

**Ludlow Select Board
SPECIAL MEETING**

**Tuesday, January 14, 2025
5:00 PM**

**HOWARD BARTON CONFERENCE ROOM
AGENDA**

Meeting ID: 437 305 4865

Passcode: 255344

BOARD MEMBERS PRESENT:

Brett Sanderson, Chairman
Scott Baitz

Justin Hyjek
Noah Schmidt

George Tucker, Jr.

STAFF PRESENT:

Brendan McNamara

OTHERS PRESENT:

Phil Carter

Bruce Schmidt

I. Call to order

Brett Sanderson called the meeting to order at 5:00 p.m. He led the meeting in the Pledge of Allegiance.

II. Consideration of any Changes, Additions or Removals to the Agenda

A. There were none.

III Hear Citizens

A. TREE WARDEN UPDATE - Phil Carter

1. Phil Carter said that he has applied for a grant to plant trees in the Historic district up to the tank. He would plant oak, honey locust and Japanese hybrid elm (not subject to Ash bore.) There is no need for the board to re-appoint tree warden and assistant (Bruce Schmidt) as they are in until they choose not to be. He said he would like to form a Tree Committee. He does already have some interest. He asked if they should advertise it on the Town Website. He doesn't want to leave anyone out who may be interested.
2. Brett Sanderson said they should post it.
3. Brendan McNamara said he would take care of posting it. They should also talk about it at Select Board meetings. The Select Board would have to appoint members.
4. Phil Carter said he has also contacted Streetscapes and there is also interest there. He said that other towns have already started tree projects (Andover, Londonderry, Springfield, Chester) as the ash borer has been found in those towns. He plans to look at every ash tree in Ludlow. He has a form that he will complete for each tree indicating the location and health of the tree.
5. Justin Hyjek asked how long an ash tree could live.
6. Phil Carter said 120 years, but they won't survive if they get infected. He will compile a list prioritizing health and which trees need to be taken down. They will be very brittle and dangerous. They only last a couple of years once infected and in the last year, sightings have spiked.
7. Noah Schmidt asked about identifying the infected ones.
8. Phil Carter said to start by looking at the crown. He said this process will take money and he is asking the board to include some money in this coming budget for this. He said that some towns have already started to take down trees: Essex - 23 trees at a cost of \$8,800, East Montpelier - 160 at a cost of \$13,500, Middlebury - 70 trees at a cost of \$120,000. This is just to name a few.
9. Noah Schmidt asked if they can be used for firewood
10. Phil Carter said you can't transport them because it may spread the disease.
11. George Tucker, Jr. said the state is pulling ash trees out of the back of Okemo.
12. Scott Baitz said some of those costs seem low.
13. Phil Carter said it is a conglomeration - town crews doing the work. He said that South Hero has budgeted \$10,000 per year with a 2 year allocation on 625 trees with a total cost of \$150,000. He said that this will cost the town. He said while there are software programs, he wants to do a simple paper study first, so he has an idea of where to start. Other towns are way ahead of us.
14. Justin Hyjek asked where these funds would be put in the budget.
15. Brendan McNamara said he has put it in as a new line item under Buildings and Grounds (B&G) - \$2,000.00
16. Phil Carter said he will do the inventory over the summer and focus on the most dangerous trees.
17. George Tucker, Jr. asked if any of the other towns are inoculating the trees.
18. Phil Carter said some towns. He said there are not a lot of ash trees in the Village, but there are a lot on the back roads.

IV. FY 2025 - 2026 Budget Review and Possible Action

- A. Brendan McNamara said that he went over the budget and we are in a good spot. The only thing he added since their last discussion was \$2,000 for the tree warden, which will be encumbered toward successive years. He said that under Administration - Web Page Management has been lowered from \$3,500 to \$1,700 because the \$3,500 included construction of the site. The \$1,700 is yearly maintenance.
- B. Justin Hyjek asked why not put it under Capital? He said then you would not have to encumber it and it would not mess with the B&G budget.
- C. Brett Sanderson said it should go under Highway. He added that Capital rolls over.
- D. Bruce Schmidt said it should not go under Capital. Capital is generally used for items with over 2- year useful life. He agrees that it should go under Highway - such as surepak - yearly maintenance.
- E. Brendan McNamara said he would move it to Highway.
- F. Justin Hyjek asked about any other unforeseen tweaks. He asked about Revenue for the Ambulance service.
- G. Brendan McNamara said he revised it down a bit. They are busy, but he would rather undershoot, than come up short. He said the amount to be raised in taxes is 5.3%.
- H. George Tucker, Jr. asked what it was last year.
- I. Brendan McNamara said 6.3%. He said that at their last meeting, they asked about consolidating phone bills. He said some of them are under contracts and we will absolutely be able to do it.
- J. George Tucker, Jr. asked the percentage of that 5.3% is attributed to benefits that we can't control.
- K. Brendan McNamara said about 2.5% - 3%. He said the increase in benefits and salaries is \$72,000 - 30% of the total increase.
- L. George Tucker, Jr. said we have no control over that.
- M. Justin Hyjek said that pre-COVID; we were at about 3.5%.
- N. Brendan McNamara said that the only numbers that have been adjusted since the last meeting are the Tree Warden and Website, the other numbers are the same as at their last meeting.
- O. Justin Hyjek said today is January 14th; the budget needs to be done by the end of January.
- P. Brendan McNamara said this is it. In his opinion, it is a controlled, accurate representation of where we are at. This is fairly accurate.
- Q. Noah Schmidt noted that MARC and VLCT numbers have doubled since last year. Do we pay for what they do?
- R. Brendan McNamara said we pay a yearly cost. They are great resources and recently hired another planner.
- S. George Tucker, Jr. said the hotline is a great asset for legal terms.
- T. Justin Hyjek asked about Appropriations.
- U. Brendan McNamara said they haven't changed since before the last meeting. They were due to us by November. The Library will be asking for an increase from the floor.
- V. Noah Schmidt said the Fire Department is back on track.
- W. Brendan McNamara said part of the costs is repairs on equipment and maintenance costs. Next year, they will be flat due to replacement of equipment.

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- X. Justin Hyjek said they consistently fund Capital.
- Y. Brendan McNamara said the Fire Department is a key point. He said that Police, B&G and Highway budgets are pretty solid year after year. We need to find grants to offset some costs. We are down 1% from last year.
- Z. Justin Hyjek said that insurance and payroll are a big part of that.
- AA. Brendan McNamara said that he meets with department heads almost daily, but this year, we did “Mid-Fiscal Year” meetings to discuss staff and budget to see if they are comfortable for the rest of the fiscal year. He said that communication is a big part of controlling increases.
- BB. Noah Schmidt asked how they are doing.
- CC. Brendan McNamara said they are all pretty much on target. This was a good thing to do and we will also do similar meetings towards the end of the fiscal year. He said that this year, salt and sand are taking a hit and not on budget. He said he also added 1 ½ person. One being a grant person. If we get grants, we can offset some costs from the budget. He added that the school budget will be crazy this year and there will be a significant increase.
- DD. Justin Hyjek asked if there is a “want list” for grants that we are looking for.
- EE. Brendan McNamara said some are projected out a year after they are awarded, such as a grant for the playground.
- FF. Justin Hyjek said there are lots of grants at the state and federal levels.
- GG. Brendan McNamara said that Cherry Nicoll is now working with the departments for a grant for the culvert on East Hill. The estimated cost for that work would be about \$750,000.
- HH. Noah Schmidt said it is a good thing to keep track of.
- II. Brendan McNamara said she will be having numbers for me as I will need to defend the position. She has now received about \$100,000 in grants.
- JJ. George Tucker, Jr. said that it was many years ago that we identified that culvert issue and it gets put off every year. Hopefully the new position will bring in money to do some of these projects.
- KK. Brendan McNamara said the Tree program won’t come off the budget. It will be operational, infrastructure.
- LL. Noah Schmidt asked about a grant for maintenance of the tennis courts.
- MM. Justin Hyjek asked about the Community Center being under B&G.
- NN. Brendan McNamara said that B&G oversees the “building - maintenance, operations and structure.” Nick Miele oversees recreational activities. B&G would like to move the gym. He said that he is not sure they should combine those 2 budgets. It’s good to see the numbers. This is the same for the high school building.
- OO. Noah Schmidt asked about the phone for the Community Center
- PP. Brendan McNamara said that is Kevin MacPherson’s.
- QQ. Justin Hyjek asked about Staff Labor.
- RR. Brendan McNamara said a piece of it is B&G - plowing, cleaning, and setting up events.
- SS. Justin Hyjek said that \$2,500 per year is needed for Skate Park maintenance.
- TT. **MOTION by Justin Hyjek and seconded by George Tucker, Jr. to accept the FY 2025-2026 budget as presented. Motion passed unanimously.**

V. **Other Business**

A. There was none.

VI. Possible Executive Session (Police Chief Position)

- A. Brendan McNamara said that an Executive Session is needed for Personnel matters.
- B. MOTION by Justin Hyjek and seconded Scott Baitz to enter into Executive Session for Personnel matters. Motion passed unanimously.**
- C. Board entered into Executive Session at 5:38 p.m.
- D. MOTION by Scott Baitz and seconded by George Tucker, Jr. to exit Executive Session. Motion passed unanimously.**
- E. Board exited Executive Session at 7:36 p.m.
- F. MOTION by Scott Baitz and seconded by Noah Schmidt to offer the position of the Ludlow Police Chief to Officer Jeff Warfle. Motion passed unanimously.**

Adjourn

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

Meeting adjourned at 7:38 p.m.

Respectively submitted

Lisha Klaiber

Brett Sanderson, Chair

Noah Schmidt

Scott Baitz

George Tucker, Jr.

Justin Hyjek