

**Buckland Finance Committee
Meeting Minutes
Feb 8, 2021 - virtual meeting 6 p.m.**

This meeting was conducted in accordance with the state of Mass. recommendations for virtual meetings during the time of Covid-19 pandemic.

Finance Committee Members: Paula Consolo, Larry Langford, Raymond Lanza-Weil, Ciara Hayden, Tim Gaulin, Karen Blom (arrived at 6:49)

Others present: Town Administrator Heather Burke, Jen Ameen of solid waste district, selectboard member Barry Del Castilho, citizen Marylin Kelsey

Raymond moved Jan. 25 minutes. Ciara seconded. Raymond, Larry, Ciara, yes; Paula and Tim abstained. Approved.

Solid Waste District

Level funding solid waste except for mowing at the landfill. Recycling is looking better. First year that towns must pay a fee for recycling. Previous years we got paid for recycling. But value of the recycling material has been going up, so our cost is going down (from \$70 in July to \$47 in January). Also, Buckland gets a grant so we can safely budget at \$50 per ton for FY22 rather than the 2021 rate of \$93.50 per ton.

Trash hauling went out to bid this year with expectation that cost would go up but it didn't go up that much and we don't have a lot of hauls. Also, the town gets scrap metal revenue which offsets this, although that revenue is not included in this section of the budget but under "Local receipts."

Heather asked Jan if we can use RDP funds for fencing at the dump? Jan says yes.

Jan has no warning for the near future. Hauling is a 3-year contract, and there's a 5-year contract for disposal for trash. Only unknown is the recycling market. Paula asked what was Solid Waste salary increase was; Jan reported that it was 2 percent.

Inspection Service is going from \$250 when solid waste district did this but may go up to \$1,500. Jan leaves 6:38

Town Clerk Office

Heather reports that Elizabeth Cerrone has resigned as Town Clerk. This will become an appointment for the selectboard, either for the remainder of the year or for the remainder of the term, which would be 2½ years. Larry reported that there is some discussion of making this permanently an appointed position, as some other towns have. Paula pointed out that former town clerk Janice Purington was adamantly opposed to making this an appointed position; Janice believed that as an elected position it provides a good check and balance on town government.

Heather has included \$1,500 for preservation of records to budget. This was funded every year before last year, when we took it out to help cut the budget. Way to preserve records from way past years.

(Karen arrives 6:49 pm)

Heather explains that in our budget sheet the town clerk salary is showing a COLA increase even though we did not include the COLA for the new clerk last year. This is automatic in our spreadsheet design. Needs more discussion.

Police Department

Chief Jim Hicks arrives 6:57 pm

Explained situation with new radios. Jim said he added \$1,000 in his budget because he may need to purchase a new antenna. IT services will go up because Jim needs help in this area. Jim reported that the state is discussing requiring all part-time officers to be trained as full-time officers, which will cost us about \$10,000 for training. He suggested that we could possibly move to 3rd full-time officer, which won't save us money but might be just a small additional cost and could save us the hassle of training people who then leave for a full-time position somewhere else. Timing: commission for this initiative would be instituted July 1 but don't know when standards would be in place. Asked Jim to do an analysis of 3rd full-time vs. numerous part-time officers. Heather reported that a new HVAC system was installed in the police building. She said that the basement in that building needs some work.

Police chief leaves at 7:10

Highway discussion

Steve is still out on medical leave. Heather says Steve does a good job of managing his accounts; he never goes over. She and he would like to reinstate the fourth highway position. The new staff is very good, and Heather would like to build on the enthusiasm they have now. Paula, as highway liaison, supports having a fourth full-time person to create a more stable crew. Gives you some security if someone leaves.

Contractor cost us \$43,000 when we needed them to do the hot patch because highway workers quit. They did a great job.

Winter roads must be level-funded per state rules so that is reflected in the budget. We had underfunded propage and electricity for building, so Heather has added to those line items to meet need.

Town employee had the big truck in the wash bay, and he hadn't lowered the dump body as he thought (the alarm did not work), so he backed up into the building. Will be covered by insurance. Heather has put in place a safety check on all highway vehicles to help prevent this type of accident.

Paula pointed out that we'd like to move the salt and sand shed from the condemned building to the new site. Now is a good time to borrow necessary funds for this as interest rates are low. Heather says we need to modify the old building on the new site in order to bring the salt shed over. Raymond points out that we intended to stop using the condemned building when we built the new garage. Neighbor would like to purchase the old building on Conway Street. Discussion to be continued.

Public comments

Marilyn Kelsey asked about what is happening at the highway garage on the weekends, as she sees steam coming from the building. Do they turn the heat down? Heather will look into this. If there is not a timed thermostat, all agree that there should be.

Schools

All-town meeting with the **Mohawk District** is Thursday, Feb. 11 at 7 pm. Paula reports that the Mohawk budget subcommittee and the consultant are doing a good job. They are in a tough spot. She thinks there will be questions around the CARES funds. Barry says that he doesn't think they will have a budget by March 1 so he is thinking we may need to postpone Town Meeting until early June.

Need a meeting with the **Franklin Tech** school. Tim has reached out. Paula said that Jackie Walsh from Shelburne is trying to set up an all-towns meeting with Franklin Tech, but a date has not been set yet.

Raymond moved to adjourn. Karen seconded. Ciara, Paula, Tim, Karen, Raymond, Larry all said yes.

Adjourned 7:48 pm

Respectfully submitted by Paula Consolo