



Warner Board of Selectmen

Meeting Minutes Thursday, November 9, 2017 APPROVED

Chairman Dabuliewicz opened the meeting at 9:00 am

Attendance: Selectman John Dabuliewicz – Chairman, Selectman Kimberley Edelmann, Selectman Clyde Carson and Town Administrator – Jim Bingham

Others present: Judy Newman-Rogers

1. Compensation Discussion

- A. With no proposed changes, the salaries, including retirement, total \$1,069,557.00.
- B. The Board wants to see the impact of a higher employee contribution towards health insurance. Jim recommends the Board first determine what they want to do for wage increases before looking at the comparisons.
- C. The first question is, will the Board approve a cost of living increase for 2018.
- D. John said in the short term the Board will not come up with a new wage scale with steps/and or merit pay. Kimberley said this will be our goal for next year.
- E. Kimberley asked about the positions that are below the 25th percentile, has the Board asked the supervisor's of those employee's what their thoughts are in terms of adjusting them. Jim said Tim Allen, who is one that is below the 25th percentile, gave Jim his thoughts about being adjusted. Tim said to Jim that sure, he would like to get a little more money but what was important to him is the benefits package.
- F. Clyde said the Board has yet to meet with Gary Thornton Associates (created the wage analysis) to have a conversation as a Board to find out how the survey was put together, a meeting was part of the total package the Board purchased. Clyde said we haven't accepted the survey numbers at this point. Kimberley said accept them how. Clyde said as numbers we think are valid compared to the positions Gary Thornton surveyed. Clyde's concern is without accepting the study, and then implementing part of it, we de facto accepted the study. He said if we do accept the study, why wait another year. John said because it's complicated and there is other things the Board needs to address as well. Clyde said he doesn't have a problem looking at it over the next year, what he does have a problem with is implementing part of it without looking at the study in total. Clyde said the study is really saying we have to do this!
- G. Jim said what we are looking at is what do we do about the employees that are significantly out of line with the market. John doesn't necessarily agree the Board didn't accept the study, we said we have the study but we haven't done anything with it yet. John is not sure what Clyde is driving at. Clyde said so we just say thank you and say this is what we are going to implement? John said the question is, what do we want to do, one of the reasons we did this study was to be competitive. Clyde is not sure he is in favor of implementing part of the study for this year, he thinks it will be more valid next year, if the Board looks at the whole study and says these are the changes that make sense in the context of the whole study. John asked Clyde what do you want to do instead, we have discovered there are employees who are not compensated competitively from the results of the survey. Judy said if you say that, the positions that have been here longer are out of whack. Kimberley said we are talking about comparison to other towns, we don't know if are comparing ourselves to employees who just started working or if they were working for 50 years, we can't use years in service as part of the comparison, that's data we don't have, but we do know what the towns are paying.

- H. Clyde asked how do you factor benefits into this. Jim said the town is comparable to the other towns for full time and better than the towns in benefits for accrued time for part timers. Jim's interest is addressing the four full time positions that are below the 25th percentile, he said the classic example is the Bookkeeper, in the study, Warner is the lowest wage. Judy said she understands, but, when you look at the responsibilities of a position, how many were comparable, equal or below, she would rather concentrate on the Deputy Town Clerk and see where she falls. Other employee's received wage adjustments and the Deputy is still at the 25th percentile after 7 years. Judy said for the Deputy Town Clerk to be not included in this calculation is not fair, address everybody or address no one. Jim disagrees, there were efforts to bring the Deputy Town Clerk up to par. The Deputy Town Clerk is well above the 25th percentile as well as the Selectman's Secretary and the Assessing Clerk. John brought the discussion back to the Board and shut off any further public comments.
- I. Clyde is not in favor of implementing part of the survey until the Board implements the entire study. John again, asked Clyde what does accepting the results or not accepting the results mean. Clyde said he wants to understand where does Warner fit, what's our strategy in terms of positioning ourselves amongst these other towns. John said Gary did recommend the Board deal with the compensation philosophy first which hasn't taken place.
- J. Kimberley asked what was the purpose of asking for a wage study. John said to see how Warner compared to other towns. Clyde said we knew Warner was out of whack and we were uncomfortable doing it ourselves. Kimberley then asked Clyde what was the expectations once the study was received. Clyde said from his perspective, we look at the study and understand the study and then say it's something that will work for the town. Kimberley asked Clyde how long will that take to do. Clyde said in his mind, there is not enough time in this budget cycle.
- K. Jim is recommending the Board meet with Gary to obtain a better understanding on the comparable's. Next, Jim said the job descriptions are being revised and corrected for the Board to review and approve. Step two is the wage scale, the Board needs to critique and discuss what is workable and adoptable. The Board wants to schedule a presentation with Gary. Clyde said the question is, does the Board have the time during this budget cycle. Kimberley said we need to make the time. The Board paid money for this study, and you want it to be timely, you don't want to wait a year. The Board needs to determine their philosophy as well, merit system or everyone gets the same wage increase. Jim said it is obvious the study is going to take additional work, the question to the Board is, what does the Board want to do for employee compensation in 2018. Jim needs to know this to put an operating budget together for 2018. At this time the operating budget for 2018 is \$87K more than last year and this figure doesn't include wage increases. Clyde said part of the increase is due to health care costs in the amount of \$25K during a year when the premium decreased, he asked if that could be looked at to be reduced. Jim explained why that is, 2 family plans were added to the budget because one, it is expected that there will be a health plan change, he will know more after open enrollment, and secondly for a full time position in the Public Works Department. Jim doesn't feel the Board needs to adjust the budget down because there is an increase.
- L. John said he is in favor of the cost of living increase across the board and adjusting the employees that fall beneath the 25th percentile or at least part of it. Clyde said as imperfect as it is, a cost of living adjustment is consistent with what the Board has done over the last couple of years and he would be in favor of that. Kimberley is in favor of making the adjustments to the full time employees that are not at the 25th percentile. John recommends providing half of the recommended wage adjust from the study to the 4 full time employees that are indicated to be below the 25th percentile. Kimberley said from a merit point of view does that make sense, would the supervisor's of those four agree to the recommended adjustments. Jim who is the supervisor of Tim, and is also familiar with Mel Furbush and the Bookkeeper agrees with the studies recommendations. John asked who do you ask about the Tax Collector. Kimberley feels it's Jim because the town elected to have the elected positions treated like employees when it comes to wages and benefits. Clyde feels the Tax Collector's supervisor is the Board, even so, everyone agreed the Tax Collector does a fantastic job.
- M. John proposes the Board gives the 4 positions half of what would bring them to the 25th percentile to show the Board is making an effort. Clyde wants to figure out what the across the board is first and see what is left. Jim said 1% cost of living would cost \$12,599.

Board Action

Chairman Dabuliewicz made a motion to provide the 4 positions, Director of Public Works, Building Maintenance Supervisor, Bookkeeper and Tax Collector that are not at the 25th percentile, half of what would bring them to the 25th percentile. Selectman Edelmann seconded the motion. Clyde is not in favor of this, he thinks the Board should just do a cost of living increase across the board until the Board has a chance to review the study. John called for a vote John – yes, Kimberley – yes, Clyde – no, motion passes 2-1.

- N. Jim will arrange a meeting with Gary after Thanksgiving.
- O. Clyde wants to see the budget impact for a 1%, 2% cost of living adjustment and also the impact if the Board increases the employee contribution towards health insurance by 9% or 10%. Kimberley said what would happen if the employees don't have to pay for health insurance and you don't give them a pay raise and adjust those who do not have health care, every wage increase, increases payroll taxes. Kimberley said her suggestion doesn't impact payroll taxes. Clyde said it does because the premium is pretaxed, that means what they would pay for their premium becomes taxable and the town has a portion to pay as well. Kimberley asked if that is true and Judy said yes.
- P. Clyde said he would be open to have a discussion about giving a fixed amount to each employee. For example \$1,000 each for the 27 employees. John and Kimberley like that idea. Kimberley asked if bonuses have ever been done, she recommends a bonus until the wage study is figured out. Judy said what about addressing longevity for those who are not being compensated along this first go around, like the State does. Clyde said getting a bonus is not as beneficial as getting a salary increase. Kimberley said the reason for the bonus is we are making a promise the Board will address the wage program in 2018. Further discussion will take place on November 14.

2. Adjournment

A motion was made and seconded to adjourn at 10:58 am.

Board of Selectmen
John Dabuliewicz – Chairman
Clyde Carson
Kimberley Edelmann

Recorder of the minutes: Mary Whalen