

3. Approve Minutes from Previous Meeting

- A. Brett Sanderson advised that the minutes are from the meeting on December 4, 2023.
- B. **MOTION by Justin Hyjek and seconded by Bob Brandt to accept the minutes from December 4, 2023 as presented. Motion passed unanimously.**

4. Comments from Citizens

- A. Eric Alden
 - 1. Thanked the road crew for the phenomenal job they did clearing the roads.
 - 2. Proposed that the town initiate a program for people, businesses, etc. to adopt a fire hydrant, noting that the hydrants had not been cleared of snow. He suggested an incentive, maybe a certificate or a thank you. He would be willing to help.
 - 3. Brett Sanderson advised that the Water department is responsible for clearing hydrants.)
- B. Glenn Heitsmith
 - 1. Suggested that the town also look into a program for businesses, people, etc., to adopt the sidewalks in front of their properties.
 - 2. NARCAN - Glenn Heitsmith advised that last there were 80,000 ODs in the US in 2022 and of that number, 250 were in Vermont. He suggested that NARCAN be more accessible, possibly by the defibrillator in town hall or other accessible locations.
 - 3. Fire Department Head Report - Glenn Heitsmith noted that there were 33 false alarms and 2 of them were for 335 Ellison Lake Road.
 - 4. Brett Sanderson advised that one false alarm is allowed. After that, any additional false alarm for that property is billed based on the number of men and trucks involved.

5. FEMA Financial/Recovery Update

- A. Brendan McNamara advised that the town spent between \$1.8 and \$1.9 million in flood repairs. That does not include the Wastewater Treatment Plant. They are still in the process of paperwork and the town is on its 4th FEMA project manager. He said that he meets with the PM 2 times per week and the new one is now up to speed, but we had to review everything we did with the predecessors. FEMA Public Assistance Supervisor Tim Baker comes to Ludlow and helps streamline the process

6. Town Re-Appraisal

- A. Brendan McNamara advised that in 2026 the town will be at the end of the 5 year period and will need to do a reappraisal.
- B. Ryan Silvestri said that Ludlow is currently out of conformity. The CLA is 75 and the COD is 22. This includes sales from 2021 through current. He said that they are planning on doing a statistical appraisal where they will collect a sampling of 10% by boots on the ground inspections. This includes sales for the last 3 years, major changes and renovations. The current software that we are

using will not be supported in 4 to 5 years. The new software that they are proposing will back up the data every 12 hours. Everything will be backed up to the cloud. He said that Brendan McNamara has a copy of the draft proposal.

- C. Justin Hyjek asked if they do backups to a hard drive.
- D. Ryan Silvestri said they back up to a partition on the server and do monthly backups to a hard drive.
- E. Justin Hyjek noted that in 2019 and 2020, our CLA was at 96% and it has fallen by a wide margin - are we expecting it to level off.
- F. Ryan Silvestri said the market is still high - sales prices vs. assessed values. We need to bring the CLA back to 100%. He said if we under assess, it affects every property in town.
- G. Bruce Schmidt encouraged the board not to leave money on the table by doing a statistical reappraisal. He said that it has been 20 years since they did the last town wide full reappraisal.
- H. Ryan Silvestri said that part of the annual maintenance includes about 150 to 225 boots on the ground reappraisals per year. The data has to be accurate for the State. He will collect samples of more than 10% and will also do a field review of every property in town with the lister's card. We have been maintaining the database and are only missing the ones where people did not file for permits. There are 3,600 improved properties. He said that the CLA is set in State statute and was not changed for COVID.

7. Emergency Watershed Program Project

- A. Brendan McNamara advised that Ludlow has been approved for USDA funding of 75% with town share of 25%. This will include spillways #3 and #5 and the river way by the Fire Station. There are also 2 locations on Route 100 South where the river jeopardizes property. The projects are in the engineering phase and will possibly go out to bid next month. The town match is \$112,000 and there is a question if that may also be FEMA funded.
- B. Justin Hyjek asked if that would mean the town share would be 12.5%.
- C. Brendan McNamara said that it is being debated if FEMA should pick up part of the town's 25%.
- D. Justin Hyjek asked about the State.
- E. Brendan McNamara said we are looking into other possibilities.

8. FY25 Budget Work

- A. Brendan McNamara said that he went over the Department budgets with Ulla Cook. Overall, we are in a good spot with the budget. The Department heads do a good job creating and maintaining their budgets. He said that this draft does not include Capital and Long Term Debt. When they meet on Wednesday, they will go over them.
- B. Ambulance
 - 1. Brendan McNamara said that the Ambulance Service had been proprietary. Last year, they voted to change it to part of the municipal budget. This increased the budget \$203,000, but it will decrease the Articles and it will not be voted on at Town Meeting. At this present draft, the overall increase in the amount to be raised in taxes will be about 4%. Most of that increase is attributed to the 12.5% increase in Health Insurance costs. The 4% increase gives the departments what they need. He said that both Buildings and Grounds and Planning and

Zoning have hired new assistants. He added that the B&G person is half B&G and half Community Center. He said that Chief Kolenda will be leaving effective June 30, 2024. Brendan McNamara said that in this budget, he added a new position of Chief/Deputy as a full-time position. He said that this town needs to consider a FT Fire Chief. They had 32 calls this month and this person could cross train with Ambulance, the Health Officer and Fire Warden. He added that other towns in Vermont had done this. He said this is still a volunteer service. We need to give the community the best response possible. (He said this item was not on the agenda because the Chief wanted to be able to tell his crew first.)

2. Bruce Schmidt said that this board needs to find a way to get information out to people. He said that he requested the budget and did not receive it. He said they used to do the budget meetings downstairs and have it on PowerPoint. He said that this is a big deal - 2,080 hours or a Full-time fire chief. He added that the board will have to defend that at Town Meeting. He suggested maybe starting in 6 months. He said this would not be a \$50,000 position. He encourages the board to consider probably going for 6 months as it is now.
 3. Justin Hyjek noted that the board also did not get the draft budget until tonight. He added that, in the past, they had more budget meetings. He said that he will compare this draft with the previous one.
 4. Bruce Schmidt said the budget should be up where the public can see it (at meetings.)
 5. Eric Alden asked if there is a Capital Needs Assessment to help plan for future needs. He said town buildings are getting older and he suggested the need for new Fire, Ambulance and Police buildings and that the board should plan for one multi-purpose building.
 6. Justin Hyjek said that the Police Department was relocated into its present location in 2004. He said that we have a B&G foreman who is responsible for maintenance of the buildings and he would be happy to chat with him about the buildings.
- C. The Board will have a Budget meeting on Wednesday, January 10th at 6:00 p.m.

9. Other Business

- A. Bruce Schmidt asked for an update on the ARPA funds.
- B. Brendan McNamara said he is looking into convening a meeting about that, but there has been no movement to date. Other towns have formed committees. He said that the committee that was formed in Cavendish was cumbersome. He said that funds have to be used by 12/31/2024 and we need to discuss our options. He said that Capital projects would probably be the best call. We need community input.
- C. Justin Hyjek noted that some of the water lines in Ludlow were installed as far back as 1898 and we are now dealing with blow outs. It would be beneficial to understand the aging process of the water system and start upgrades.

10. Department Head Reports

- A. Reports are in. No comments

11. Municipal Manager Updates

- A. Brendan McNamara said that the board will start discussions for use of the ARPA funds.
- B. Short Term Rentals
 - 1. Brendan McNamara said the board needs to reconvene discussions on Short Term Rentals (STR.) We will have a meeting on January 24, 2024. The board needs to decide if they wish to pursue this topic or not. The Planning Commission worked on it. We need to take a stand. We have heard public input.
 - 2. Justin Hyjek asked Noah Schmidt if Cavendish was working on STR.
 - 3. Noah Schmidt said that the Select Board has asked the Planning Commission to come up with some possible suggestions.
- C. FEMA Buyout
 - 1. Brendan McNamara advised that Windsor County Youth Services has applied for a FEMA buyout and it will be on the agenda for the February meeting.
 - 2. Bruce Schmidt noted that this will be the 4th FEMA buyout and the board should try to help these properties. He said that one building is off the foundation and one is unplowed. He suggested possibly hiring a consultant to help. These properties are the gateway to the community. These people want out and the town should try to help.
 - 3. Glenn Heitsmith said he has been in the buyout process for 4 years. He would love to stay in Ludlow. Is there a land swap available? He said that the land across from the Timber Inn should have always been left as a swamp. He said this last one was the 5th flood since he moved here. He said they did hear from the adjuster today and he will be getting funds. He said they should dredge the river.
 - 4. Said that he spoke on Thursday and Friday with the people from the State Economic Development and Recovery and Ludlow is the poster child for FEMA buyouts for the last 4 - 5 years. Sam's and Subway are going. This is not good for property owners or the town. They are talking about a program to expedite project payments. The Highway Department needs to look at options. He said the buyouts are not doing Ludlow any favors. We will end up with nothing coming in via Route 103.
- D. Building Resilient Infrastructure and Communities (BRIC) grant program
 - 1. Brendan McNamara advised that we are in discussion with Cavendish and Mount Holly to apply jointly for a BRIC grant. The scope would be about \$120,000 with regular match
- E. ONSOLVE Code Red Alert System
 - 1. Brendan McNamara said they will be kicking off the new system. It will shape the map within the town and village limits. It will include social media, public information, text message and phone calls. The messages will all be identified as the Town of Ludlow Alert System or have a telephone exchange of "228" so that people will know where the messages are coming from. It is user friendly.

12. Set Date for Next Meeting

- A. January 10, 2024 - Budget
- B. January 24, 2024 - Budget and STR

C. February 5, 2024 - Regular Meeting

13. Possible Items for Next Meeting

A. Budget, STR

14. Sign Warrant Orders

A. Brendan McNamara noted that Warrant Orders have been signed.

15. Possible Executive Session/Personnel/Contracts/Legal Issues

A. Brendan McNamara said that an Executive Session is needed for Personnel matters.

B. MOTION by George Tucker, Jr. and seconded Scott Baitz to enter into Executive Session for Personnel matters. Motion passed unanimously.

C. Board entered into Executive Session at 6:52 p.m.

D. MOTION by Bob Brandt and seconded by Justin Hyjek to exit Executive Session.

E. Board exited Executive Session at 7:16 p.m. No action taken.

16. Adjourn

A. MOTION by Justin Hyjek and seconded by George Tucker, Jr. to adjourn. Motion passed unanimously.

B. Meeting adjourned at 7:17 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Lisha Klaiber

Brett Sanderson, Chairman

Justin Hyjek

Scott Baitz

George Tucker, Jr.

Bob Brandt

