

PRELIMINARY MINUTES

**TOWN OF LUDLOW
BOARD OF SELECTMEN**

BUDGET WORKSHOP

MONDAY, NOVEMBER 23, 2020

5:00 PM ZOOM ELECTRONIC MEETING

BOARD MEMBERS PRESENT:

Bruce Schmidt, Chairman
Scott Baitz

Justin Hyjeck

Brett Sanderson
Heather Tucker

STAFF PRESENT:

Scott Murphy

OTHERS PRESENT:

Jeff Billings
Ulla Cook

Nick Miele

Eric Chattergee (Okemo Valley-TV)

1. Call to Order

- A. Bruce Schmidt called the meeting to order at 6:00 p.m. He noted that there was no flag and therefore he would not lead the meeting in the Pledge of Allegiance. He asked Scott Murphy to read the guidelines for Zoom meetings.
- 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.

“In order to mitigate the transmission of the virus and reduce the risk of COVID-19 illness, we have been advised and directed by the State of Vermont to suspend public gatherings, and as such, the Governor's Order suspends the requirement of the Open Meeting Law to have all meetings in a publicly accessible physical location. All members of public bodies are allowed and encouraged to participate remotely. He said that for all votes that are not unanimous, the board will have a roll call vote.”

- C. Bruce Schmidt took a roll call of Select Board members:
 - Brett Sanderson – aye
 - Justin Hyjeck – absent
 - Heather Tucker – aye
 - Scott Baitz – aye
 - Bruce Schmidt – aye

NOTE: Please see last page of minutes for ZOOM meeting information

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

- A. Scott Murphy advised that no changes are necessary. He advised that there have been changes to the draft budget made since the packets were sent out. The budget draft in the packets was dated November 18th and the current draft is dated November 23, 2020. The Capital Budget is also included in the newer draft. There is an approximately \$17,000 increase over last year. He reminded the board that last year, we also received a one-time increase of \$95,800 from the Municipal Transit Capital.

3. **FY2022 Budget Workshop**

A. Police

- i. Scott Murphy noted that the purchase price of new cruiser (which had been put off from last year) was \$40,000 and the trade-in was \$5,000 for a net increase of \$35,000. He said that the rest of the Police budget is down about \$12,400. He said that the biggest increase was in Insurance
- ii. Bruce Schmidt asked Jeff Billings if there are any foreseeable increases in the future, such as the dispatch board or computers.
- iii. Jeff Billings said the new telephone recording system, but he is not sure of the cost. He does not anticipate any big-ticket items. The officers have new body cams and they are using a different system for in-car cameras that is less expensive.
- iv. Bruce Schmidt asked if the telephone system was in last year's budget.
- v. Jeff Billings said it was, but they are still working on it. It is in the FY2021 budget. The state mandated they start using it in 2021. He said that he thinks he has enough in the budget to cover maintenance and upkeep.

B. Parks and Recreation

- i. Scott Murphy advised that key issues why revenue is down are because the After-School Program took over the summer camp program and COVID. Revenue was \$3,000, while expenses were \$11,600. They are considering resurfacing the Skate Park out of Capital funds.
- ii. Bruce Schmidt asked why there is a 16% increase in Support Staff salaries.
- iii. Nick Miele said he is trying to consolidate line items. He added that they have to have a person at the Skate Park for more hours.
- iv. Scott Murphy explained that if you look at the next line item, Camp Staff, it is down 60%.
- v. Bruce Schmidt noted that the next change in those 2 lines items is \$900 over.
- vi. Nick Miele said that is correct.
- vii. Bruce Schmidt noted that there was \$15,000 savings in Camp staff.
- viii. Nick Miele said that Concession Stand revenue was up in 2020, but due to closing the baseball season, they didn't run the stand. It is difficult to predict outdoor sports and activities and indoor is also difficult to predict.
- ix. Bruce Schmidt said Recreation is tough to estimate. With less revenue, we need less expense, but there is not much place to cut. This is okay for the first go around.
- x. Nick Miele said he is trying to be consistently under budget – about \$30,000 – and trying to stay there.
- xi. Bruce Schmidt agreed, but said that they have lost revenue, and expenses have gone up. He said we do need a Recreation Department.

- xii. Scott Murphy said this is the first year that the school took over the summer program. We started to build out our budget in 2018 and he thinks we have a good handle on it now.
- xiii. Bruce Schmidt said he thought there would be more significant changes with losing revenue. He thought expenses would be down
- xiv. Heather Tucker noted the \$12,500 budget for referees and coaches and asked if that is high, considering COVID.
- xv. Nick Miele said it is not close right now. Next year we will have Babe Ruth, soccer, basketball and we are trying to predict. He said he will try to hire fewer officials and officiate himself.
- xvi. Scott Murphy said of the \$12,500, only \$9,000 has been spent.

C. Buildings and Grounds

- i. Scott Murphy said there are no significant changes to Buildings and Grounds. He pointed out that some exterior brick work is needed at Town Hall and that Truck/Mower gas is up. He said there is a small increase in Salaries/Benefits but revenue is level funded.
- ii. Bruce Schmidt asked if he expects any reduction – are there any fuel cost savings for next year.
- iii. Scott Murphy said they got hammered the winter before last.
- iv. Bruce Schmidt said that gas prices in town are down. We haven't built in the changes for electricity.

D. Town Clerk and Treasurer

- i. Scott Murphy said that the new land records portal went live
- ii. Ulla Cook said the attorneys love it because they can check the land records online. Copies of pages are \$2.50 and of that, she gets \$1.00. The portal is updated by NEMRC daily. She said that the state mandates that we have 5 years online and we have 40 years online. The cost is \$1,200 per year. She said we set aside \$4.00 per page for Vault Preservation and here is \$40,000 in that fund. We have been very busy with recording.
- iii. Bruce Schmidt said the records are in the cloud and now protected.
- iv. Ulla Cook said yes.
- v. Bruce Schmidt said there is also less worry about fire.
- vi. Ulla Cook said the files are backed up offsite.

E. Planning

- i. Scott Murphy said there are 3% salary increases and the increase in their budget is less than \$1,000. Insurance and the NEMRC online program are reasons for the increase. Planning documents are now online and public has access to records. He said that revenue is down due to less building permits because of less new construction.

F. Other Select Board Questions from Last Meeting

- i. Health Office Increase Expense – Scott Murphy said that he is paid hourly in Ludlow, while some other towns have a stipend for their Health Officers. He said the increase is because we now have a Health Officer and the Deputy Health Officer is stepping aside. She was not charging the town. If the board wants it, we can set up a stipend.
- ii. Tax Sale Legal Fees – Scott Murphy said that the \$14,415 expense is offset by the fees that the attorney receives from the people redeeming the properties. We never know the exact numbers, but basically it is a wash.

G. Fire Department

- i. Scott Murphy said that Chief Kolenda will be at the Select Board's next meeting. He said that the Equipment/ Trucks line item is up from \$27,000 to \$30,000. It was \$37,000 in FY2019. He said that this fiscal year to date, they have spent \$24,000 for service and repairs.
- ii. Brett Sanderson said their Aerial Platform is about 25 years old and a new one would cost about \$1,000,000.00. They put in \$18,000 for maintenance.

H. Highway

- i. Scott Murphy said that the Miscellaneous line under Revenue is for Okemo salt reimbursement and excess weight permits.

I. Draft Budget Copies in Packets

- i. Bruce Schmidt said that he wants to make sure that the board members are not working off different revisions of the budget drafts. The draft sent to us is not the one we are using that was dated today.
- ii. Scott Murphy said that they had a review process today and Ulla Cook found additional revenue.

J. Scott Murphy's Challenges Memo

- i. Bruce Schmidt said that this board discussed a 0% increase in the budget and we are at 2 -3% now. We need to take some time on this. There may be a lot of little things. The budget is up because of salaries, wages and insurance. We need to discuss this at the next meeting.
- ii. Scott Murphy said that with today's changes it is a .4% budget.
- iii. Bruce Schmidt asked how Scott Murphy addressed the challenges.
- iv. Scott Murphy said that Health Insurance and the Listers were built in. The Ambulance is the biggest item and we can hold that off until the next meeting.
- v. Bruce Schmidt asked what if we don't complete the reappraisal.
- vi. Scott Murphy said that both firms think it will get done in time.
- vii. Bruce Schmidt said we are short \$49,000. Should we consider not finishing?
- viii. Ulla Cook said the contract says it has to be done this year.
- ix. Bruce Schmidt asked how we got into this hole?
- x. Scott Murphy said that when the listers looked at the contract, they thought they had the funds to pay, but they didn't. He said the budget for the regular reappraisal was \$280,000 and \$28,000 for the mountain.
- xi. Bruce Schmidt said it is a 15% overage.
- xii. Scott Murphy said it was a shock.
- xiii. Bruce Schmidt said that can affect taxes.

K. Next Budget Workshop/Meeting

- i. Scott Murphy said their next regular meeting is on December 7, 2020.
- ii. Bruce Schmidt asked what other items will be on the agenda for that meeting. He said Community Center and Water.
- iii. Scott Murphy said nothing big.
- iv. Bruce Schmidt said he would rather spend extra time at the regular meeting and not schedule another meeting before it.
- v. Scott Murphy said that they could start earlier – 4:30 or 5 p.m.

- vi. Brett Sanderson said they could start at 6:00 p.m. and if they need to, schedule another meeting after that.
- vii. Next meeting will be at 6:00 p.m. on December 7, 2020.
- viii. Scott Murphy said he will try to restrict other items from the agenda.
- ix. Bruce Schmidt said he wants work on Capital and to make sure there are no big differences. He asked if they could delay Ambulance.
- x. Scott Murphy said they had been planning on looking at it this year, but pushed it out a year. It is too big to handle. They need to look at ways to increase the revenue and decrease expenses.

4. **Other Business**

A. **Discuss Possible Australian Ballot Voting for Town Meeting**

- i. Bruce Schmidt asked Scott Murphy to give us an overview.
- ii. Scott Murphy said there is a temporary law that allows municipalities, by vote of the Select Boards, to have a conditional meeting or special meeting in 2021 and to vote by Australian ballot. We still need more information. This can be done by ZOOM. He said that some other towns have already set this up. Town Meeting will be on March 2, 2021 and January 31, 2021 is the last day for us to post the warning.
- iii. Ulla Cook said that people will have to request absentee ballots, they will not be sent out without that request.
- iv. Bruce Schmidt asked if the town has the ability to send them out.
- v. Scott Murphy said no. He said that all budget Articles could be voted on. He said that last year, they combined Highway, Police, Recreation and Town Hall into one article. We can do the same this year.
- vi. Bruce Schmidt asked Scott Murphy to have a mock up ballot for their next meeting.
- vii. Scott Murphy said he will.
- viii. Ulla Cook said she will.
- ix. Bruce Schmidt asked about the one group that this was the first year they made a request. He said that usually, that would be put on the ballot and usually people would accept it. He asked if the Select Board would have to get together, as a group, to have the town manager accept the Town Report.
- x. Scott Murphy said all of the questions need to be simple. We have to:
 - a. Elect officials
 - b. vote on the budget articles
 - c. respond to public questions.He said that the new group that put in the request went away when they were told about the paperwork needed.
- xi. Bruce Schmidt said he thinks we have to do this.
- xii. Ulla Cook said that officials will not need to get petitions this year to get on the ballot.
- xiii. Scott Murphy said they would have a mock ballot for their next meeting.

5. **Possible Executive Session/Personnel/Contracts/Legal Issues**

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

6. **Adjourn**

- A. **MOTION by Brett Sanderson and seconded by Heather Tucker to adjourn. Motion passed unanimously.**
- B. Meeting adjourned at 6:02 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Lisha Klaiber

Bruce Schmidt, Chairman

Brett Sanderson

Scott Baitz

Heather Tucker

Justin Hyjeck

Join Zoom Meeting:

<https://us02web.zoom.us/j/84309588958?pwd=N2tQczV4bHdFTGFhSW9hMXV1MKZGUT09>

Meeting ID: 843 0958

8958

Passcode:

283438 One tap

mobile Dial by

phone:

+1 929 436 2866

Meeting ID: 843 0958 8958

Passcode: 283438

(That's B-U-D-G-E-T" on
a phone keypad)

Find a number for areas outside New England:

<https://us02web.zoom.us/j/kbKrBiSyZg>