

PRELIMINARY MINUTES

**TOWN OF LUDLOW
BOARD OF SELECTMEN**

January 10, 2022

**SPECIAL MEETING
Heald Auditorium**

6:00 P.M.

BOARD MEMBERS PRESENT:

Bruce Schmidt, Chairman	Justin Hyjek
Scott Baitz	Brett Sanderson

BOARD MEMBERS ABSENT:

Heather Tucker

STAFF PRESENT:

Scott Murphy	Ulla Cook
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OTHERS PRESENT:

Gary Blodgett	Marriel Meringolo	Marissa Selleck
Bob Brandt	Nick Miele	Jeannie Stasz
Sharon Huntley		

1. CALL TO ORDER

- A. Bruce Schmidt called the meeting to order at 6:02 p.m. He led the meeting in the Pledge of Allegiance.

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

- A. Scott Murphy advised that no changes are needed

3. FY2023 BUDGET DISCUSSION AND POSSIBLE APPROVAL OF FY2023 TOWN BUDGET

- A. Scott Murphy said that he had included a memo with their packets that outlined the changes made since their last meeting. He said that he also included a draft Town Meeting Warning and remote public informational meeting Notice which included proposed articles.
- 1) Added \$33,056 for overall 5% COLA/market wage adjustment for non-union staff (full and part time).
 - 2) Separate budget calculation which includes a 10% across the board reduction for all Appropriations (\$18,500).
- B. Recreation Upgrades
- 1) Gary Blodgett said that Marissa Selleck has a presentation and he thought that Scott Murphy had a copy. He said it includes a scaled back proposal.

- 2) Scott Murphy said that he does have a copy, but that the Select Board members had not received copies.
- 3) Gary Blodgett said that they looked at the current budget. He said that Scott Murphy has also checked into the ownership of the ropes equipment in the Back 40. The Superintendent of Schools will also check, but it is believed that the town owns it. The ropes are already there and lots of money has been put into it. The committee is asking for a little money to maintain it.
- 4) Scott Murphy said that the Superintendent will confirm ownership this Friday. He said that he and Garry Blodgett hiked up there and they brought in the original builder. The safety item is that there are some trees on wires. The equipment is in better shape than we expected. The school district meeting is this week.
- 5) Gary Blodgett said that there are matching funds for the mountain bike trail. They have volunteers to do the work and some of the equipment has been donated. They are looking for \$10,000. He said the committee now proposes a 4-year flexible plan. Option #1 will be to dredge and replace the sand at West Hill. They have an estimate of \$20,000, but Nick Miele suggested putting in extra in case the equipment gets stuck. They are asking for \$25,000. Option #2 would be to repave the basketball court and parking area. The estimate for that would be \$25,000. Option #3 would be to resurface and paint the lines. The estimate for that is \$27,000. It would probably qualify for a grant. We can put the last 2 options on the back burner for next year. He said that the goal is to ramp up West Hill. This could be a separate article.
- 6) Bruce Schmidt said that this board does not want to receive information on the day of the meeting. It does not give the board time to review it. He said this is the second time that this has happened. We received this information at 6:05 tonight and we can't make decisions. It is terrible that we have to be forced into decisions. He asked if he had not made that clear at the last meeting.
- 7) Scott Baitz asked when the board would decide, if not tonight.
- 8) Bruce Schmidt said next year. The committee came in last week and asked for \$500,000 for projects that we only found out about that night.
- 9) Justin Hyjek said that the stripped-down proposal sounds feasible. He said that dredging the pond and replacing the sand at West Hill is worthwhile. Doing just this for this year,
- 10) Scott Baitz agreed.
- 11) Bruce Schmidt asked where they would include the money, in capital or as a separate article.
- 12) Scott Murphy suggested a separate article. This would set the groundwork for next year.
- 13) Justin Hyjek said agreed and asked how many articles there will be.
- 14) Scott Murphy said that draft budget included 11 at this time. He said that some of them are the basics.
- 15) Bruce Schmidt said the Gill tax exemption is not voted on from the floor and asked why it is in there.
- 16) Scott Murphy said that the next item is to discuss how we will hold town meeting – it possibly could be remote.
- 17) Justin Hyjek asked if West Hill would be article 12.
- 18) Bruce Schmidt asked Nick Miele if he has looked at the \$500,000 proposal and what are his thoughts on maintenance, staffing and equipment.
- 19) Nick Miele said he had not planned on staff for West Hill. He said that the other future projects are the trails and tennis courts and they are easily maintained. He said that Dorsey tennis courts do not get much sun.
- 20) Bruce Schmidt said that pickle ball and mountain bike trails need maintenance. He said that West Hill would require an attendant, but they could charge for that.

- 21) Nick Miele said he has considered revenue at West Hill and thinks that the concession stands for baseball and basketball can make more revenue.
 - 22) Justin Hyjek said it is not realistic for this budget.
 - 23) Bruce Schmidt said they need a long-term plan and future Select boards will have to deal with requests for more employees and maintenance for pickle ball and the mountain bike trails. You can't always rely on volunteers.
 - 24) Justin Hyjek said that the plans need more time. He suggested doing West Hill this year.
 - 25) Gary Blodgett said the mountain bike trails, if not used, will go down. There is a large group of interested people. He said there is a person helping at Dorsey and a possible grant.
 - 26) Scott Murphy said we won't hear for a while about the grant.
 - 27) Gary Blodgett said that the tennis court and playground at Dorsey need work. There has to be a long a term plan.
 - 28) Bruce Schmidt said that this board has not supported the skate park and playground as much as we should have. He said they do need a long-term plan.
 - 29) Justin Hyjek said this is an outdoor community and West Hill could be the jewel. It would be nice to redevelop it, but there needs to be a plan and we need to take baby steps. He said that if dredged, it would be more swimmable.
 - 30) Bruce Schmidt said that this could be an article to be voted on.
- C. Bruce Schmidt said that the proposed budget has a 3.6% increase. It shows a 5% wage/market adjustment to show appreciation for our employees. It also included a 10% across the board reduction in appropriations.
- D. Justin Hyjek asked where the ambulance depreciation is listed as an asset.
- E. Scott Murphy said that is on the Auditor's financial report; one is a 2013 and the other 2016.
- F. Justin Hyjek asked about Ambulance staffing and insurance.
- G. Scott Murphy said that includes changes in staff.
- H. Bruce Schmidt said single versus family coverage.
- I. Justin Hyjek asked about Vehicle Repair Salary and noted \$1,500 increase and increase in Maintenance of \$3,000. He asked if that would decrease with the new ambulance.
- J. Scott Murphy said probably not because we may not receive the new ambulance until December. He said that the power lift article is the second one; the first one is on order through a grant and donations.
- K. Justin Hyjek asked, if West Hill is added to the articles, it will increase the budget by \$25,000.
- L. Scott Murphy said the total now is \$452,000 and with West Hill would be about \$475,000. The total to be raised in taxes is \$4,806,933 – a 4.1% increase over last year. He added that last year's amount to be raised in taxes was 6.1% increase over that previous year.
- M. Justin Hyjek said we are looking to reduce appropriations, saving about \$18,000 and add West Hill. He said that he is not thrilled with the 10% reduction in appropriations.
- N. Scott Murphy said that they can do a re-correct next year. He suggested that the board review all appropriations next year reevaluate them all.
- O. Bruce Schmidt said that another possibility would be to remove the 2 positions in Solid Waste and Buildings and Grounds and remove the bus transportation for the fireworks. They would have \$51,000 to use. He added that everything is important.
- P. Justin Hyjek said that he likes having transportation for the fireworks.
- Q. Bruce Schmidt said that they can close the road and people can watch from other places in town. There needs to be a plan.
- R. Justin Hyjek said that the board has discussed a walking path.
- S. Nick Miele said that would be a liability, it would be dark and would need to be really lit up. He said that there is money in the budget from this year and maybe we could put a down payment

- for busing. The buses are important. We can make do with 2 or 3 buses. We can ticket the event and direct people to other viewing locations.
- T. Scott Baitz agreed that walking would not be safe; it's not a good plan.
 - U. Bruce Schmidt asked Nick Miele to look into ways to make a better path with lights.
 - V. Justin Hyjek said there is \$1,000 from this year.
 - W. Scott Murphy said it would be about \$3,500 to do the buses this year.
 - X. Bruce Schmidt said or they could leave it in. He added that 3.6% increase would be the max. The employee increase and Vail Bridge costs were unforeseen. He asked Ulla Cook if she anticipates any possible surplus this year.
 - Y. Ulla Cook said that they are doing well and she would review numbers in April or May, after the winter.
 - Z. Scott Murphy suggested that the board could possibly look at removing the loader and do fund raising and apply for a grant next year. They would have 18 months to raise funds.
 - AA. Justin Hyjek said 3.6% is okay with what we've done. We've done a good job.
 - BB. Ulla Cook asked about the ARPA funds.
 - CC. Scott Murphy said that Tom Kennedy, from the Regional Planning Commission is coming to the February meeting to discuss possible uses of the funds.
 - DD. Bruce Schmidt said, if we took out the power stretcher (\$41,000) and kept in the appropriations (\$18,000) and lowered the West Hill dredging to \$23,000, we could stay at 3.6%
 - EE. Justin Hyjek said that the Rec. committee did put in a buffer.
 - FF. Scott Murphy said that it is not unreasonable to pull the stretcher.
 - GG. Bruce Schmidt said he hopes that they can go to the town meeting in person. He thinks that the department heads and Scott Murphy did a good job on the budget. We have had some challenges such as Vail Bridge repairs.
 - HH. Scott Murphy said he will take out the stretcher and put in \$23,000 for West Hill and replace the \$18,500 to the appropriations.
 - II. Bruce Schmidt asked when the board could review the numbers.
 - JJ. Brett Sanderson said he thinks they can do the dredging for \$20,000.
 - KK. Bruce Schmidt said they should shop around.
 - LL. Scott Murphy said he would have the final numbers tomorrow. Bruce Schmidt said he would like the increase to look at 3.5%

4. **POSSIBLY SET DATE TO SIGN WARNING FOR 2022 ANNUAL TOWN MEETING WHICH INCLUDES FY2023 TOWN BUDGET AND POSSIBLE REMOTE INFORMATIONAL MEETING**

- A. Scott Murphy said he would like the board to meet this week to approve the budget.
 - 1) He said that January 13, 2022 is the last day for voter petitions
 - 2) January 20, 2022 is the first day for warnings
 - 3) January 30, 2022 is the last day for warnings
- B. Scott Murphy said the board could meet on January 20, 2022 to warn the meeting. He needs to send the pdf to the printer on the 19th.
- C. Board will meet at 8:00 a.m. on Friday, January 14th for final approval of budget.
- D. Bruce Schmidt said that with Zoom, they have to be able to give people on Zoom a chance to talk. He said that if needed, they could postpone town meeting until April or May.
- E. Ulla Cook said that in 2020, the Town meeting was in person and 648 people voted. She said that last year, with Zoom, only 220 voted and she had sent out cards to tell people about absentee voting.
- F. Justin Hyjek said he would prefer in-person

- G. Scott Baitz agreed.
- H. Justin Hyjek asked if we moved town meeting one month, would people come.
- I. Ulla Cook said they did that one year, because of a snow storm and it was about the same.

5. **OTHER BUSINESS**

A. People Running for Office

- 1) Scott Murphy reminded people who are running for office that they do have to get signatures this year.
- 2) Ulla Cook said that the deadline is January 24, 2022.

B. Cemetery Gift

- 1) Scott Murphy advised that a donation of \$500 was made to the Cemetery to embellish a lot. The Cemetery Commission will take care of it, but the Select Board must sign the documents to accept the funds.
- 2) Bruce Schmidt said board members will sign.

6. **ADJOURN**

- A. **MOTION by Brett Sanderson and seconded by Scott Baitz to adjourn. Motion passed unanimously.**
- B. Meeting adjourned at 6:56 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Lisha Klaiber

Bruce Schmidt, Chairman

Brett Sanderson

Scott Baitz

Heather Tucker

Justin Hyjek