

**Finance Committee
Town of Buckland
Minutes of Meeting
April 4, 2022**

This meeting is being conducted remotely in accordance with the provisions of the Governor's March 12, 2020, Executive Order Suspending Certain Provisions of the Open Meeting Law.

Present:

Finance Committee: Larry Langford, Paula Consolo, Dena Wilmore, Bruce Lessels, Bob Dean
Town of Buckland: Heather Butler, Town Administrator, Barry DelCastillo, Selectboard, Cara Leach, Tax Collector, Treasurer

Others: Rick Kingsley, Collins Center, Pam Guyette, Cindy Schwartz, Recreation Committee

The meeting was called to order by Chair Langford at 4:00 p.m.

Dena motioned to approve the minutes of February 21, 2022 ; Bruce seconded. Dena, yes; Bruce, yes; Larry, yes; Paula, yes. Unanimously approved.

Larry Langford welcomed Bob Dean who is interested in joining the Finance Committee

Review of the Operating Budget

Heather went over changes in salaries to bring Bob Dean up to speed on our draft budget.

We discussed Paula's concern about putting 40% of the Buildings and Grounds person's salary into Snow and Ice since that means we aren't funding that stabilization account. Heather explained that we pay all winter road salaries through snow and ice.

Heather clarified that we will be increasing Buckland police salaries to match what Shelburne pays. We will also give them 3.5% COLA increases.

We have a \$200,000 grant to set up an intermunicipal agreement for shared police services that will be brought to the 2023 Town Meeting for a non-binding vote. Staffing will be determined by that agreement. By creating a joint policing agreement, we will be able to control the costs of police reforms which are coming in the next year.

Paula asked about the 7.2% increase for Arms Library. This is thought to allow them to open on weekends.

Paula asked about the 2.8% increase for the senior center. Larry invited Barry DelCastilho to discuss the topic of the new senior center agreement.

Barry said the present conditions at the senior center are unacceptable so that something needs to be done. This will require a significant capital outlay. The current structure of the senior center won't allow them to take debt, so they are pursuing the proposed senior center district. The board of managers for the senior center will be appointed by the three towns' selectboards. Barry believes this district will be a model for the state and as such is likely to attract some funding.

Larry pointed out that the district would have significant overhead. Paula expressed her concern about the difficulty in getting usage numbers from the senior center. She'd also like to know usage from outside the three towns so that Buckland may be paying for other towns' seniors who use the center.

Barry responded that the senior center tracks usage with a system of duplicate users, so one person using the center two times counts as two usage units.

Larry said the concerns about usage are easily solved with a simple RFID chip card that would allow the senior center to track each user. Also, what are the plans to expand the senior center's appeal to younger or more active seniors?

Barry said the new Senior Center director is aware of these concerns.

Paula is concerned that the expansion committee is not open to improvements to the existing space as opposed to building a new space. She thinks we can make the present space significantly better without building a new space.

Larry suggested the finance committee could state that we are in favor of the senior center district, but not in favor of making a significant capital investment in a new building.

Capital Budget

Heather talked about using free cash for the new truck for the hwy dept, \$100,000 for the pool, town clerk, historical society, \$10,000 each. Since then, the bed in the truck used by the Buildings and Grounds dept needs to be replaced. It will cost about \$10,000.

Pam and Cindy explained that the present cost estimate for the Buckland Rec pool project is \$2,062,378. They are short \$510,244 in funds raised so far. Ways to save money (total about \$90,000):

- Metal roof to asphalt roof would save about \$20,000 but that would mean we couldn't do solar in the future.
- Eliminate benches and other furnishings
- Reduce building size

Dena asked whether we could borrow to cover the shortfall. Heather said it is too late to do that based on lead times needed.

Paula asked if we could decide to borrow for other capital purchases and then use free cash for the pool. Heather said we also have ARPA money (\$552,978).

Larry asked if we were to use ARPA money and general stabilization to build the pool and to build a salt shed, how would that work? The combination of the two funds is over \$1 million, so that should be possible. The cost for the pool and the salt shed combined is probably under \$1 million.

Heather suggested we take \$100,000 from free cash and \$400,000 from ARPA to fund the pool overage.

Paula moved that we recommend to the selectboard that we use \$400,000 from ARPA and \$100,000 from free cash to fund the pool overage. Dena second. Unanimously approved.

Rick Kingsley from the Collins Center joined our meeting to discuss the work they've done under the community compact grant. He gave a presentation on multi year revenue and expense forecasting and showed us the 5 year projected budget they've built. He plans to hand over the spreadsheet for us to familiarize ourselves with and to manage ourselves after the grant expires. There's also a user's guide that shows how to update the forecast and extend it into future years.

Next steps for our meeting April 11.

- Put the budget to bed so we can start to discuss warrant articles for town meeting
- Resurrect 12 month calendar so we stay on track for the year

No comments from the public.

Dena moved to adjourn at 5:47 pm. Paula seconded. Unanimously approved