

PRELIMINARY MINUTES

**TOWN OF LUDLOW
BOARD OF SELECTMEN**

**PUBLIC INFORMATIONAL MEETING
&
ANNUAL TOWN MEETING
March 4, 2024 and March 5, 2024**

BOARD MEMBERS PRESENT:

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| Brett Sanderson, Chairman | Justin Hyjek |
| Scott Baitz | George Tucker, Jr. |

BOARD MEMBERS ABSENT:

Bob Brandt

STAFF PRESENT:

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| Brendan McNamara | Ulla Cook | Newton Rose, Moderator |
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OTHERS PRESENT:

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| Eric Alden | Joe Josselyn | Frank Provance |
| Dean Alexander | Jay Jurkoic | Pat Pullinen |
| Linda Alexander | Abigail Karner | Richard Radonis |
| Robin Anderson | Rachel Karner | Thomas Ray |
| Evelyn Baldwin | Edward Kelly | Paul Rix |
| Lynette Bard | Heather Kelly | Susan Rohdieck |
| George Benson, Jr. | Angela Kissell | James Rumrill |
| Kaitlyn Benson | Frank Kissell | Sherry Scales |
| Lynette Bard | Peter Kolenda | Carmen Schleider |
| Jeff Billings | Craig Kovalsky | Bruce Schmidt |
| Ron Bixby | Elizabeth Krefski | Lisa Schmidt |
| Sharon Bixby | Louis Krefski | Noah Schmidt |
| Gary Blodgett | David Ladd | Marissa Selleck |
| Marilee Blodgett | Donald Lagro | Ginny Snyder |
| Joanna Bombadil | Mary Mancino | Debra Staniscia |
| Michelle Brandt | Jeffrey Mazurek | Michelle Stinson |
| James Briggs | Steve Meyers | Jean Strong |
| Dan Buckley | Cynthia Mischel | George Thomson |
| Suzy Buckley | Patrick Moore | Linda Thomson |
| Alan Couch | Otis Nelson | Penny Trick |
| John Denner | Julie Nicoll | Deborah Tucker |
| Robert Fortuna | Logan Nicoll | George Tucker |
| Terry Fortuna | Alice Nitka | Heather Tucker |
| Aaron Galley | Pam O'Neil | Jerry Tucker, Jr. |
| Peter Girouard | Rhinard Parry | Jerry Tucker |
| Patricia Greenwood | Melissa Phipps | Sheree Vaughn-Tucker |
| Stephanie Grover | Paula Pollender | Jeff Warfle |
| Glenn Heitsmith | Peter Pollender | Vincent West |
| Mary Hoyne | Rebecca Prasse | Timothy Wingate |
| | | Madeline Young |

1. **CALL TO ORDER**

- A. Newton Rose called the meeting to order at 7:00 p.m. He asked for a moment of silence in honor of three members of the community who had passed in the last year, Howard Barton Sr. (Ludlow Electric Superintendent from 1975 to 2022,) Martin Nitka (Town Attorney Town Moderator, Select Board and Cemetery Commission) and Herb Van Guilder (Select Board, Village Trustee, Town Moderator and Cemetery Commission.) He then introduced Tom Ray and Jim Rumrill from the Rotary.
- B. Tom Ray said that he is the new president of the Rotary and he and Jim Rumrill are here tonight to honoring Martin Nitka.
- C. Jim Rumrill said that Mr. Nitka was instrumental in organizing the Ludlow chapter of the Rotary, the first Penny Auction and mentor. He served as Ludlow Town moderator and in that capacity allowed people to speak until they were able to get their point across without interfering and for his years of service to the Rotary and town. The Rotary is donating a new podium for Town Hall with a plaque honoring Marty Nitka.
- D. Alice Nitka read the plaque on the new podium and thanked the Rotary.
- E. Newton Rose said that this meeting will adhere to Roberts Rules of Order and is modeled by State statute. He said this meeting is to discuss and vote on the articles. He said that he will read the article and there will be a motion to approve and second, then there will be discussion on the motion. He asked those who wish to speak to come to the microphone and give their names. The voters will vote to accept or no. He said that once an article has been voted on, you can't go back to it. Voting will be by voice, aye or nay. He will call the vote as he hears it. He explained that they are here to vote on the articles and that if an item was not warned, there will be no binding vote on that issue. There may be discussions of those issues under OTHER BUSINESS. In order to participate, you must be a registered voter of Ludlow. He said that Brendan McNamara and Stephanie Grover are present to speak for the town and Ambulance Service.

2. **REVIEW & DISCUSS ARTICLE 1 – To Elect Town Officers for the coming year**

- A. Newton Rose said that that voting for this article will be by Australian ballot tomorrow, Tuesday, March 5, 2024 at Town Hall from 10:00 a.m. through 7:00 p.m.

3. **REVIEW & DISCUSS ARTICLE 2 - Shall the voters of the Town of Ludlow fix the salaries of the Select Board, Cemetery Commissioners and Trustees of Public Funds the same as last year, Select Board \$1,600, Cemetery Commissioners \$900, Trustee of Public Funds \$400?**

- A. **MOTION by Linda Thomson and seconded by Terry Carter to adopt Article 2 to fix the salaries as described above.**
- B. Newton Rose called for a vote. He noted that the ayes have it.
- C. **Article 2 is adopted.**

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4. **REVIEW & DISCUSS ARTICLE 3 - Shall the voters of the Town of Ludlow collect taxes on Real Property in installments to be paid to the Town Treasurer on August 15, 2024, November 15, 2024, February 15, 2025 and May 15, 2025, and must be delivered to the Town Treasurer and postmarked on or before the due date.**
- A. **MOTION by Joanna Bombadil and seconded by Dan Buckley to adopt Article 3.**
 - B. Newton Rose called for a vote. He noted that the ayes have it.
 - C. **Article 3 is adopted.**
5. **REVIEW & DISCUSS ARTICLE 4 – Shall the voters of the Town of Ludlow authorize the Select Board to borrow money to pay the necessary expenses of the Town and any part of its indebtedness?**
- A. **MOTION by Pam O’Neil and seconded by Sharon Bixby to adopt Article 4 to authorize the Select Board to borrow money to pay the necessary expenses of the Town and any part of its indebtedness.**
 - B. There was no discussion
 - C. Newton Rose called for the vote. He noted that the ayes have it.
 - D. **Article 4 is adopted.**
6. **REVIEW & DISCUSS ARTICLE 5 – Shall the voters of the Town of Ludlow vote a specific amount in lieu of a rate on a dollar on the Grand List as set forth in the Select Board’s budget and the Windsor County budget? Then the Select Board shall set the tax rate necessary to raise this amount after the Grand List has been completed and lodged in the office of the Town Clerk. The amount to be raised by taxes will be \$4,684,819.00**
- A. **MOTION by Dan Buckley and seconded by Pam O’Neil to adopt article 5.**
 - B. Brendan McNamara made a note for clarification. He said that the budget starts on page 15 of the town report and there was a printing error on the preface page. The correct numbers should be \$6,843,392 and \$2,115,573. He said that the error does not affect the budget. He said that he should have caught the error and apologized.
 - C. Lou Krefski asked about the increase on page 28 – line #1 regarding the Chief Deputy from \$13,800 to \$95,000.
 - D. Brendan McNamara said that the board is advocating for a full time chief. He said that after 25 years, Chief Kolenda will be retiring on June 30, 2024. The board has had multiple discussions on this and feels that it is the best option for Ludlow.
 - E. Joanna Bombadil noted that on page 21 under Appropriations, there is a line for \$10,000 for BRACC, but no corresponding report.
 - F. Pam O’Neil said that she is the former president of BRACC and explained that BRACC services students from Ludlow who go to Green Mountain High School. They have an Open- Coffee day for outreach. She said that there have been conversations with Divided Sky for programs for youths and adults from Ludlow.
 - G. Rhinard Perry noted that the budget for the High School Building has expenses listed as \$97,000 and revenue as \$90,000. He said that when the town took back the building, there was talk that after 5 years, they would decide what to do with the building – keep or sell.
 - H. Brendan McNamara said that they extended the lease for the Expeditionary School for one year. He added that the decision about the building was delayed because of the change in Town

manager and the flood. This is a discussion not just for the Select Board, but for the entire community and we will be looking at this aggressively within the next few months.

- I. Pat Pullinen said that the Expeditionary School wants to stay there. State approval was not received until late June 2023. We are now recruiting students for next year. Our goal is to become a community school serving Ludlow and Mount Holly.
- J. John Denner asked why the town doesn't move the Elementary School into the High School building.
- K. Newton Rose said this discussion is about Article 5.
- L. Glenn Heitsmith asked if he would be allowed to make an amendment to the article.
- M. Newton Rose said if it is germane to the article.
- N. Glenn Heitsmith proposed an amendment rather than to give the money to BRACC, give it to Divided Sky to address the national, state and local issue of opiate addiction and asked about NARCAN. The town should keep its eyes open about the opiate problem. He noted that there is no one present from BRACC tonight.
- O. Pam O'Neil said that she spoke for BRACC.
- P. Newton Rose said that the amendment is not germane to the article.
- Q. There was no further discussion.
- R. Newton Rose called for a vote and noted that the ayes have it.
- S. **Article 5 is adopted.**

7. **REVIEW AND DISCUSS ARTICLE 6 - Shall the voters of the Town of Ludlow authorize the Select Board to maintain a Capital Fund to support the following vehicle and equipment purchases, building maintenance and repairs and to fund programs?**

Highway Equipment Fund \$30,000

Fire Equipment Fund \$30,000

Police Equipment Fund \$5,000.

Recreation Facilities Fund \$10,000,

Ludlow Town Hall Facilities Fund \$10,000,

Ludlow Community Center Facilities Fund \$5,000,

Black River Senior Center Facilities Fund \$2,500

Black River High School Building Fund \$5,000

Dam Spillway Fund \$125,000?

The amount to be raised by taxes will be \$222,500.00.

- A. **MOTION by Sharon Bixby and seconded by Terry Carter to adopt Article 6.**
- B. Peter Girouard asked if the town buys a new piece of equipment, does the town pay or take a loan or bond.
- C. Brett Sanderson said that it depends on the article. The money put in capital will go toward the purchase.
- D. Peter Girouard asked about the Dam Spillway.
- E. Brendan McNamara said there was damage to Dams #3 and #5 and their spillways. He has been working with the USDA Emergency Watershed Program and financing for repairs would be 75% with a 25% town match. He said that would be the \$125,000. He added that as of last week, he thinks there is a possibility we may even get 100% financing. He said that until all of this is verified, we need to leave that money in the budget.

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- F. Glenn Heitsmith said that the dams were damaged during Irene and again this summer. He said they were built by the Army Corps of Engineers and asked why they aren't responsible to fix them. He added that they have not been maintained.
- G. Rhinard Perry asked about the \$5,000 to the High School when there is already \$90,000 in the budget.
- H. Brendan McNamara said that the Capital Fund is for long term projects.
- I. Rhinard Perry asked what if the school is sold.
- J. Brendan McNamara said the funds would still go toward the building.
- K. Pat Pullinen said the Expeditionary School wants to stay. This money is for long term expenses. He noted that there was an ice dam on the roof that leaked into the building. With the school being present, this damage was caught right away and repaired.
- L. Newton Rose called for a vote on the amendment to Article 6. The ayes have it.
- M. Amendment to Article 6 is approved.
- N. Newton Rose called for a vote on Article 6. The ayes have it.
- O. **Article 6 is adopted.**
8. **REVIEW & DISCUSS ARTICLE 7 – Shall the voters of the Town of Ludlow appropriate the sum of \$7,250.00 to The MOOvers, formerly The Current, to support the public transit bus service to Ludlow, from Bellows Falls and from Rutland?**
- A. **MOTION by Tracey Leary and seconded by Suzy Buckley to adopt Article 7.**
- B. Glenn Heitsmith commented that it is a great service. He asked what Okemo pays towards the service.
- C. Bruce Schmidt said that Okemo pays \$35,000 for the service from Bellows Falls to Springfield to Okemo and another \$10,000 to \$12,000 for the area and Village Shuttle.
- D. Newton Rose called for a vote and the ayes have it.
- E. **Article 7 is adopted.**
9. **REVIEW & DISCUSS ARTICLE 8 - SHALL the voters of the Town of Ludlow exempt the lands and improvements of Fletcher Farm Foundation from real estate taxes for a period of five (5) years: commencing with the 2024 - 2025 tax year?**
- A. **MOTION by Linda Thomson and seconded by Cynthia Mischel to adopt Article 8.**
- B. Newton Rose called for questions or comments.
- C. George Thomson said that he is the president of the Fletcher Farm Foundation. He said the foundation was formed in 1933 for the benefit of the people of Ludlow and Cavendish. There is money to maintain the buildings and grounds. He said that 105 acres of the property was in Ludlow and 150 acres are in Cavendish. He said the foundation donates \$10,000 each to both the Fletcher Library in Ludlow and also in Cavendish. They provide scholarships for Ludlow and Cavendish students for courses at the Arts and Crafts school. The property serves Stepping Stones, TRSU, HCRS and Black River Good Neighbors. Part of the land is used for the Community Garden as well as the Fletcher Fields for sports, the Dog Park and hiking and sports trails. They contributed money after the floods.
- D. Donald Lagro asked about the mine.
- E. George Thomson said the foundation no longer owns that part of the property.
- F. Newton Rose called for a vote. He noted that the ayes have it.

G. **Article 8 is adopted.**

10. **REPORT FROM STATE CONGRESSMAN LOGAN NICOLL**

- A. Newton Rose said that at this time, we will hear a report from State Congressman Logan Nicoll.
- B. Logan Nicoll said that he is on the House Committee on Commerce and Economic Development and his priority has been a bill on data privacy regarding more regulation of harvesting and selling data. He said that other bills that are in process are housing, Educational Finance and Act 250. He noted that people are anxious about the Educational funding. He said that the state did have federal money that artificially deflated property taxes. We no longer have those funds. He said that the legislature did pass a budget adjustment act to true up the current budget. He added that Ludlow will receive \$1,000,000 in flood relief funds.

11. **REVIEW & DISCUSS ARTICLE 9 – To transact any other business necessary and proper when met. Voters to discuss whether to consider allowing optional delivery methods of the Annual Town Report**

- A. Newton Rose advised that no motion is required.

12. **OTHER COMMENTS**

- A. Brendan McNamara recognized Bob Brandt for his service on the Select Board and thanked him for his time on the board.
- B. Brendan McNamara recognized Chief Peter Kolenda who will be retiring from his position as Fire Chief as of June 30, 2024. Chief Kolenda has served for 25 years. Thank you Chief Kolenda.
- C. Brendan McNamara offered his thanks to the Select Board, Staff and Community. Next month will be his one- year anniversary as Town Manager of Ludlow.
- D. Carmen Schleider said that she represents Divided Sky. They opened November 13, 2023 and will be holding a Fun Run at Jackson Gore on May 18, 2024. She invited people to participate.
- E. John Denner said that the school bond is \$10,000,000 with \$5,000,000 for the elementary school. Why not move the elementary school students into the high school building.
- F. Lisa Schmidt said that would be a School Board issue.
- G. Brendan McNamara said that may be part of the discussion when the Select Board begins discussions on the future of the high school building.
- H. Dean Alexander asked if there are any representatives here tonight from the school board and if not, that is poor.

13. **ADJOURN**

- A. **MOTION by Sharon Bixby and seconded by Don Lagro to adjourn.**
- B. Newton Rose adjourned the meeting at 7:58 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Lisha Klaiber

Brett Sanderson, Chairman

Justin Hyjek

Scott Baitz

George Tucker, Jr.

Bob Brandt

Ulla Cook, Town Clerk

Jean Strong, BCA Chair

Newton Rose, Town Moderator