

***PRELIMINARY MINUTES***

**TOWN OF LUDLOW  
BOARD OF SELECTMEN**

**SPECIAL - MEETING -  
BUDGET WORKSHOP**

**MONDAY, NOVEMBER 15, 2021**

**6:00 PM**

**HEALD AUDITORIUM**

**BOARD MEMBERS PRESENT:**

Bruce Schmidt, Chairman	Justin Hyjeck	Brett Sanderson
Scott Baitz		Heather Tucker

**STAFF PRESENT:**

Scott Murphy	Ulla Cook	Stephanie Grover
Jeannie Stasz	Ron Tarbell	

**OTHERS PRESENT:**

Cindy Galuska	Mike Ghia	Ryan Silvestri
Dave Galuska	Andrea Goldman	Baxter Urist
Barbara Ghia	Meredith Milliken	Jack Wheaton

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

- A. Scott Murphy suggested that when the board begins the budget discussion, that they begin with the Highway Department as Ron Tarbell is present. The board agreed.

**2. Call to Order**

- A. Brett Sanderson called the meeting to order at 6:00 p.m. He led the meeting in the Pledge of Allegiance.

**3. REVIEW BID FOR NEW AMBULANCE FOR LAS THAT WAS PREVIOUSLY APPROVED BY THE SELECT BOARD FOR PURCHASE**

- A. Scott Murphy advised that at their October 4<sup>th</sup> meeting, the board had voted to approve the purchase of the ambulance with certain covenants. The purchase would be subject to voter approval. The cost will be \$255,000 less a discount for the net cost of \$249,644. The contract was also amended to include delivery by the 4<sup>th</sup> quarter of next year.
- B. Stephanie Grover said that every ambulance needs a stretcher and power loader.
- C. Scott Murphy said that a stretcher costs about \$19,000 and the power loader about \$20,000. He added that they will probably receive about \$20,000 as a trade-in for their current ambulance.

4. **FY2022 Budget Workshop**

A. Town Clerk

- i. Ulla Cook said she does have a fund balance this year due to an increase in revenue and a decrease in expenses.
- ii. Scott Murphy said the budget includes a 3% increase in wages.
- iii. Bruce Schmidt asked if we are in a good position with computers.
- iv. Scott Murphy said we have been adding pieces and added more protection when we went to the cloud. We have the system setup with multiple people who have to sign off. We have received advice from the VLCT.
- v. Bruce Schmidt asked about possible exposure to the treasurer's department. Do we have the right equipment?
- vi. Ulla Cook said the computers are not that old.
- vii. Bruce Schmidt asked Ulla Cook her feeling about wages.
- viii. Ulla Cook said they are below the curve across the departments.

B. Appropriations

- i. Scott Murphy advised that other than a decrease in the After School program because of a decrease in Ludlow students. He said that he will be meeting with the new director on Wednesday.
- ii. Heather Tucker asked why BRACC has 2 listings.
- iii. Scott Murphy said that he will find out for the next meeting.
- iv. Justin Hyjek asked if we are looking to trim student based activities.
- v. Scott Murphy said not at this time. He said that the new director thinks the numbers will remain about the same.
- vi. Justin Hyjek asked if BRACC always spends the funds requested.
- vii. Scott Murphy said yes, they give us an annual report.
- viii. Bruce Schmidt said to ask them if they can do with less.
- ix. Scott Murphy said he is meeting with her on Wednesday.
- x. Bruce Schmidt said there is a need. He said the Rec. Department charges kids from other towns \$50 and the program is worth more.
- xi. Justin Hyjek said the After School Program is very important.
- xii. Scott Murphy said they will have more information next month.
- xiii. Andrea Goldman asked about page 47.
- xiv. Scott Murphy said that the board does not have the overall budget yet.
- xv. Bruce Schmidt asked Scott Murphy to try to have copies available for the next meeting.

C. Highway

- i. Scott Murphy referred to the Capital Budget and noted that the International we have now is being traded-in for a new truck purchase in FY 23 (if approved). It will be a different make, possibly a Western Star or Freightliner, as the International trucks have not fared well. The cost is projected at \$192K with \$20K trade-in (or outside sale) and a bank promissory note for the remainder of \$172K.
- ii. Scott Murphy said that there are no major changes in salaries or overtime. Insurance is down \$7,500 because we lost one employee who has family coverage. He said although they didn't use it last year, they are leaving crack sealing in.
- iii. Bruce Schmidt asked why they hadn't used it this year.
- iv. Ron Tarbell said it is hard to get vendors.
- v. Bruce Schmidt asked what we gain with crack sealing.
- vi. Ron Tarbell said he can't really say. He said they haven't had much luck with it.

- vii. Scott Murphy said that fuel and supplies/tools are up a little
- viii. Bruce Schmidt asked what is meant by DFF.
- ix. Ron Tarbell said it should read – DEF, Diesel Exhaust Fluid.
- x. Scott Murphy said it is driving cost.
- xi. Bruce Schmidt asked Scott Murphy to break it out from supplies/tools/
- xii. Scott Murphy said he would for their next meeting. He said that Street Lights are down a little because of the LED lights. He said that Winter Salt and Sand are best estimates, because of the weather. Scott Murphy said that he has listed for roads for Retreatment: Upper Trailside is the top priority, followed by Red Bridge Road. The other two are Locust and Ghia Farm. He said that Upper Crossroad would be about \$105,000 and Red Bridge would be the next priority – combined they would be about \$136,000.
- xiii. Baxter Urist asked what the procedure is for getting the road paved into the budget. He said that Ghia Road services 88 homes and 90% of the owners want the road paved. He thinks it is one of the most used dirt roads in Vermont. He said the road is unsafe.
- xiv. Scott Baitz asked him to describe unsafe.
- xv. Baxter Urist said cars flip over, slipping down the mountain and going off the road.
- xvi. Scott Baitz said he has seen 20 cars pile up on West Hill Road.
- xvii. Baxter Urist said there are deep divots, washboard areas and ruts. He said that there is a sharp left turn that is treacherous and visitors don't know how treacherous that turn is.
- xviii. Bruce Schmidt said this board looks to its department heads, Highway Foreman to determine which roads to do. They are guided by state requirements like the pitch of the road. He said that paving the road will increase the speeds and increase the salt costs. He suggested possibly doing sections of the road.
- xix. Mike Ghia said that his mother is opposed to paving the road. He said that he is an EMT and based on experiences, the most severe accidents are on paved roads. Paving will not make this road safer, people already drive too fast on it. People walk down the road. If you don't redo the culverts and drainage issues, if you pave it, the paving will break up and you'll have potholes. WE need to address the ditches and drainage.
- xx. Dave Galuska said in light snow or drizzle, you are safer with a dirt road. Paving will not solve the issues on this road. He said cars go off the road on the straight-a-way going up the hill. People don't know about black ice.
- xxi. Ron Tarbell said he is against paving this road unless they repair the infrastructure issues. He said the road was rebuilt around 1972 and they used clay on the road bed. He said paving won't hold up. The mud comes from the clay.
- xxii. Baxter Urist said they need to research these issues. He said that Cross Mountain Road was paved.
- xxiii. Ron Tarbell said that was a nightmare before and connects with the Access Road and West Hill Road.
- xxiv. Bruce Schmidt said this board needs to find a balance for everyone. We won't decide this issue tonight. He suggested fixing the bad areas. We could also look at paving sections, starting by that left turn corner. We will keep the conversation going.
- xxv. Ron Tarbell said the road does rank up there with traffic. He suggested having the Regional Planning Commission do a traffic survey. They will count the cars and speeds.
- xxvi. Dave Galuska said they would need to do 2 profiles, weekends and weekdays.
- xxvii. Bruce Schmidt asked Ron Tarbell to look into the traffic survey.
- xxviii. Brett Sanderson said they could try to build up the mud sections. He said that corner is crucial.
- xxix. Bruce Schmidt said if we pave it, we will have to salt it. If it is diet, we sand it. We can use sand on pavement. This board needs to be cautious on where and how we spend money. We have 52 miles of roads and 20 are paved. He added that this is the first time that he has heard

- a request to pave that road. If paved, the speeds will increase. We could look into putting up signs.
- xxx. Dave Galuska said if they pave the road, in 3 years, people will want speed bumps.
- xxxii. Mike Ghia said they need to address the drainage issues first; ditches and culverts. He said there is a seasonal brook that is wet all of the time. He said he suggested water diversion to the foresters.
- xxxiii. Bruce Schmidt asked Ron Tarbell to bring back some suggestions with numbers.
- xxxiv. Ron Tarbell said that they paved South Face to the top of Route 66 in 2011 and it is deteriorating.
- xxxv. Baxter Urist said he wants an analysis done and suggested paving the road.
- xxxvi. Scott Murphy said they will bring back some ideas for the next meeting.
- xxxvii. Heather Tucker asked if they use chloride in the summer.
- xxxviii. Ron Tarbell said yes. He said water won't keep down the dust.
- xxxix. Bruce Schmidt asked if they are looking at salary adjustments and where the market is. He asked how much the highway department impacted the surplus. Why was there a \$400,000 surplus? We need to budget better. He said some of the surplus was police department vacancies. He said we have run a surplus for 2 years in a row.
- xl. Scott Murphy said there will be a complete budget for the next meeting.
- xli. Scott Murphy referred to the note about Town Farm Road culvert. He said the culvert is always maintained to keep the road from washing out. The state made changes and the property owner put in a garage and now has petitioned us to fix culvert again. She has gone to an attorney. He said this is just a place holder and if we do one; we will have to do it for others. He said that this has been discussed several times.
- xlii. Bruce Schmidt said if the Town Manager and the Highway Foreman think that we should do nothing about it, and we are legally okay, and then don't fix it.
- xliii. Scott Murphy said that is also his and Ron Tarbell's position.
- xliv. Ron Tarbell said we didn't change anything. There are places all over town like that and he doesn't want to set a precedent.
- xlv. Bruce Schmidt asked Scott Murphy to check with the town attorney.
- xlv. Scott Murphy said on Highway Revenue, there is a line item for grants. The state took away grants during COVID and gave a particular amount of money to the town. Grants are back now.

D. Listers

- i. Scott Murphy said that the new assessor's contract reduced our wages by \$25,000. He said they are very happy with the assessor system. The transition was smooth.
- ii. Ryan Silvestri said they are reorganizing the office and updating it. They had a good value for the reappraisal. Their next project is to clean out the vault.
- iii. Justin Hyjek asked about the \$400 in computer expense?
- iv. Ryan Silvestri said a copier. We will be buying chairs and a computer next year.
- v. Bruce Schmidt asked Scott Murphy if this will be long term.
- vi. Scott Murphy said they will see how this year went. They were concerned about an outside group not being able to answer questions, that that didn't happen. Things are going well.
- vii. Ulla Cook said that Ryan Silvestri also set her department up to be able to access the Listers' information.
- viii. Justin Hyjek asked if the contract with the assessor will grow at a reasonable rate.
- ix. Ryan Silvestri said that they have already signed the 2022 -2023 contract. They will talk again after that.
- x. Bruce Schmidt said the question is do we want an assessor with a support staff or go with a company.

- xi. Justin Hyjek said that if the town employees are happy with the way it is, leave it.
- xii. Bruce Schmidt said this relationship works well.
- xiii. Ryan Silvestri said that a problem might be with the availability of a full time assessor.
- xiv. Bruce Schmidt said this has gone much better than expected.

E. Buildings & Grounds

- i. Scott Murphy said that there is a misprint in Buildings & Grounds Supervisor wages; it says \$67, 000 and should say \$62,000. He said that with regard to mower, the old mower needed repairs, but the parts were not available. Scott Baitz donated his mower to us.
- ii. Bruce Schmidt asked if they have enough staff help. We need to look at the budget. He said that the buildings are getting older. He suggested 7 days/ week coverage. He asked if we could share personnel with other departments. He said that the supervisor is busy all of the time.
- iii. Justin Hyjek asked if the supervisor is salaried.
- iv. Scott Murphy said he is hourly, with overtime capped. He works 40 hours per week,
- v. Justin Hyjek suggested hiring part time help.
- vi. Scott Murphy said that they have a plan to help the supervisor. They will restructure other departments.
- vii. Bruce Schmidt said that someone has been emptying the trashcans on weekends over the summer and it is probably the supervisor.

F. Planning & Zoning

- i. Scott Murphy said they had a drop in a full time to a part time employee. He added that there will be a change in the staff and will have changes in staff and he will have more information at their next meeting.
- ii. Bruce Schmidt cautioned to make sure we are covered against ransom-ware.
- iii. Justin Hyjek asked if we have an online safety plan.
- iv. Scott Murphy said we have a contract with a vendor with tiered service, not at the highest tier, but mid-range.
- v. Justin Hyjek asked who is responsible if we are held-up.
- vi. Bruce Schmidt said we need to prevent that.
- vii. Scott Murphy said we have good checks and balances and we do not do ACH transfers.
- viii. Justin Hyjek suggested keeping a database on an external hard drive.
- ix. Scott Murphy said we have the capability.
- x. Bruce Schmidt said he is concerned about emails with malicious software attached.
- xi. Justin Hyjek said TDS emails get hacked frequently.
- xii. Scott Murphy said he will bring in the vendor to the February meeting.

G. High School Building

- i. Justin Hyjek said that initially we allowed them to use the building pro bono and would then renegotiate.
- ii. Scott Murphy said that they pay \$500 per month plus any additional security. We have locked down the first floor. They have use of the second floor and one science room on the third floor.
- iii. Justin Hyjek asked about utilities.
- iv. Scott Murphy said it is a flat fee.
- v. Bruce Schmidt said we should look into that.
- vi. Justin Hyjek said he wants a school in town, but not at the town's full responsibility.

- vii. Bruce Schmidt said the town would like to get rid of that building, suggesting apartments. He asked if the proximity to the Elementary school is a detriment. This board's goal is not to be a landowner in 5 years. This will be 3 years in July.
- viii. Scott Murphy said we were hoping that we'd have a clearer indication where the independent school is going. They haven't gotten state funding.
- ix. Heather Tucker said they are donation operated now.
- x. Scott Murphy suggested that the board ask them to come to a meeting.
- xi. Heather Tucker noted that the Emergency Services building needs repairs and asked if the Police department could move there. .
- xii. 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. Next Budget Workshop/Meeting

- i. Scott Murphy asked if the board wanted to meet on November 9<sup>th</sup> or at their next regular meeting is on December 6, 2021.
- ii. Bruce Schmidt suggested December 6, 13 and 20 if needed. He asked about the Micro transit study. He said we need accurate budgets.
- iii. Justin Hyjek suggested meeting in 2 weeks.
- iv. Bruce Schmidt said to meet on December 6<sup>th</sup>, then if needed December 13<sup>th</sup> or December 20<sup>th</sup>. Then again at the regular January meeting. He said they should prepare for a 2 ½ to 3 hour meeting. He said we need accurate numbers. He would like to shoot for a 1 to 2% total increase in the tax rate.
- v. Justin Hyjek asked about salary increases of 3%.
- vi. Bruce Schmidt said we need a salary plan and again asked why there was a \$400,000 surplus.
- vii. Andrea Goldman asked what the revenue was.
- viii. Bruce Schmidt said the budget is \$4.1 million for the town.

5. Adjourn

- A. **MOTION by Brett Sanderson and seconded by Scott Baitz to adjourn. Motion passed unanimously.**
- B. Meeting adjourned at 7:35 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Lisha Klaiber

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Bruce Schmidt, Chairman

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Brett Sanderson

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Scott Baitz

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Heather Tucker

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Justin Hyjeck