

**Town of *Dunstable* Selectboard  
Meeting Minutes  
September 11, 2018  
Town Hall, Dunstable, MA 01827**

**Convened:** 8:00 am

**Present:** Leah D. Basbanes, chair, Ronald J. Mikol, vice chair, James E. Tully, James W. Dow, Chief of Police; Brian Rich, Fire Chief; Mike Martin, Roads Commission; Pat Murphy, Personnel Board; Bob Nelson, Leo Tometich, Advisory Board; Dana Metzler, Town Moderator; John Gath, Gerald Gath, Steven Chaisson, Whole Sun Farms, LLC

**Organization of Municipal Bodies, Departments, & Reporting Structures**

Mr. Haddad started off by going over his review of operations. The town has some number of bifurcations in authority with various elected bodies overseeing various employees. Coordination is very difficult in the current system unless you have the right person in the Town Administrators office. That said Mr. Haddad stated he's had a great experience with all of those various departments. Still, his recommendation is the appointment of a town governance committee with representation from all of these various bodies so that they can sit down, go through the structure of government and make determinations on possible reforms. This could take the form of adopting a Town Charter, or simply tweaks to various by-laws. Mr. Haddad then spoke about efforts made to improve cooperation between all parties to improve teambuilding. The Board agreed that the goal of a Town Administrator was to improve communication and develop coordination. So it makes sense to try to facilitate teambuilding and clearer channels of communication. Mr. Haddad then suggested that the organization really should be looked at from an aerial viewpoint. The Board again agreed noting that the town had never had a Town Administrator until very recently and all of this has been a learning process. Obviously there has to be a good manager with good management skills in the Town Administrators office. Mr. Haddad agreed stating that one of the biggest skills is knowledge and being willing to set aside ego and admit if we don't know the answer. It is more important to work together and make sure things are done right. The Board again concurred and was willing to allow Mr. Haddad to explore his recommendation for a governance committee further. This would include a suggestion as to who should be appointed to it and to develop a charge for it. The town has a lot of valuable qualified department heads both on a full time and part time basis and the town really should utilize its talent more.

**Employee Job Descriptions, Personnel Board, & Highway Dept. Wages**

Mr. Haddad started by noting this topic mostly has to do with the Highway Department. He stated that there are two positions, in particular, in the department that need to be reclassified, one in title and the other in grade. The department would also like to add some fringe benefits. The Highway Department's budget should be able to sustain the costs, but there are still some outstanding questions with DOR and the Accountant's office. Mr. Haddad advised the Board to support the reclassification requests. The Board had some questions about the differences between grades and how that works. Mr. Haddad noted that the answer to most of those questions would be through policies. This included some discussion of how to handle different employees in different grades covering for others employees who may be sick or otherwise out. Mr. Martin explained what the department is seeking to do. The paygrades are good and fine, but in the department's situation, how they draw the lines can be challenging. The Board clarified that both employees are doing the same thing and working the same grade. Mr. Murphy noted that this is the first this has been brought up and never to the Personnel Board. He then went over what had been presented to the Personnel Board and spoke about some of the things that have to be considered from a benefits standpoint. He noted that the current distinction grew out of a request from the Highway Department for the position of equipment operator in FY18, and it still makes sense to have at least one person in the department be a laborer. Mr. Haddad elaborated on how to work the classifications to consider all of the concerns expressed suggesting that both employees could be the same grade if they are basically doing the same job. So it may be better to make them both equipment operators. There was then some discussion of the Board's motion made at the meeting on September 4<sup>th</sup>, 2018.

Mr. Haddad noted that there has to be some coordination between the numbers presented by Roads and Personnel Board. This prompted some discussion of the various grades and their pay ranges. Mr. Murphy

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provided all of the relevant figures. Mr. Haddad felt that the recommendations make sense when reconciled with Personnel Board. Mr. Tometich interjected that the Advisory Board hasn't had a chance to look at this. The Board noted that if this can be covered within the department's budget for wages, then Advisory doesn't need to be involved at this stage and will have the ability to review more as part of the FY20 budget. Mr. Nelson expressed some concerns about both employees getting raises with one not so insubstantial. This could prompt some issues in the budget regarding taxes. Mr. Haddad suggested he would speak with the Accountant but stated that some of the wages could be taken from Snow & Ice. Mr. Haddad then elaborated on how using Snow & Ice could work legally. It would have to be constructed as an incentive for not using other benefits like vacation during winter. Mr. Murphy noted that a lot of what has been discussed with the Board was not discussed with the Personnel Board, in particular the fringe benefits. Personnel Board attempts to do its homework and bring final results to the Board. This saves the Board the feedback loop and makes the decision process run smoother.

Mr. Murphy then noted that the job descriptions for both of these positions will need to be cleaned up. He promised to work with the Roads Commission to ensure that is done. Discussion then shifted to the Police Administrative Assistant. Mr. Murphy noted that this employee works 32 hours a week. Chief Dow then went over the employee's compensation noting the raise would be effectively a \$1.77 an hour. He has been working on this question since June and felt comfortable with its budget. Mr. Murphy noted that the Chief made a compelling argument as to change of duties that substantiates this. The Board felt that as long as it is within the budget it should be fine. Mr. Tometich suggested that while this may work in the short term, there could be long term ramifications. Chief Dow responded that labor retention is a serious issue for his department right now. So it is important to keep employees in their positions. This particular employee does a lot and is highly skilled. This change makes sense and would be role that would be very difficult to fill if it became vacant. This prompted some discussion of the Chief's attempt to get more officers and the places he's posted looking to hire. There have been some difficulties. Mr. Metzler then had some questions about the costs noting that the town votes salaries at the Annual Town Meeting. The Board responded by elaborating further on the ways of addressing these issues both within this budget and moving forward. Mr. Haddad agreed going over the numbers he's run with both departments. The Board then made a series of motions.

A motion was made by Mr. Mikol to support the recommendations of the Personnel Board and the Roads Commission as to the job descriptions, wage scale placement, and grade of Highway Department employees. The motion was seconded by Mr. Tully and passed without objection.

A motion was made by Mr. Mikol to authorize special snow & ice pay for highway employees to be paid from Snow & Ice from November through April at \$150 a week. The motion was seconded by Mr. Tully and passed without objection.

A motion was made by Mr. Tully to support the recommendations of the Personnel Board and Police Chief as to change in job description and wage scale placement of the Police Administrative Assistant. The motion was seconded by Mr. Mikol and passed without objection.

### **Budget & School Committee Requests**

Mr. Nelson briefly went over his discussions with the School Committee Chair. Groton usually has its numbers earlier than Dunstable and that provides a challenge since the committee has to then wait for Dunstable. The Board noted that the School Committee has long been frustrated by the differences in process and requested further discussion. Something the town has worked very hard in the past to address. Still, part of this is a request by the committee for a 5-year projection that the town simply can't provide. We know what the new growth should be, but really more information beyond that is too challenging. Mr. Haddad asked what the 5-year average for Free Cash is. Mr. Nelson noted it is usually about \$500,000. Last year was over \$800,000, but that was an outlier. This year it is closer to the average at \$490,000.

### **Town Administrators Job Description, Hours, & Scope of Office**

Mr. Haddad started off by outlining his recommendations. Based on his review, the town doesn't need to budget for a full time Town Administrator. This town needs a seasoned person who is either retired or doesn't want to work full time. 20 hours a week should be enough. This would be a savings in the budget since this

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position could be paid between \$55,000 and \$65,000 for the position. At the medium of \$60,000 that would be close to \$58 per hour. He then went over his analysis of the position and how it prompted his recommendations for the Administrative Assistants position. Mr. Haddad then asked the Board if it would like to keep him through the end of the year to get through the towns budget season, or whether the town should go out to hire for a Town Administrator at this stage. The Board determined it would like to pursue both. To begin the search process, but still have Mr. Haddad determine if he can stay longer than September 30<sup>th</sup>, 2018 as the Board would like to utilize Mr. Haddad's knowledge of municipal budgets. Mr. Haddad was agreeable suggesting he could help the Advisory Board build the budget from the ground up and reformat it. Still, he noted it would likely require more hours a week from him so both towns would have to keep that in mind and it would have to be considered budgetarily. In the meantime, he agreed to draft a new job description, a job advertisement, and an outline of the job search. As for any plans regarding the budget he needs to meet with the Advisory Board and the Accountant.

### **Administrative Assistant to the Board of Selectmen & Town Administrator's Job Description, Hours, Title, & Scope of Office**

Mr. Haddad reviewed the duties of this position and felt that if this position is made an Assistant Town Administrator with additional duties, coupled with a good Town Administrator, would function very well for Dunstable. With the right Town Administrator, the current employee could be trained and elevated in his work quality. That said there would need to be a reasonable bump in wages to reflect additional duties, which could be taken from the Town Administrators wages. Because the Town Administrators wages are separate in the budget from the Administrative Assistants position, you would need a transfer from the Town Administrators wage line. Whether this would be done at town meeting or via an end of year transfer is still an open question. Mr. Haddad stated he would do research on the subject and make further recommendations to the Board. The Board was in favor of the change.

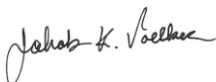
### **Host Community Agreement with Whole Sun Farm, LLC**

The only issue raised by Town Counsel is the process payment and whether the town may be reimbursed for legal fees relating to this matter. Whole Sun Farms was willing to reimburse the expenses. The legal costs, Mr. Haddad noted, are estimated to be about \$1,000. The Board was comfortable with the agreement which was drafted. It was based on the model provided by Town Counsel and then edited by Whole Sun Farms and the town via Town Counsels facilitation. Mr. Haddad then asked Whole Sun where things stand on their design and where their pricing will be. John Gath stated that they are months out since they still needing to get their license from the Commonwealth. Once they are closer to opening they'll have more certain information on their pricing and other related information. Mr. Chassion spoke about the expectations with the Cannabis Control Commission. The start would be expected in 2019 with the first payment to the town by 2020. Mr. Haddad noted there would be one payment a year. This caused some questions about whether the payment should be quarterly rather than once a year. Mr. Haddad noted the draft agreement is for once a year and there are some reasons why that makes sense. The Gath's felt that the annual makes the most sense for them at this stage.. There was then some discussion of how the HCA will be reported to the Commonwealth. Mr. Chassion stated that they would communicate to the Cannabis Control Commission that the HCA is now in place. Mr. Haddad then asked if the Board would authorize the chair to sign the agreement

A motion was made by Mr. Mikol to authorize the Board's Chair to sign the HCA agreement with Whole Sun Farms, LLC. The motion was seconded by Mr. Tully and passed unanimously.

A motion to adjourn was made by Mr. Mikol at 9:05 am. The motion was seconded by Mr. Tully and passed without

Respectfully submitted by



Jakob K. Voelker, Admin. Assistant to the Selectboard & Town Administrator

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