

Town of *Dunstable* Selectboard
Executive Session Minutes
April 26, 2017
Town Hall, Dunstable, MA 01827

Convened: 3:05 pm

Present: Daniel F. Devlin, chair, Walter F. Alterisio, Leah D. Basbanes, member(s); Tracey Hutton, Town Administrator

Union Update

Ms. Hutton started off by updating the Board on the current discussion between the town and union. As things stand, the talks have related to the compensation and how to handle the requested increase. It appears that the increase will be about \$50,000 for the first year, plus other requests including education incentives. There was discussion of whether the education incentive is by stipend or by percentage. Ms. Hutton responded that three officers are grandfathered under percentage. All new officers are stipend. From there Ms. Hutton turned to what is requested regarding time off. The Union wants about 17 extra days off per year. That would cost approximately \$30,000. There was discussion of what is paid by area towns. It was noted that sergeants are lagging behind more than other officers. The sergeant(s) would get about 9 percent the first year, with the other officers seeking about 7 percent for the first year. There was discussion of the possibility of arbitration and what it would look like and whether arbitration would benefit the town or not. There was some concern about how the rest of the town's employees would take seeing such high one year increases. Especially when Advisory Board considered not doing increases for other town employees and those same employees had to accept what increases they did get over a three-year period. Ms. Hutton noted that Labor Counsel has told her that the town shouldn't fear arbitration.

There was then talk about what kind of impact simply accepting the Union's requests would bring. The Board followed up by noting that this isn't about an unwillingness to pay employees both union and nonunion what they are worth, it is about the ability of the town to pay employees competitively. Ms. Hutton noted that the union is only calculating its numbers on the average high numbers, or max pay. This means they aren't considering minimum pay figures. There was talk about the plan to increase to three Sergeants rather than replacing the Lieutenant. From there discussion then turned to how the hourly rates work for police officers. Currently there is no real scale; they all come in making the same hourly rate at a given position. So if existing officers make \$28 per hour, then a new officer would make \$28 per hour. The Board expressed an interest in seeing some kind of step system. Ms. Hutton elaborated further on the situation and how to even get there. From there discussion returned to the issue of arbitration. Ms. Hutton agreed to talk to Labor Counsel again in order to explore what the process would entail and whether the arbitrator would be fair to the town.

Ms. Hutton then asked the Board if Mr. Devlin should remain the negotiator along with her for the Board after his term ends. Mr. Devlin stated he does not wish to continue past the end of his term. The Board thanked Mr. Devlin for his service and his work on this topic. Ms. Hutton then turned the discussion back to the minimum versus maximum wages. She has provided the Union with examples of what a step system could look like for them. The Union was not entirely open to it. Nonetheless, the idea should probably still be considered. The Board noted that to give the Union what it wants, the town may very well have to cut back on the Department itself. It was explained again that the requested 7 percent and 9 percent figures are for the first year. After that it would be 3 percent for the two subsequent years. It was determined that Ms. Hutton and Mr. Devlin would go back with revised numbers, and express to the Union the Boards desire to see not just high numbers used but also minimum ones for wages. The numbers have to be reasonable and based on reality. In the past, the Police Union has been accommodated more in the past than other employees. Although some officers may not wish to be compared to other town employees, there is no reason not to do so. While officers have a special duty to serve and protect, other town employees are just as important to the function of the town. Again, the ability to pay must be considered. If necessary, the Department may have to be cut. If that is what is required to pay what is demanded. Ms. Hutton then finished by reporting that there is one more meeting before the towns next election, so Mr. Devlin will be involved with that meeting.

Approved and adopted on 10/31/17

A motion to exit Executive Session and adjourn was made by Leah D. Basbanes at 3:35 pm. The motion was seconded by Walter F. Alterisio. The motion was then adopted without objection by Daniel F. Devlin, Walter F. Alterisio and Leah D. Basbanes.

Respectfully submitted by

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Jakob K. Hamm". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a long horizontal stroke extending to the right.

Jakob K. Hamm
Admin. Assistant to the Selectboard & Town Administrator

Approved and adopted on 10/31/17