

PRELIMINARY MINUTES

**TOWN OF LUDLOW
BOARD OF SELECTMEN**

ZOOM BUDGET WORKSHOP

December 21, 2020

6:00 P.M.

Join Zoom Meeting

<https://us02web.zoom.us/j/87468644121?pwd=d3pCN1BnR05DQWhLUlhja25xSjNOdz09>

Meeting ID: 874 6864 4121

Passcode: 045737

Dial by phone+1 929 205 6099

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BOARD MEMBERS PRESENT:

Bruce Schmidt, Chairman

Scott Baitz

Justin Hyjek

Brett Sanderson

Heather Tucker

STAFF PRESENT:

Scott Murphy

Ulla Cook

OTHERS PRESENT:

Eric Alden

Eric Chattergee (Okemo Valley-TV)

1. CALL TO ORDER

- A. Bruce Schmidt called the meeting to order at 6:00 p.m. and lead the meeting in the Pledge of Allegiance.
- B. Scott Murphy said that this open meeting of the Town of Ludlow Select Board is being conducted remotely consistent with Governor Scott's Executive Addendum #6 of Order of 01-20 Act 92, due to the current State of Emergency given the outbreak of the coronavirus. This has all been discussed at previous meetings.
- C. Bruce Schmidt advised that all Select Board members are present.

2. CONSIDERATION OF ANY CHANGES, ADDITIONS OR REMOVALS TO THE AGENDA

- A. It was noted that there is not actually an agenda item for Budget Workshop, but since it is in the title of the meeting, that is sufficient.

FY 2022 BUDGET WORKSHOP

1. Bruce Schmidt said that the board has gone through all of the departments' budgets. He said that this is the opportunity to ask and answer questions. He advised that on page 26, the total amount to be raised in taxes is \$4,076,367.60, down \$6,495.40. It is basically level funded.
2. Scott Murphy that doesn't take into account that last year, we also received a one-time increase in revenue of \$95,800 from the Bus Capital account. He said we are in good shape. He said that he does not recommend trying to level fund for very many years in a row, but he understands that COVID situation and financial pressures on the tax payers.
3. Bruce Schmidt asked about the budget with the Ambulance.
4. Scott Murphy said that there was a clerical error on page 2 in the revenue section under Ludlow. We had put in a place holder of \$70,000 and when we came up with the deficit spending, we hadn't included that number. Instead of needing \$242,000, we actually need \$312,000. This will affect the tax rate by about \$.02 or about \$40.00 on a \$200,000 house, based on last year's Grand List. That's s a floating number at this point; it is less than a 1% increase. He said that he looked at the other article questions and last year's capital equipment from highway, fire, police and Moover numbers are the same. The only thing new is the \$5,000 for the Black River High School Facilities maintenance to build a small capital fund to repairs and restoration. There is also the \$18,760 for the asbestos removal for the Black River Academy building.
5. **LISTERS**
 - a. Bruce Schmidt said that one of his biggest questions is the Listers and that the board has been provided with more information.
 - b. Scott Murphy said that he prepared 4 options that the state says are available: Current Set-up (Listers with contract assessor), Town Assessor (with limited responsibility listers), Contracted Assessor (1 day per week with part time employee) and Full-time town assessor. He said that the one we recommended at the last meeting is the Contracted Assessor with part time town employee.
 - c. Brett Sanderson said he would prefer to leave it alone and try to find someone to put in there as a lister and try to keep it running in the same direction as we have been.
 - d. Bruce Schmidt asked if we should budget for it the way we have been and take time to look at it.
 - e. Brett Sanderson said that is what he recommends. He would hate to bail right into it.
 - f. Scott Murphy said that in the Listers' column, we have the same amount with a 2.1% increase. If we keep it that way, we don't need to adjust the budget at this time.
 - g. Bruce Schmidt asked Scott Murphy if he had left the budget the same, with listers, even if we had gone with the assessor, there may be a savings.
 - h. Scott Murphy said yes. He said that he agrees with Brett Sanderson and would like to look into this a bit more. He said he thinks, if we went with an assessor, he thinks our taxes would stay more equitable. That person could make changes to over time.
 - i. Ulla Cook said they are really working on that and when we get property transfers, Terry Thayne always goes out to check the properties and why it sold for so much more than we had assessed it for. He is really trying to keep on top of it.
 - j. Bruce Schmidt said that the assessors could do that. He said that the listers have done a good job. We should look through the options. He's not sure if he likes the idea of a company. He thinks we should stick with listers and see if we can find someone.
 - k. Ulla Cook said that Terry Thayne is very knowledgeable in real estate.
 - l. Bruce Schmidt said we wouldn't be making any changes to the budget and leave it as it is.
 - m. Scott Murphy asked Ulla Cook to address concerns that Margot Martel will be retiring in the spring, we have Tomieka Mac Pherson, who is new and Terry Thayne with issues with the Patriot system.

- n. Ulla Cook said that Terry Thayne is okay with the Patriot system, but is having trouble with the NEMC system and wants to learn more. We would need to find another lister and that may not be easy.
 - o. Bruce Schmidt said we can always spend some money on the company. He thinks their proposal was \$3,000 per month
 - p. Scott Murphy said we are currently paying them \$10,800 per year.
 - q. Bruce Schmidt asked if he had seen something about \$3,000 per month, with one day per week.
 - r. Scott Murphy said that was option #3.
 - s. Bruce Schmidt asked if they would do that from the time Margot Martel leaves.
 - t. Scott Murphy said he is sure they would. They are currently assisting us on a monthly basis. We could demand more help from them and pay for it.
 - u. Justin Hyjek said he doesn't think we need to decide this tonight. We can hire the company for more help as the retirement date approaches if we haven't found someone.
 - v. Scott Murphy said yes, on an as needed basis.
6. Bruce Schmidt said it seems that the board is in consensus that this is the budget we are going to present. He said that he and Scott Murphy were talking and we would most likely get together around January 21, 2021 to sign the warning. Scott Murphy said that they would need to have things confirmed by January 14, 2021.
 7. Bruce Schmidt asked if they would need to take actions at their January 4th meeting.
 8. Scott Murphy said yes, the board could vote to approve the budget as we have it and finalize it after January 14th, which is the deadline for petitioned articles.
 9. Bruce Schmidt said it sounds like we have board consensus.
 10. Board members agreed.
 11. Ulla Cook said we are all good. She said that she will have a Board of Civil Authority meeting before the Select Board meeting to get approval to send out post cards to families, not individuals, so that if they absentee ballots for Town meeting

3. **OTHER BUSINESS**

- A. Bruce Schmidt said that the highway crew really rallied and did a good job in clearing and cleaning up the snow and continue to do so. He said that everybody did their parts and they have been under constraints with equipment and staff
- B. Scott Murphy said thanks for letting us know and they appreciate the feedback. He mentioned it to Ron Tarbell today.
- C. Heather Tucker voiced her concerns for houses in remote areas and there are places that are still plowed and do they have the means or can they afford to have equipment coming in. Has anyone reached out to the town offices that they are still stranded?
- D. Scott Murphy said they haven't had anyone like that, but we have had a few distress calls that we have dealt with. The initial concern was to get the roads safe and travelable. He said that he thinks we are caught up with things along those lines.
- E. Justin Hyjek said they also did a great job on the sidewalks.
- F. Scott Baitz said there was nothing easy about this storm...it was tough.

4. **POSSIBLE EXECUTIVE SESSION/PERSONNEL/CONTRACTS**

- A. Scott Murphy advised that an Executive Session is not needed.

5. **ADJOURN**

- A. **MOTION by Brett Sanderson and seconded by Scott Baitz to adjourn. Motion passed unanimously.**
- B. Meeting adjourned at 6:21 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Lisha Klaiber

Bruce Schmidt, Chairman

Brett Sanderson

Scott Baitz

Heather Tucker

Justin Hyjek