

Finance Committee Notes
April 6, 2022
Town Offices
5:00 p.m.

The meeting was called to order at 5:07.

Present: Ginger Robinson, Joyce Muka, Nate Messer, Glenn Caffery, Michèle Higgins
Bill Glabach, Erica Jensen.

Absent: ø

Guests: Karin (left at approx. 5:40), Liz Kidder. Alice Wozniak (5:45), Bob DePalma and Ken Spatcher (both came at approx. 5:50).

Ginger welcomed Glenn Caffery as our new member.

Michèle asked committee to check her numbers in the minutes of March 23 before considering approval. Then Nate made a motion to approve the minutes. Joyce seconded. Ginger, Joyce, Nate, Michèle approved. Glenn abstained. The motion passed.

Karin Parks came for the Library budget presentation. She said that the budget request reflects a 4.97% increase largely due to inflation and noted that a 2 1/2% increase is required in order for the Library to retain State certification. 20% of the budget must be spent on materials which would be \$5,732. There is currently \$13,000 or so in the State aid fund which is used for upkeep. The new door was paid for out of State money and might be used for painting the building. She anticipates receiving \$4,000 or so from the State.

She has been clearing the library of older books that people no longer check out and has twelve boxes in the basement. She will organize a book swap in May when townspeople can select from among these books. Townspeople have already paid for these books so she offers them at no charge. The books that are left after the book swap will be offered to Bernardston Elementary School, then a women's shelter in Turners Falls and then Roundabout Books.

The Library is heated with propane. The cost has nearly doubled. She has a new computer which was paid for out of the utilities budget. That budget currently has about \$1300 in it, and she is now networked with the Town Offices. There is a small printer for scanning small projects. The money from the State rolls over into the next year (about \$3,900 last year).

Materials that she purchases include books, dvd's, movies, preloaded MP3's, dvd players. She is in the process of making room in the library for those dvd players.

Erica asks her to consider using the Sheriff's department for painting the exterior of the Library; they paint for free and do good work. Karin will ask at the upcoming Trustee's meeting. Erica asks how many hours per week Karin works. She works about 24 hours per week, but is paid for 17 and 1/2. She does not have vacation time or benefits but has volunteers who work on Saturdays or who can fill in when necessary. In other details, the printer is two years old and in good shape. She refills only two times per year and is satisfied with that budget.

Nate asks for an example of how much "a" book costs. Karin says that the Library gets a 40% discount from her main supplier Ingram and that a book costs \$18 from this supplier. A dvd would also cost around this much. Audio books on CD cost about \$60 as well as pre-loaded MP3's. (She noted that the cost of the pre-loaded MP3's is increasing. She compared this purchasing power with what she can acquire at BES. Her budget there is \$700, but she can only acquire twenty-two books with that money.) She purchases books weekly, adding top tiered books, weeds infrequently read books after five years and has about 150 more of them left to cull. She will be increasing the Library's magazine subscriptions and will subscribe to The Recorder. She will also be using some of that money to purchase power converters and chargers.

Erica wondered if Karin ever has trouble getting books. Karin said no but that she has had one challenge.

Erica asked for a definition of "lending materials." Karin replied that they are anything that the Library lends, and the number is used to qualify for State aid as is the number of people who come into the Library. She noted that she usually lends 50 pieces of material per day. The Library participates in inter-library loans. Dues to the Mass. Library Association come out of her budget as does training. She has a \$750 budget for two programs which the Leyden Cultural Council could not fully fund, programs which are for crafts, music and summer reading programs.

Before leaving, Karin asked for a finalized budget when it is ready because she does not receive any from the Accountant. This prompted another discussion about the lack of communication from the Accountant, and we reiterated this to Erica. Karin asked to please keep in mind that that a 2 1/2% increase is required in order to keep State funding; she said that they needed a waiver in 2021 which requires a good deal of paperwork. (This ended Karin's presentation.)

Ginger noted that Michele G. will begin populating a spread sheet for us to use. Joyce noted that Karin is quite underpaid as our librarian.

Ginger read the following statement, preceding it by saying that she did not know if she was speaking for the Finance Committee or only as the Chair.

Because I have yet to receive any answers about missing town equipment including, but not limited to, a Ford 800 truck, I have reported all information to the proper authorities.

This week, I worked with Rep Paul Mark's constituent services to obtain answers about missing vehicles and trailers. I am awaiting documentation but was told in an email regarding the F800, "This title was signed over from the town to DJs Auto Sales, sold for \$1000, title signed by a Gilda."

They also state, "This title belongs to a Dan Galvis of 83 Greenfield Rd, Leyden, MA 01301." There is no corresponding deposit for this transaction.

A reminder: This truck has never been on the town's fleet schedule. It was purchased for \$1500 with Vermont Yankee funds on 5/29/19. I would like to ask why Dan Galvis, as the EMD, would need a dump truck in the first place.

I also received from the accountant every deposit made into the town from 2018-2020. Again, I do not see where any deposits were made to the town for the sale of town owned equipment including a 1998 Bobcat skid steer loader (\$7200), a 1985 AM General Dump truck (\$5300) and a Cummings Motor sealed in case (\$1650). The F800 is still missing, however, Dan Galvis listed a Ford F800 for sale on Facebook in May 2021 for \$8500.

Regarding the Bobcat which was listed with a rebuilt Kaboda engine: I still have no answers as to why Dan Galvis shipped a V1702 Bobcat engine to Virginia for repair at the cost of \$2950 to the town.

Erica reported that the School Committee has revised our budget down by 0.7%.

Alice Wozniak came at 5:45 to present the Assessors' budget. She told us that there is a \$3,000 difference between this year and last year and that some line

items have been consolidated since last year. The \$3,000 increase represents part of the payment for a new service to map properties using a GIS system that will be more readily accessible and readable than what they currently have. There is a one-time set up for putting the property cards online which will make them accessible 24/7. This is an annual fee. Alice is proposing to decrease her salary by \$500 because she has largely caught up from the Covid period when the former Clerk to the assessors could not come in to work. The stipends for the Assessors themselves will remain the same.

Prior to the Annual Town Meeting, the Assessors will need to put an article on for the Special Town Meeting which will request moving \$7,500 from the assessors' stabilization fund to pay for all of this mapping. Bob DePalma noted that the Town is way behind in this process.

Alice explained that the maps are updated every year. It's called CAI mapping at \$1,000 annual cost. The current maps are old and the updates should be done soon as she noted that realtors and lawyers, especially, are asking for them more and more. She does monthly updates, and while they are not for "legal" disputes and are purely for assessment purposes, the Planning Board and the Conservation Commission often need them. They are also necessary for some of the grant writing and septic plans, as well. Ken talked about the necessity of staying "modern." He noted that the Town is allowed by law to charge \$24 per hour for requests for this information. Ginger thought that charging might be a good idea, but Alice said that a charge can be assessed only if it is an historical request.

The new system will be easier to use and will make Alice's job more efficient when looking for notices of intent or deeds or for conservation, for instance. The website will be enhanced and will bring up a property with boundaries, buildings and other pertinent information. Ownership will be updated yearly with massmapper (see mass.gov/dls) which is replacing Oliver and will be current as of the first of the year unless a property has recently changed hands.

Ginger mentioned that the Assessors were feeling overwhelmed last year and asked if things are better this year. They both said that they are comfortable now. Alice is great, they said; she has 15 years experience in Colrain and 14 in Heath and has made their jobs much smoother, that she goes above and beyond the job. Because of her positions in those two towns, she can do comparative work with them. (There was conversation about her wealth of knowledge and experience from the various committees which she serves in Colrain and Heath.)

When asked about water fees from Greenfield, Bob said that he hand-delivered a bill to Greenfield for \$21,000 which is double what has been asked in the past. Greenfield sent a letter but with the property information which Bob sent back, they did pay the full amount, but he said that the value of the initial purchase impacts what Leyden can charge for the water. He also mentioned PILOT payments.

When asked about backup for Patriot, Alice told us that it is not a good situation. Backing up information in Patriot is complicated as it is a closed system. If, for any reason, Patriot is not available, it is gone. It is not there. Erica emphasized that we need to work this out; we need some kind of external hard drive.

Bob mentioned that no paperwork has yet been filed by the new owners of Spirit Fire. The deadline for filing was the end of March; they have not done their due diligence. Their accountant has not contacted the Town as required by the State. He is mulling over how best to approach this situation.

Michèle made a motion to adjourn at 6:29. Ginger seconded. It was unanimous.

Our next meeting will be April 13 at 6:00 p.m. at the Town Offices.