday? Does that include the restaurants and annuals with the Fire Department?

Ms. Church: Annual liquor license, annual certificates of inspection, multi-family. I try to keep up with all of that in my municipalities.

Mr. Goncalves: I saw that you're a sprinkler expert so that's got to come in handy with all the commercial exposure.

Ms. Church: I was taught by an old commissioner who said don't live in a vacuum. Make sure you're always moving ahead and educated and knowing what you're looking at. I went to Stowe, the facility that fire has there and went to a week-long class. I went to another one at Myrtle Beach through the ICC.

Mr. Goncalves: Have you had any or many complaints filed against you with the State?

Ms. Church: With the State, no. I have had complaints about me obviously. If I didn't I wouldn't be doing my job.

Mr. Goncalves: People are going to complain all the time, but to have it escalate to the point where they would write a letter or make a phone call. How many times have you taken people to court on violations? Or how many people in the course of a year would you have to take in for non-compliance?

Ms. Church: First of all, I don't want to take people to court because when we get to court the judge doesn't know me, you, or the town. That judge is going to read the black & white of the code, which may vary depending on the situation so I really try hard not to. I really try to avoid it so it's not been that many times. A handful at best. I want to find a solution. This code wasn't set up to make it a hardship or punishment. This code is to provide safety for the structures that we live in and do business in. You're always going to run across one that has it in their mind that you're bad, the code is bad, the state is bad and you're not going to convince them otherwise. I contribute it to being from the south. I've had really good success in finding solutions rather than going to court.

Mr. Goncalves: Who is doing the inspections in these communities? Who is looking at the plans and making the changes and approving the plans.

Ms. Church: The plan reviews to issue the building permit? I do. I work Monday-Sunday unless I go on vacation. I like the job. I grew up on a farm building. I love seeing new ideas in homes. The products in helping people get builds done the right way, whether they're commercial or residential. I had great experience by being in these different municipalities. When I served in Lenox & Lee the old Cranwell was bought by Hyatt and they put in 14 new buildings and renovated

several historical buildings on that. I can't tell you the vast knowledge that I gained during those few years.

Mr. Goncalves: Would you consider 20 hours a week and then go into the full-time job? Would that fit with your schedule?

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2024 MAY 22 A 11: 55  
TOWN OF LUDLOW

Ms. Church: No.

Mr. Goncalves: There's a method behind the madness. We have somebody in here right now that's 20 hours and I don't think Erik wants to do this forever but things are going well and I don't want to disrupt the flow too much and I'm wondering if it's something where we could use another 20 hours and eventually when Erik retires completely move you to full-time. That's nothing you'd be interested in?

Ms. Church: No, I'm sorry.

Mr. DeBarge: What do you know about our community?

Ms. Church: I researched the size, 20,000 people, you're talking about maybe going from a Town Administrator to Town Manager.

Mr. DeBarge: How about the projects we're working on in Town? The Mills and high school project. Are you familiar with some of them?

Ms. Church: I read through some of the minutes. Trying to make your schools better.

Mr. DeBarge: The 4.8-million-dollar track & field project we have going on over here. We have a 60 million dollar build out going on at our Mills with apartments and retail, 36.4 buildable acres in the Mills area. A lot of busy stuff for that office. At the same time, we're the construction company capital of Western Mass if not the eastern seaboard with the number of construction companies we have in Ludlow, which means a lot of our residents are builders and contractors and they build their own homes and put on their own additions and they're set in their ways. Our town probably has a reputation and our building office has a reputation and I don't care to know what it is. As an elected official I hear it. I'm sure with your resume and the vast amount of communities you work in you deal with a number of different people & attitudes. I like to say our community is unique and I've listed a number of reasons why I think we're unique. With the kind of people we have and knuckle dragging contractors that are going to be upset if you don't agree with them. Do you have that kind of situation often? You seem like you mitigate those very well.

Ms. Church: I don't think any building commissioner that's done this job for any length of time hasn't run into this. I think serving the different municipalities I have has given me those abilities to deal with those different situations and to navigate them. It is always having good communication and being able to walk through it without getting emotion involved. That's when you turn a corner and you're not going to get anywhere. If you're dealing with emotion you're not going to get into the facts of the issues and get anything solved.

Mr. Goncalves: If I bring you a set of plans today, typically when are you going to be able to turn around a permit? New build residential house?

Ms. Church: You have 30 days by code to review and issue or deny permits. I've not ever taken 30 days. Not ever because there has been a couple of times they hadn't turned in all the proper documentation or there was a special permit involved where there were still some requirements. That's why I went to plans review with the ICC in Myrtle Beach. That's why I educated myself so I can do the plan reviews efficiently and timely.

Mr. Goncalves: So, it's not a 30-day thing every time?

Ms. Church: With a new build you want different departments to make sure they've signed off, whether it's Assessors, Board of Health, Conservation, and make sure everyone has seen this and they're not setting it in the middle of wetlands. Sometimes a new build can take a little bit longer but 2 weeks is usually for a new structure and that's basically just making sure I check with everyone.

Mr. Silva: I like a lot of what you said because you said that you like to work with people, you like to help them and you're here to help them. We have had a lot of issues with we have a lot of ethnic people here and they like to do a lot of things themselves and they go into the department and you say you can't do that. That's not what should happen. I think the building department should be telling them here's what you can do and do it right. And that was important what you said to me. You have no idea how many complaints I've gotten from the building department. There wasn't a day that didn't go by. I've been here going on my 13<sup>th</sup> year. To hear a flat out no is just wrong. I'm happy that you said that. Ludlow at one time had a record number of contractors compared to across the country. At one time we had more major contractors per capita than any other community. There's a lot of that. A lot of these people know the things they need to do.

Ms. Church: And they're also the worst offenders. My mentor as I was coming up the ranks was Louise Vera, who was a state inspector and also Portuguese. She was being my mentor and helping me with interpretation before I would go to a test. She wasn't easy on me. She laid it out and said look it up. Here's the question. Where would you go. She's the one who said I'm teaching you; you need to pass this on. I believe in that. It's the same concept I learned in the military. There's a chain of command and in that you respect and you give people that respect. It will come back and it always has for me.

Mr. Goncalves: It's interesting you said that. Would you ever turn around if somebody came to the counter and had a question put the code book in front of them and say look it up?

Ms. Church: No. I have pulled the book out and said let's look it up together. You can talk to contractors and the majority of them will say I've done just that. I've helped contractors pass tests who were wanting to become inspectors. It's so important because if we're teaching each other and you don't understand something and I show it to you and you go what does that mean, I can go further and you leave my office saying if I just do this then we're set. I think what happens with the code is people look at it and are overwhelmed. I'm also in with the new energy code. We have the base energy code, the stretch code and now we have the opt in specialized code that municipalities can do because of the very aggressive schedule that Mass wants to be net zero by 2050. I've had contractors ask what I think and I have to walk a very fine line because when the stretch code came out and I was having to inspect bays that were being caulked to make this building so tight and then I had a contractor ask me to come over and the wall was sweating. At some point we had to put in a mechanical fan in the house to circulate because we've made the building so tight. At some point being with each other and working with each other and learning it together instead of codes like this coming out without people in the field's input the energy code has gotten a mind of its own. I think it's better when we try to learn it together.

Mr. DeBarge: Do you have any closing comments?

Ms. Church: I've been doing it long enough and I'm here because I want to try to focus on one municipality and bring that knowledge because I think I can. I want to try. In Lee & Lenox I had a young woman who was working for her father's construction company and her father was retired and it was concrete work and she didn't want to do it. I said if you want to be an inspector, let me know and I can help you become an inspector. I got a call about a year later and said she is ready. Now she's an inspector in Lee & Lenox. They're doing a shared service with Stockbridge and Great Barrington. I told her to get her commissioner's but it's really hard when you're doing the job and trying to take tests. I think it's the way we need to get back to. To have experienced, knowledgeable inspectors that are going to stay and grow with that municipality.

6:15 p.m. – Joseph Black – LFD Interview

Chief Pease: This is for a firefighter/paramedic position vacated by Rene Dubois.

Mr. DeBarge: This is a normal interview process, other than the fact that you're the only one here for the interview. Please tell us a little bit about yourself.

Mr. Black: I appreciate you having me giving me a little bit of your time. My name is Joseph Black. I've been a paramedic for about a year. I was an EMT prior to that for 3 years. I worked in Springfield and I'm currently in Holyoke. I grew up very sport oriented, hanging around with a lot of friends, spending a lot of time doing stuff outside. I still try to challenge myself on a day-to-day



basis. I go to the gym and constantly try to make my skills better in the work field. I'm always looking to improve my career someday, somehow.

Mr. Rosenblum: Thank you for coming in. What do you see as future technology for firefighters?

Mr. Black: Safety is progressing quite a bit especially from where we've come. Fires now a days are less but the types of fires are progressing in how they portray. Much more dangers. To acknowledge safety wise to get people out of a building safer and faster, whether that's obese patients on higher up floors. I think that is going to be implemented sometime soon to try to help obese patients on the upper floors get down quicker and safer, as well as the elderly. We try to advise to stay out of elevator shafts when a fire is happening. As far as technology goes in the future I think it's going to go down that road.

Mr. Silva: Thank you for applying and thanks for your service in the Air Force. You're working in Holyoke, not at the fire department but for the ambulance service?

Mr. Black: Correct.

Mr. Silva: Have you gone to any fires? Seen them in action?

Mr. Black: More in Springfield. I worked in Springfield for 3 years and there were a few fully involved apartment fires that we went for a standby. I found myself over by the staging area with the firefighters seeing how their process works and their communication skills.

Mr. Silva: Transgressing to the fire area, you feel comfortable doing that? Obviously you're applying I just want to make sure you feel comfortable.

Mr. Black: I do. I trust myself especially with the training I will receive.

Mr. Silva: What is a short trauma thing you went through and how you handled it.

Mr. Black: I had a call in Springfield. It was a police involved shooting. I responded to it not realizing it at first but the person involved and we brought to the hospital was my friend from a few years ago. I didn't know it at the time. My buddy sent me a link saying this is so & so. I was at the gym when it happened and it did hit me like a ton of bricks. At that moment I knew I wasn't going to be able to deal with it ok. I went into work the next day and told one of my supervisors before I went on the road. I did my shift and did my debriefing. About a month later I was able to get a lot off my chest. I felt it helped me quite a bit. I still think about it sometimes but that debriefing helped me learn how to cope with what happened.

Mr. Goncalves: Thank you very much for applying. You went to STCC and didn't get a degree but got a fire science certificate. Was that the intention when you went in? Not to get the associate's degree?

Mr. Black: I went in not fully understanding where I was at. I knew I wanted to be a firefighter and I knew that STCC had an excellent program for that. I went one step at a time. I got my degree and wanted to pursue my Associate's but never actually finished it. This winter I was in contact with STCC to finish out my degree, whether it's in the fall or the following spring if I happen to go to the academy.

Mr. Goncalves: A lot of times you go to Brandford Hall where you can be a mechanic you can get a better education with that certificate program than you are going to a community college trying to be a mechanic. From a fire standpoint this will be your first exposure to that besides any calls you might have gone on? Will that require additional education on his part?

Chief Pease: Part of our process is most people that come to us have very little fire experience beforehand. 85% of what we do is paramedics and working in an ambulance. He comes to us with that certification and experience, which is a great thing these days to find a certified paramedic with experience. We do send them to the Mass Fire Academy once we vet them on the ambulance and they go to the 10-week program there. That certifies them in firefighting 1 & 2 through the program. That's the standard process and it has been. I, myself, came to the department without any fire experience other than wanting to be a firefighter and many of our firefighters in the past

have. It's great to have some experience but you learn our way the first time and you don't learn any bad habits. On your own it's kind of tough without a municipality sponsoring you. You can through volunteer departments but you're doing that in your own time. Many people don't have the funding or time to take on that endeavor for very little to no pay. It is rare that we see somebody come in with all their fire experience. Our last hire came in as a lateral transfer from another department. He came with that experience, which was a big plus for us but that's not typical.

Mr. DeBarge: I don't have any questions for you. You're the only one here and vetted through our fire department. What do you have for us Chief?

Chief Pease: He came as a student. We let students participate. We have a few agreements with a couple of programs like the AMR program at Greenfield Community paramedic program. It's great because they get a chance to come into the department and ride on the ambulance and learn from seasoned medics. It's part of the process. We've all been through it. It's nice because we get to take a look at that and see how they interact with a patient and provide care and they get to look at the departments. They're interviewing the department just as much as we're interviewing them. He could go to any civil service department that he chooses being a certified paramedic. They are very tough to come by. He comes to us with experience too. We did interview him in house last week. Deputy Chief and a couple of our Captains along with Carrie. All his background checks came back positive. Current and past supervisors all have positive responses. He's a very strong candidate for this position and I don't think it should be taken away from him or the position that he's the only applicant. I think he's a great applicant for the position. It would be my recommendation to move forward in the hiring process with him.

**Motion made by Mr. Rosenblum** to appoint Joseph Black as a new firefighter for the Ludlow Fire Department pending his physical evaluation and successfully passing the PAT, which he has already done. **Mr. Goncalves second. All in favor. Motion passed 4-0.**

#### **CORRESPONDENCE**

242. Chief Pease – Request to charge off medical expenses and lost wages to Chapter 41, Section 111F for an injury sustained by a firefighter/paramedic as a result of an incident that occurred on May 1, 2024.

**Motion made by Mr. Rosenblum** to approve charging off medical expenses and lost wages to Chapter 41, Section 111F for an injury sustained by a firefighter/paramedic as a result of an incident that occurred on May 1, 2024. **Mr. Goncalves second. All in favor. Motion passed 4-0.**

243. Conservation Commission – Reorganization.

Mr. DeBarge: Angela Tierney Chair, Cameron Covill Vice Chair, Penny Lebel member, Helder Cerqueira member.

**Motion made by Mr. Rosenblum** to file. **Mr. Goncalves second. All in favor. Motion passed 4-0.**

244. Library Board of Trustees – Reorganization.

Mr. DeBarge: Linda Collette Chair, Kathy Ouellette Co-Secretary, Ruth Saunders Co-Secretary.

**Motion made by Mr. Goncalves** to file. **Mr. Rosenblum second. All in favor. Motion passed 4-0.**

246. Philip Roberts, Director – Commonwealth of Massachusetts Department of Labor Relations – Informing the Board of the Certification of Representatives.

**Motion made by Mr. Silva** to file. **Mr. Rosenblum second. All in favor. Motion passed 4-0.**

245. Council on Aging – Reorganization.

Mr. DeBarge: Diane Peacey Chair, Robert Mishol Vice Chair, John DaCruz Treasurer, Karen Martin Secretary, Fernando Barroso member, Rosalind Fortini member, Helen Grabowski

member, Debbie Johnson member, Robert Radowski member, Kara Ribeiro member, Deborah Potter member.

**Motion made by Mr. Rosenblum to file. Mr. Goncalves second. All in favor. Motion passed 4-0.**

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2024 MAY 22 A 11: 55

## VISITATIONS

TOWN OF LUDLOW

6:35 p.m. – Laura Rooney, Ludlow CARES Coalition – CARES Updates and discuss opioid settlement funds.

Ms. Rooney: Thanks for giving us the chance to come here. We presented back in October the request for opioid relief funds. I know there's been a lot of discussion and clarification of how that money can be spent or what an organization can do with those funds. Today we are submitting expenses that we have incurred since that meeting as well as expenses that we've incurred around our mental health first aid initiative with all the backup that is required as well as proof of how it relates to the stipulations outlined in the opioid relief fund documents that are supplied by the state. I submitted a letter to you and it contains all the explanations of what's been done and how it corresponds to opioid relief fund reimbursement. Detailed listings of the 4 areas that we're looking for reimbursement for. I'll go back to mental health first aid work that we did in 2023, mental health first aid work we've done 1<sup>st</sup> quarter 2024, red ribbon week and the activities associated with that, the walk to remember and speaker at Ludlow High School that was really organized and recommended by the LHS CARES group. A couple of the things I want to highlight in the letter are we began the mental health first aid initiative for a lot of reasons. Everybody was talking about mental health. I've heard it many times at these meetings. The importance that mental health is a concern and something should be done about it. As we discussed before, we put a lot of thought into what we can do. Karen Carreira, who is a counselor and educator in this area, brought the mental health first aid program and youth and adult mental health first aid program to us at a CARES meeting. A couple of us were aware of it. Paulina from the Board of Health had been familiar with it. We jumped on this. Youth mental health first aid is specifically documented in the guidelines of how the opioid funds are to be spent and programs related to it. What's really exciting for Ludlow is a couple things. One is the program is taking off as far as we are concerned. We do have about 50 members of the public who have taken the course and gotten certified on a volunteer basis. We were able to do a mental health program at the Wellness Day through Karen for the town. Most exciting is the professional development day that was just completed at Ludlow Public Schools where over 260 of our teachers and administrators received their youth mental health first aid certification and that was supported by CARES and the schools and the American Foundation for Suicide Prevention that awarded that initiative a \$30,000 grant to get that program completed. About 20 trainers came in from all across the state and New England to do this training. The feedback has been amazing. That paved the way for us to be one of the first towns in this area to be able to offer teen mental health first aid to our students, which is a peer-to-peer program that is something that can be done next year really starting with the LHS CARES which has very much been established. It is precedent setting. We're being asked how do we do this. Many communities are coming forward. Karen's phone is ringing off the hook so it's a throw a stone in a pond ripple effect that is starting with our community and we should be very proud of that. We will continue that work. We have some programs coming up for our paraprofessionals, for our coaches and we will continue with our mental health first aid initiative, our goal to have a thousand members that live or work in our community trained by the end of 2025. We are also submitting expenses for Red Ribbon Week. Most of you are familiar with Red Ribbon Week. Have done it in the past and expenses have been incurred since 2012. We are only going back to 2023 and asking for some reimbursement for those expenses. While we're going through that I'd like Diana & Ben to update you on what we're looking at for 2024 Red Ribbon Week and education on substance use disorder, opioid use disorder and the illegal use of drugs & alcohol.

Ms. Roy: Red Ribbon Week has traditionally been centered in the schools because that's where our biggest target audience is. That will continue but we want to expand that. We have been expanding that over time to include the entire community. There have been many ideas that we can do for our seniors. Our senior center is very busy. There are a lot of people there and it is a target group of people that are in many cases struggling with substance abuse, even though we don't think of it that way. Their reliance on prescription drugs makes them an important target audience, and families themselves. We are planning to do some expansion this coming year to include a lot of things. We're going to be brainstorming a variety of community events that will

bring the message of Red Ribbon Week not just to the students but to the entire community, whether it's an art project or a family movie night. A variety of speakers. We haven't had a speaker in a while other than a target speaker at the high school, so we are exploring many possibilities. The Hope Stroll happens around the same time. This year the theme is Life is Advice. Live Drug Free. When we talked to the high school kids they said they were thinking about a movie so they already are buying into this theme and have ideas of ways we can develop the theme of Red Ribbon Week.

Mr. Bovee: In speaking of how we could not just support the schools but also the community, we had some great suggestions at one of our last meetings. We talked about Coffee with CARES. Setting up an opportunity where folks can come & visit us at a local Dunkin Donuts or Starbucks for a free cup of coffee with us and talk about what we have going on, talk about these mental health trainings and Red Ribbon Week and try to get more community involvement.

Ms. Rooney: We do a lot of meetings over Zoom and we have an opportunity to meet with the administrators of all the schools to talk about their plans for Red Ribbon Week. It's at the point now where we supply materials to support their message during that week. LHS CARES wants to be able to dictate, along with the administration, their ideas. We had a Baird CARES before Covid and we're hoping to bring that back next year so we can have some more programs in the middle school. It did fall off quite a bit during Covid and hasn't really come back yet. Dr. Tiano and the whole administration has been so supportive of CARES. That's how we're able to do a lot of things that we're doing and looking forward to getting involved with Red Ribbon Week and doing some more things with the Baird CARES group. One of the large things we want to take on is we've been thinking about applying for the drug free community grant for some time now. It is a major application. Circumstances happened that it didn't work out this year for us to apply in April. We have contacted Gail Gramarossa who is a grant writer well known in the area. She was on CARES at the very beginning and helped us at the very beginning when CARES started in 2012. We are in contact with her to help us write the grant and get it done for 2025. The application is due in April 2025 with funds coming out in September. A lot of the items under the drug free community grant, it is a matching grant but opioid relief funds can be used as part of that match, thereby almost doubling the money from the federal grant and the opioid relief funds. I'd like everyone to keep that in mind. It does require representation from 12 different sectors of the community. Most of the sectors we already have on Ludlow CARES in one way or another but in order to refresh ideas and get new ideas we're open to new people that have been sitting on the sidelines of this and are interested in getting involved to contact Ludlow CARES or come to a CARES meeting if they are interested in getting involved and see if they can be a representative on one of the sectors. There's 12 different sectors and all of them are important. We are always looking for more volunteers. It seems like we do a lot and we have a lot of volunteers but it's a lot of people that have been doing a lot right along, new volunteers, young families and parents, community members that are representative of the seniors or other populations. We want to encourage them to think about joining up with CARES so we can all tackle this problem together and all of the issues that put our youth and community at risk from these perspectives.

Ms. Roy: One thing that we're not submitting expenses for is the family dance party. We started a dance party during Covid because we were looking for something as we came out of Covid that was positive. Everyone was negative and depressed and asked what fun things can we do. So, we had a dance party. Last year we realized it was very close to the time that the Boys & Girls Club had what used to be their father-daughter dance, then it was child-caregiver dance and we realized maybe we need to combine forces and just do one. This year we had a combined Boys & Girls Club/Ludlow CARES event, which was very successful. That's one of our favorite partnerships, maybe for me because I'm on both boards. It's a logical partnership and we use that space quite frequently. The more we can do to have something fun for free. As you may have noticed CARES doesn't charge a penny for anything. That was a transition with the club that has to meet expenses. We spent less than \$1,000.

Mr. Bovee: In that same vein of outside the scope of the opioid relief funds but within the mission statement for the CARES group is slide into summer on the last day of school. Just an opportunity for kids to get together outside away from screens interacting with their friends getting some exercise having some fun and also the safety element, as it's supported by the Ludlow Police & Fire Department. Getting to meet first responders, getting to learn some safety tips as we head into summer. Another great opportunity for our community.

Ms. Rooney: With the 250<sup>th</sup>, we know there are a lot of events that are happening around the 250<sup>th</sup>. One of the things we tried to do was not to do more events to take away from theirs, but to support their events, to advertise for them and to draw attention to them. We have a segment on LCTV called Share the Care, where we try to highlight all the good that's happening in Ludlow and all the good that everybody is doing. Different organizations submit that and pictures so we're able to bring everybody up in what can sometimes feel like a heavy environment at times. That's one of the other focuses of Ludlow CARES because if your community is in a positive place and is protected then chances are your kids are going to feel that as well. With that, I am formally requesting this reimbursement.

Mr. DeBarge: The total request is \$13,900, right?

Ms. Rooney: Yes.

Mr. DeBarge: Marc, we haven't voted to spend anything we have, correct?

Mr. Strange: The board voted to authorize \$30,000 for CARES.

Ms. Rooney: Marc asked me to provide this.

Mr. Strange: They'd have \$16,000 left after that.

Mr. DeBarge: In case anybody hasn't looked at the paperwork from the state, and Laura & I were talking on the phone the other day about it, the mental health first aid classes the language is right there. The reimbursement for that is clear. Who fills out those forms? We do? So, when it comes down to the Board of Selectmen allocating those monies, when those monies are expended you have to report that back to our office and our office fills out the paperwork and that cycle continues for the entire time until the money is expended from all the entities we give the money to? That's how that works?

Mr. Strange: Yes, Laura & I spoke extensively about all of this making sure that whatever expenditures CARES submits for qualifies under this long list of qualifying uses. This is the result of that. We have to then on a quarterly, semi-annual basis submit to the state and say this is how we're using our funds.

Mr. Goncalves: Let's assume we gave Michael J. Dias \$10,000; how does that get reported back to the state?

Mr. DeBarge: It seems like an exhausting chain of custody with the paperwork. It's almost better if you had a committee that was able to do the paperwork while disseminating the funds rather than getting something from one entity and then funneling through the Board of Selectmen's office for office to do all of that. It seems like a lot.

Mr. Strange: Are you asking in the future if Laura can send this information just to our office and we can process it?

Mr. DeBarge: No, I'm asking how is it going to work? Is there a more efficient way? If we have 6 different offices that we give funds to then that's 6 different committees that are going to be funneling information to your office for the forms to be filled out to send to the state. I wonder if that can be corralled into one place.

Mr. Strange: I'd love that.

Mr. DeBarge: One committee that disseminates the money that and paperwork that sends it to the state.

Mr. Rosenblum: Correct me if I'm wrong but in most instances you have to spend it and it has to be reimbursed.

Ms. Rooney: This is how you set that up for us. Instead of giving us \$30,000 because there wasn't a lot of clarity at that time but we were moving forward. We had plans and initiatives. We don't have a lot of money. We're collecting money from businesses to do all this stuff. I think the idea

was we'll spend it because we had it, we just raised money last year, and now we don't have as much. We're down to \$15,000 so we need this to replenish that. I don't disagree that if there's a couple of entities, not a lot but Dias Foundation, CARES, Police, there's a few entities in Ludlow that have been working on prevention. Then there's the entities that work on the recovery and treatment aspect of things that are also eligible for the funds. I don't know that our town has a plan of how to address all this. We have all these resources but are we doing it in a way that makes a lot of sense and spends the money as wisely as possible because this is the first time this kind of money has come in where you get to just spend it and it's still going to be there. How do we make sure we get the most bang for our buck. With the drug free community grant with the sector involvement using that as matching funds I think that's a broader plan. It also has a paid position that does this.

Mr. Goncalves: What I'm seeing as a problem is I don't think anybody is going to be as organized as they are in submitting this to us.

Mr. DeBarge: I'm not saying the Board of Selectmen wants to give up the authority to disseminate the money.

Ms. Rooney: I don't think they should.

Mr. DeBarge: I'm trying to lessen what I see as being chaos. If we have a meeting and there's a different group coming in every meeting requesting something every time that's more paperwork every time.

Mr. Goncalves: Is there a questionnaire we can put together, like a checklist for people.

Mr. Strange: I hear what everybody is saying. I don't think we're going to get to that situation. We've had CARES, Dias and the Health Department come in. I don't know who else is coming in unless we do a full public engagement process.

Mr. Goncalves: We still need to know where the money is going. We need to meet the checklist.

Mr. Silva: How can the money not be reimbursable? If we got awarded this money, and it's our money now, and we're awarding it to CARES, which is an organization that does all of this stuff, why isn't it enough to say CARES gave us a request and they are going to be disseminating this money out to wherever, they're using it for this, why should we have to do that?

Mr. Goncalves: They want to make sure they're not taking that money to go to Las Vegas for a conference once a month.

Mr. Silva: They should report the things they're using it for.

Mr. Strange: We are the entity that received it. To me this is terrific. I can just put this with our report and send it in. We can use this as an example for future entities.

Mr. Rosenblum: You have the blueprint in front of you. Anything you're asking for you state in the guidelines where it qualifies. In most instances it's going to be this is how it qualifies, here's the supporting documentation and receipts and it's done.

Mr. Silva: Did they tell us they have to spend the money first before they can get the money?

Mr. Strange: No, since this is the first time we're doing this we have to look at the fine details but if you have some sort of contractual arrangement or signed proposal or commitment you can probably award the money prospectively. We thought it was safer to do a reimbursement model.

Ms. Rooney: We were spending the money before everything was settled down so the thought was we can do it on a reimbursement basis. What I'm hoping is that if we apply for the drug free community grant I'm hoping that all those that are asking for money will be coming together under this drug free community grant to figure out how to continue to address this issue in Ludlow especially on the prevention and education side. Then you have another side on this which we don't touch, which is the recovery side and the work the police are doing like going out when there's an overdose. We used to talk about that and were one of the first that brought it to Ludlow

but it's already being done so we're not doing that. We have always been here to fill the gaps. If this education gap is filled by someone else then we're not going to keep doing that. We don't want to educate all year long and bring this campaign and throw them at kids because they'll get sick of hearing it. We're hoping with this drug free community grant we can bring everybody back together and they can join in and be part of this because it's a \$250,000/year award and our consultant has told us there's no reason Ludlow shouldn't get it. We've been doing the work the whole time.

TOWN OF LUDLOW

Mr. Goncalves: Karen Carreira. Once upon a time there was talk about putting her in a paid position.

Ms. Rooney: She is doing a lot of our training on the mental health front. That would be a wonderful thing that would happen for the Town of Ludlow. She is now being requested throughout Western Mass and other states to do training and advocacy on the mental health front. She is the one that got us the grant. I don't know if that would be something she would be interested in but under the drug free community grant that is a paid executive director position that works within the fiscal agent of the schools but it has to be the community. Karen would be a great candidate and there are other great candidates out there. That has to be a fair employment opportunity like any other one.

Mr. Goncalves: From your organization, is there anything there that we could give Karen money from this grant to do a little more than what's being done now, rather than every Wednesday night when you get together, 1-2 days or nights a week?

Ms. Rooney: I don't know how we would do that but with this mental health first aid initiative she is the one and CARES paid her up front and she organized a good deal of that program. We have done that in some respects to use her as a consultant.

Ms. Roy: There are a couple individuals in town who after that training reached out to her individually with a specific issue. In a way that is happening already. When you're trainer gives you some ideas about youth mental health first aid and you have an issue you know where to go. She is our go-to person.

Ms. Rooney: The resources she put together were unbelievable.

Mr. DeBarge: If we approved \$30,000 before we don't need a motion for this.

Mr. Strange: You can if you want. I don't know if you've had a chance to go through all of it. I don't think you need a motion because the funds have already been allocated. It's up to us to make sure everything is copacetic.

Ms. Rooney: The report is due in October every year, so our hope is that we will get back to you again before October to do that report. As we figure out what we want to do for Red Ribbon Week we would like to spend more money now that we're out of Covid and have some speakers. Some of it will be that we have the capacity to spend first and reimburse later but if we feel like there's something we really want to do we want to come forward and ask for money before we spend it then we'll do that.

Mr. Rosenblum: In lieu of a motion, with this \$13,900.82 you'll have a balance of \$16,099.

Mr. Silva: I think we should get the organizations that have requested and set up different funds, whether it's \$30,000 each one for now then set those up and as they come in and request those things then you allocate that amount to them and the other ones still have them. Probably the easiest way to set up something where each one has their account.

Mr. Goncalves: A maximum limit for each one subject to them performing what they're promising to do with the money?

Mr. Silva: No, we awarded them before.

Ms. Rooney: We asked for \$30,000 specifically because that was our yearly operating budget but I also would say I want to caution with a drug free community grant, those funds and we're hoping

that's not spent, all of this is going right into the community at a very low cost. Probably 20% of what it would cost given all of the professional costs.

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Mr. Goncalves: And all of the volunteers. Good job. Keep it up.

2024 MAY 22 A 11: 56

Mr. Strange: Carrie is sticking around to discuss the agenda item Board to discuss personnel updates.

TOWN OF LUBLOW

Board to discuss personnel updates – Treasurer/Collector, Procurement, Building Department

Mr. Strange: The interviews are going to be a part of this. I wanted to give you a holistic update as to what's going on in those departments. As you know, Elsa is retiring at the end of May. You have the contract in front of you tonight. We've contracted with Capital Solutions to bring in an interim Treasurer/Collector to help with the transition. This is his 2<sup>nd</sup> week. He's here Tuesdays, Wednesdays and Thursdays and he'll be here at least through the end of May depending on what you do with Ms. Marra. Maybe a little bit beyond that to help with the transition. My two cents on Ms. Marra. Carrie & I had similar concerns about Munis. It is a big lift. When we interviewed Ms. Marra she did not seem concerned about that. It seems like she feels like she can take on that challenge. There's also a profound lack of treasurers/collectors that are in the market for other jobs. She lives in town and in the absence of other applicants I'm pretty confident that she can do the job with Munis being a temporary obstacle that I think she can overcome.

Mr. Silva: I know Munis has training, is that something that we can bring them in they can show her? I haven't worked with it and they did in Southbridge. It's cumbersome. It's a big deal. We need somebody to get on there and learn those ropes.

Ms. Ribeiro: It's a tedious process but I think if you have somebody that knows the processes of what the treasurer/collector role is and what they're doing she'll have a step up and easier time learning Munis. I came here with no experience with Munis. I'm self-taught and can navigate through it but I think that if you understand the end result and what you need it will be a little bit easier for her to learn it. We do have money in a training budget.

Mr. Silva: I would definitely set it up because it's tough.

Mr. Rosenblum: If the recommendation is to move forward with her, would you keep Capital Strategic on as a bridge?

Mr. Strange: You approved the transfer of those jail impact funds for this so we have enough funds for about 10 weeks. There's 4 weeks between now and when Elsa retires and we have time after that.

Mr. Rosenblum: Another month from June 1.

Mr. Strange: We could pivot instead of having Stephen Price come in and use those funds to help train Brenda.

Mr. Silva: Is he proficient on Munis?

Mr. Strange: Yes.

Mr. Silva: Maybe we could have him.

Mr. Rosenblum: Bridge him in and if we've got the money to do it keep him on because they're learning our way. I wouldn't have a problem with that. If you believe that the Munis system won't be a heavy lift for her she did say she's been able to sift through and organize things that have been a mess before.

Mr. Strange: A couple things that came out of our interview was she's doing everything in Lenox right now, payroll, reconciliation. Here the way our treasurer/collector department works is there are staffers doing that work. It will be a transition going from doing the day-to-day to being more of a manger. As she alluded to her mentality is bond issuances and some of that higher level treasurer/collector task that I'm used to the treasurer/collector performing. The last thing is she



lives in Ludlow and works from 6-4 Monday-Thursday in Lenox. She leaves her house and 5 and comes back at 5. For me a big thing is work ethic. I don't think we're going to have any problems with her work ethic. Carrie can chime in with anything but I wanted to give you our impression from the interview we had with her and a lot of it was reiterated with you tonight.

Ms. Ribeiro: We're not going to get a perfect candidate that has everything. When we first talked about posting this position I put in an email to Marc that Munis is a must and we've had it posted and we're not getting those applicants but we do have somebody that's doing the job and has been for quite some time and is knowledgeable.

Mr. Silva: And all the credentials.

Ms. Ribeiro: And has an assessing background. I think Munis can be learned. We have a consultant here that knows Munis and can help get her up to speed. The more you do the same task the more you pick it up. I think we'd be foolish to pass somebody up that has this knowledge. We have had other applicants but there is nobody that has municipal experience.

Mr. Goncalves: Why didn't we see the other applicants?

Ms. Ribeiro: They're not qualified. There's somebody working in healthcare or a medical office. There's nobody that's even close.

Mr. DeBarge: The Munis thing is a big red flag for me but I trust your opinions and I believe your expertise is greater than mine in that field. My reservation with Munis is not only knowing the system but also because of the other employees, which is why I posed the question to Ms. Marra. You have 4 employees there that are versed in the system and for me to be all in on this you're going to have to tell me that you're going to train her immediately in this. This is 4 women that are going to be essentially training their supervisor and I have an issue with that. These are 4 women that could be considered for the position. I trust your decision but it's mine to be concerned for them as well. I wouldn't want to be training somebody that's going to be telling me what to do. If we're bringing somebody in that knows the Munis system and can train somebody that has all the other tangibles except for that and can manage and this is the will and majority of the board I won't fight you on it but know I have reservations because of that.

Mr. Strange: To reiterate Tony's point, I want you to understand there were no other qualified candidates.

Mr. DeBarge: That's a huge message too.

Ms. Ribeiro: Anybody in that office could have applied too. This is not a union position. Any internal applicant could have applied.

Mr. Goncalves: Do we need a treasurer? Is it bylaw?

Mr. Strange: Yes, it seems like you probably do.

Mr. Goncalves: If we don't are we missing the best candidate? This lady seems very nice, I don't think she'll cut it. I think she's going to get swallowed up by the job. I think she's going to be overwhelmed really quick and if the other 4 people are going to be training their supervisor I'm sure with no ill intention you can see her having a problem with anything that slightly seems like the environment she came from where she was having a problem with that supervisor that came in afterward. It's a big position in a small town and she seems like she'd make a great assistant to somebody. I don't know if she's there to run a department. I don't think she'll stay in the position long if I think what is going to happen happens.

Mr. Silva: I think we're putting too much emphasis on the employee not willing to help her. We're hiring a manger to get into the department and if that manager says you're going to have to do these entries in Munis it doesn't mean she has to do it. She's going to manage and make sure these things get done.

Mr. Goncalves: She has to know the difference between right and wrong.

Mr. Silva: We got Marc and he knew some things he needed to do but through the job he said this is what's got to be done. I see some issue in that but we have to have somebody in that position.

Mr. Goncalves: But does that person need to have a designation?

Mr. Silva: Yes, there's got to be a treasurer/collector.

Mr. Rosenblum: In most municipalities there's a lot of time you are thrown in and learning on the job. There's a lot on yourself and the work ethic is there. If there's a concern with the current employees it's not going to change with whoever you put in there. If we've got only so much time if we sit on this and no one else applies where are we at that point? Then we have to re-up another contract with them and find more money to pay Capital.

Mr. DeBarge: I want to make one point perfectly clear. I have no concern with the employees about this. I'm concerned because I don't think it's right that you train your boss.

Mr. Goncalves: Does she come from a department where she has any employees where she is or she's the only person in there?

Ms. Ribeiro: She has one employee. There's a learning curve in any new position you take, whether you're in charge and the department head or whether you're working for somebody. I do think that whether she came in and had Munis experience she's still going to have to rely on staff and the office to bring her up to speed and show her things. You're right there probably is going to be a little bit more of a learning curve and a teaching atmosphere between her and the staff; however, I still think that would happen regardless of whether or not she had Munis. There's always a learning curve. All those idiosyncrasies in how municipalities and towns do things. I think the staff will be helpful in teaching her. Ultimately it is her responsibility at the end of the day as the department head. The staff is experienced. There's one individual that can do the whole treasurer's side by herself. I don't foresee any issues with them helping. We can't pay consultants forever. It gets expensive. If the flood gates were open with applicants we'd be in a different situation. Munis is a bear as far as finding somebody with that experience. In the 10 years I've been here I can count on one hand the number of applicants we've gotten for all these jobs that have Munis experience. If they have the Munis experience they might not be the right candidate.

Mr. Goncalves: The Munis experience isn't so much to me as the ability to manage 3-4 people in a department. Not in a bad way but you could have 4-5 Brenda's and she couldn't match up to Kim Collins. What we need and expect from our treasurer sitting and talking to a finance department and coming in with us and budgets and the intricacy of the whole thing I think would be a mismatch. How much of it is pushing buttons over there vs what I'm talking about and working with a finance committee to bring a budget. It scared me when I asked her what her budget was in Lenox and she had no idea. How involved is she if she doesn't know what her budget is?

Mr. Strange: To be fair, every town is different, and for us the town accountant would know all the budgetary stuff, so our treasurer/collector doesn't take the lead on the budget. She probably should have known what the town budget is but it's not like she's intimately involved with the creation of a budget like our town accountant is here. It sounds like their town accountant is the finance director person who handles the budget.

Mr. DeBarge: Is anybody interested in making a motion in the treasurer/collector position so we can move on to the next one?

Mr. Silva: Recognizing that our human resources director and Marc has full confidence in Brenda Marra to step in and do the job.

**Motion made by Mr. Silva to appoint her as the treasurer/collector. Mr. Rosenblum second. All in favor. Motion passed 4-0.**

Mr. DeBarge: On to Ms. Church. I cannot tell you how impressed I was with that interview.

Mr. Silva: She was impressive. I liked a lot of things she said, especially that she's going to work with people and not just enforce. I asked her about the other communities and as long as she curtails some of the other communities and not have so many things to do, we want somebody that's going

to be in Ludlow and do the work that's necessary. I know that Mr. Wight thinks he can get the stuff done in part-time but by what she said I don't understand how.

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2024 MAY 22 A 11: 56

Mr. Strange: Not by himself. He would need assistance.

Mr. Silva: I think we need a full-time inspector and part-time. Other inspectors have come in here several times wanting an assistant to do inspections because there wasn't enough time. I'm a little lost in that area but I really think we need a full-time inspector. One that's going to help people out.

Mr. Rosenblum: We approved the 19-hour before, didn't we? So, we are budgeted for full and part-time. It would be stupid to swing and miss at this one because if we let her go we don't know what we're going to get and how long the other gentleman is going to stay on. The military background, she had a better crease than I did and she seems to genuinely care which is something this community needs because it seems we haven't had someone...she cares more than the past building inspectors as long as I've been involved with this board and before that when I was dealing with the building inspector. As far as the other communities, if she has to go over there for an hour or 2 on the weekend that's on her time. That's the reason I said to you what my question was going to be. 2,000. She might fall asleep in this office. The work ethic is there. The background is there. If we let her go I don't think we're going to get anything like that.

Mr. Goncalves: We're not getting applicants anywhere else. She definitely has the experience. From what she said during the interview it appears she genuinely cares about people and maybe we're not going to have problems we had in the past with personality conflicts and the tug of war that was consistently going on. Two weeks on permits was a big problem we had. Do we have probationary periods in these contracts?

Ms. Ribeiro: Yes. Six months.

Mr. Silva: As far as Mr. Wight, can't we hire him as the assistant for the 19-hours? I believe we're losing one of them again for not passing the tests.

Mr. Strange: That's what we were thinking.

Mr. Silva: I don't know if he would accept it but we can offer that. He's doing 17 hours now.

Mr. Goncalves: We can't have Mr. Mole anymore? That's expired?

Ms. Ribeiro: That job has been posted.

Mr. Goncalves: He doesn't want to take the test. If we move Erik to 17 and hire BJ, we'll be ok?

Mr. Strange: We'd have to either adjust his hours or hourly rate to get within budget. We can talk to him. Best case scenario would be to have BJ come in. She interviewed very well with us as well. We thought she was really impressive and you saw that too. We don't want to lose her but Erik is doing such a good job too. I haven't had any complaints since he's been here.

Mr. DeBarge: She was incredibly impressive. I've rarely seen you not speechless but some of her answers were...that was some impressive answers.

Mr. Goncalves: She answered all the questions that have been asked for the last year and a half, she said what I wanted to hear.

Mr. DeBarge: Most importantly the part that Manny drove home was that she works with people and the look it up part as opposed to we can look it up and we can figure it out was most impressive. I'm very optimistic about this move and I thought you put it very well that we'd be stupid to swing and miss.

**Motion made by Mr. Goncalves to pursue an employment contract with Brenda Church for the position of building commissioner. Mr. Rosenblum second. All in favor. Motion passed 4-0.**

Mr. Strange: You know that Lori Belanger is also retiring on May 31. We have a person in town who is a certified procurement officer. She's the business administrator at the DPW and she offered to help out where we needed it but she wasn't comfortable totally coming over. The job has been posted. That job I'm a little bit less concerned about because we can reiterate with our department heads if you need something between \$10,000-\$50,000 you need to get 3 quotes and lean on the departments for a little bit.

TOWN OF LUDLOW

Mr. Goncalves: Is there a mini seminar we could do for department heads on procurement to get them some basics.

Mr. Rosenblum: The state should offer the thresholds. I think Connecticut went to 9999.

Ms. Ribeiro: I think there was just something on procurement recently.

Mr. Strange: We can do a summary sheet. That's what people were doing before we hired Lori. I know Ellie was doing procurement. I picked it up as best I could. Unless you're doing some of the bigger projects it's not too involved as long as the departments are following what they need to follow.

Mr. Silva: Is there really enough work for a full-time person in procurement? When we decided we were going to do procurement/grants that would be such a great thing to have a combination of that. I'm sure there probably aren't many people that can do both.

Mr. Strange: It depends. Right now, we have Millside Drive, the high school, the town hall and a lot of construction projects going on. It's not just the procurement piece, there's also a project management piece so if we tone down our bigger projects, these are hopefully going to be done this year then the workload for procurement lessens. It becomes regular 30B purchases and services and the lift isn't quite as heavy.

Mr. DeBarge: Let's just finish the process in case we mess up any details filling the school seat. I want to go into the process because we accepted the resignation of Joao Dias from the School Committee. Mr. Rosenblum is going to read the process to everybody so you know what's going to happen.

Mr. Rosenblum: This is a notice of vacancy. The Board of Selectmen/School Committee are seeking applicants interested in filling a vacancy on the School Committee until the next town election in March 2025. The key responsibilities of a school committee member are to establish educational goals and policies for the district, oversee the school district budget and hire and evaluate the superintendent of schools. Interested applicants must submit a resume and letter of interest to [hrjobs@ludlow.ma.us](mailto:hrjobs@ludlow.ma.us) by May 17, 2024. Interviews will be held at a joint Board of Selectmen/School Committee meeting on May 28, 2024, at Harris Brook Elementary School. A candidate will be appointed at this time and will participate in the regularly scheduled school committee meeting immediately following. That was a joint posting from Chairman Derek DeBarge and Chair Sarah Bowler of the School Committee.

Mr. DeBarge: That's an extra meeting for us. A deliberation and vote to fill that vacancy. Then we'll be done.

Ms. Ribeiro: All the candidates will be interviewed.

Mr. Strange: We have 2 applications so far.

Ms. Ribeiro: We have more than that now.

## UNFINISHED BUSINESS

Board to approve and sign the Selectmen Meeting Minutes of April 16, 2024.

**Motion made by Mr. Goncalves** to approve and sign the selectmen meeting minutes of April 16, 2024, member absent James Gennette. **Mr. Silva second. All in favor. Motion passed 4-0.**

Board to approve and sign the Executive Session Minutes of April 16, 2024.

**Motion made by Mr. Goncalves** to approve and sign the executive session minutes of April 16, 2024, member absent James Gennette. **Mr. Silva second. All in favor. Motion passed 4-0.**

Board to approve and sign the contract between the Town of Ludlow and Mott MacDonald for additional professional design services for Ludlow High School Sports Complex, not to exceed \$109,200.

Mr. Goncalves: Marc and I spoke about this a little bit. This says for additional services.

Mr. Strange: It shouldn't say additional.

Mr. Goncalves: This is the contract. This isn't additional.

Mr. Strange: You previously allocated \$77,000 and \$32,000 separately for Mott MacDonald.

Mr. DeBarge: Lori explained this all to me. We will not incur any more costs from Mott MacDonald.

Mr. Goncalves: I wanted to make sure. When I saw that additional it kind of scared me a little.

**Motion made by Mr. Silva** to approve and sign the contract between the Town of Ludlow and Mott MacDonald for design services for Ludlow High School Sports complex not to exceed \$109,200. **Mr. Goncalves second. All in favor. Motion passed 4-0.**

#### **NEW BUSINESS**

Board to approve and sign the Common Victualler license for Bar Burrito, 319 East Street.

**Motion made by Mr. Goncalves** to approve and sign the Common Vic license for Bar Burrito, 319 East Street. **Mr. Silva second. All in favor. Motion passed 4-0.**

Board to approve and sign the Common Victualler license for Prime Meat Market, 4-6 White Street.

**Motion made by Mr. Goncalves** to approve and sign the Common Vic license for Prime Meat Market, 4-6 White Street. **Mr. Silva second. All in favor. Motion passed 4-0.**

Mr. Silva: Was there a social club going in there or is that not happening?

Mr. Strange: They're in.

Board to dissolve the Cemetery Advisory Committee.

**Motion made by Mr. Goncalves** to dissolve the cemetery advisory committee and thank them for their service. That's a great location on Center Street and I'm sure we're going to need this board again in a dozen years or so. **Mr. Silva second. All in favor. Motion passed 4-0.**

Board to approve and sign the One-Day permit for the 250<sup>th</sup> Block Party Picnic on Saturday, June 15, 2024 from 12:00 p.m. to 12:00 a.m. at Memorial Park, 11 East Street and to waive the fee (if approved).

**Motion made by Mr. Goncalves** to approve and sign and waive the fee for the One-Day permit for the 250<sup>th</sup> Block Party Picnic on Saturday, June 15, 2024 from 12:00 p.m. to 12:00 a.m. at Memorial Park, 11 East Street. **Mr. Rosenblum second. All in favor. Motion passed 4-0.**

Board to appoint Patrick Halpin as the Sealer of Weights & Measures effective May 1, 2024.

**Motion made by Mr. Silva** to appoint Patrick Halpin as the Sealer of Weights & Measures effective May 1, 2024. **Mr. Goncalves second. All in favor. Motion passed 4-0.**

Board to discuss personnel updates – Treasurer/Collector, Procurement, Building Department.

Mr. DeBarge: We did that. Moving on.

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Board to approve and sign contract with Capital Strategic Solutions for interim treasurer/collector services.

TOWN OF LUDLOW

**Motion made by Mr. Goncalves** to approve and sign contract with Capital Strategic Solutions for interim treasurer/collector services. **Mr. Rosenblum second. All in favor. Motion passed 4-0.**

**Motion made by Mr. Goncalves** for the Chairman to sign on behalf of the Board. **Mr. Rosenblum second. All in favor. Motion passed 4-0.**

#### **BOARD UPDATES/MISC**

Mr. DeBarge: Charter Committee update. We are finalizing a flyer to go out into the next tax bills that will be mailed out so that every household will get one. I'm going to post this flyer onto the Charter Committee's Facebook page as well. This flyer has basic information that the Charter Committee has agreed to. No formal motions, as Mr. Rosenblum has said numerous times. Basic agreements on various things like the Town Manager agreement with 7 council members. We've gone on to distinguish between different committees and elected and appointed positions and things like that. It's a good flyer. It's got great information. We have more open forums coming up. We will have members of the Charter Committee at the Veterans Center on May 14 for the Veterans lunch. They'll be speaking about the change in government study that the Charter Committee is doing. We will have some information out for the precinct members at the Town Meeting and we always continue to meet the 1<sup>st</sup> and 3<sup>rd</sup> Thursday of every month 6:00 in the Board of Selectmen's room. The 250<sup>th</sup> obviously is still going in full vigor leading up to the June 15<sup>th</sup> parade and block party. The golf tournament on May 18 deadline is May 10<sup>th</sup> and the tournament. You have to register at 11, shotgun is at noon. For veterans we're doing our Memorial Day Parade. Friday the 24<sup>th</sup> at 3:00 p.m. we will be doing the wreath laying at various monuments; Island Pond, Sgt. Josh DesForges Memorial at the High School, Center Street Cemetery and the Civil War Memorial. Sunday the 26<sup>th</sup> at 7:00 p.m. is the candlelight vigil at the War Memorial at the Gazebo. Monday's parade 10:00 a.m. We start at Worcester and Winsor Streets at the memorial at the Gremio. There's a lot more stuff coming but take a look at all the Facebook pages for Veterans services and the 250<sup>th</sup>.

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.

Mr. DeBarge: Town Meeting is May 13 at 7:30 p.m.

#### **CLOSING COMMENTS**

Mr. Silva: Unfortunately, I will not be at the Town Meeting. I'm going to have surgery probably staying overnight. As most of you know, you can't cancel those things because it will take you a year to get back in and I have to get it done. I was going to speak at Town Meeting about something a lot of you might not like. As far as the charter change, I absolutely appreciate all the work that's being done; however, I am not in favor of the charter change. I never have been. As you know, I didn't vote to expense the money we did for the consultant. I'm a believer in smaller government, not bigger. I've been through a lot of communities that have managers and I don't see them working any better. I don't like taking stuff away from the public. While we could use some revamping of the precinct membership, yes, but I would like some members of this community to have the ability to not vote for something. If we weren't so big I would still like the old town wide open meeting. Wilbraham had it and I loved it. People got a say. I don't see that we need that. We have done so much work in consolidating the collector/treasurer office. The DPW is now in our hands. I don't see that it's not working right now. I've been to 14-15 town meetings.

Mr. DeBarge: All you do is complain about them.

Mr. Silva: Yes, but it seems they haven't been wrong in the votes that have been taken.

Mr. Goncalves: 250<sup>th</sup>, it's incredible what these people are doing. Look on their Facebook page. There's something for everybody. The golf outing is a great opportunity for people to get out there. Put a team together. You can go down in the record books if you win the golf tournament. Be part of history. Everything they've got going on is incredible. And of course, the parade. Most of you that go to the parade will see that Mr. Silva has taken it upon himself to fix that memorial at Gremio Lusitano where now you're able to walk around the entire thing. Thank you Mr. Silva.

TOWN OF LUDLOW

Mr. DeBarge: I hope none of you listened to Manny Silva because I don't know what the hell he was just talking about. You know going to Town Manager makes the government smaller than representative town meeting, right? Last Saturday was town clean up day. We did the gazebo, riverwalk and all the way up East Street. The best thing this board has done since I've been on it, one of the top 5, was put Jamie in charge. Jamie has got these guys that look like they all love what they're doing. All the help we've had from them has been right on time. The mulch they dropped off was perfect. They were trouble shooting for us. Ryan Linton was there for us with gear he brought over from the course we needed that we couldn't get from DPW. Lions Club was there, 250<sup>th</sup> was there, Michael J. Dias brought 12-15 guys. Our veterans were well represented. Billy Kos always there driving around picking up the trash bags. It was a full 3 hours and was a great time. Everybody please pay attention to what is going on in town with the events going on. Check out the latest committee meeting and get to know what's going on with the change in your government, unless Manny Silva is talking.

**Motion made by Mr. Goncalves to adjourn the meeting at 7:59 p.m. Mr. Rosenblum second. All in favor. Motion passed 4-0.**



Chairperson

