

Members Present: Jo Lown, Chair, Bill Linnane, Brigitte Casemyr, Judy Lucas, Ian Johnson, John E. Arnold, Michael Meachen. Absent: Kevin Cronin, F. Robert Brown.

At 7:02 p.m. Ms. Lown called the meeting to order in the Selectmen's Meeting Room.

Open Forum

There were no requests to address the committee.

Discussion of minutes – Meeting No. 5, FY2010, October 1, 2009.

Ms. Lown asked the committee whether they would rather have the discussion summarized or include each member's statement, which resulted in seven pages of minutes. Ms. Lown will summarize the discussion, and send out both versions to all members for review.

AFC Meeting with Personnel Board

Ms. Lown welcomed Kathy Wilfert, Sue Abladian, and Jim Parker of the Personnel Board, and asked Ms. Wilfert to give an update on the evolution of this Board. Ms. Wilfert distributed packets of information on the history of the Personnel Board from 1954 until present day. Ms. Wilfert noted that the Personnel Bylaws of the town are not the Bylaws of the Personnel Board, and so tasks outlined in the Town Bylaws are not necessarily tasks done by the Board.

Mr. Parker has done extensive historical research on the town Personnel Bylaws. Beginning in 1954, Annual Town Meeting voted to create a five member Personnel Board to administer the town's personnel bylaws and develop a salary and administration plan. The Salary and Administration Plan was presented to the town and took effect in 1955. At that time the town budget went from January 1st to December 31st even though ATM was held in March. The function of the board was to represent both taxpayers and employees of the town, and to find an equitable system to balance the interests of town citizens and town employees. Much of this plan is still in effect, and has stood up well over the years. The Salary Plan was divided into groups, rather than grades, with Group 70 being the lowest and Group 24 being the highest. Section 25 delineated the four steps in each grade with a 5% increase between steps.

Ms. Wilfert explained that in Westborough most employees start at Step 1 in their Grade, although if justification is given a new employee can be started at a higher Step. The Personnel Board has not had a justification presented that was not reasonable. Westborough is now considered a good place to work – while positions are not overpaid, they are competitive. The MMPA State Benchmark Salary Survey puts Westborough in the middle when compared to similar towns. The Personnel Board uses for comparison towns which are comparable in services provided, population, and size, and makes adjustments for Westborough's larger daytime population among other factors.

In 1955, Steps were gained at specific time periods established by the town. Currently, Steps are increased yearly. In the past, there had been a six month probationary period, and then increases yearly thereafter. In 1958 a separate classification for salaried and hourly personnel was introduced. In 1967 the plan changed from Groups to Grades, separating positions into salaried, hourly, police, fire, and professional. In most years a wage increase has been approved at ATM.

Each year the Personnel Board is asked to calculate an adjustment based on the increases negotiated by the town's unions for the prior year. This is applied to all employees, regardless of their Step. When this began there were four Steps, then it was increased to five Steps, and now there are seven Steps. Unions have also included longevity increases in their recent contracts for employees who have been here for 20 years, 30 years, etc.

There was a major revision to the bylaws in 1965. In 1975 the bylaws were incorporated into the Town Charter. Another revision was made in 1985. As departments became unionized they included the existing Grades and Steps in the negotiated contracts. Changes are bargained for between the unions and the town. Any changes to the Bylaws must be done by Town Meeting vote, including adjustments for non-union employees (28 FT individuals at this time, plus any part-time employees, not including School Department employees.) School Department employees were the first to unionize, followed by the Police Department, DPW, Fire Department, and finally a union for department heads. Most Westborough unions were formed long after other towns' employees were unionized.

Any changes to the Administration Plan for town employees other than School Department employees must go through the Personnel Board. All Personnel Board actions are done pending ATM approval. This includes any changes to hours, numbers of employees, grade/step, number of positions, or job title. If a position exists and the employee leaves, the department can fill it. If a department wants to start a new employee above Step 1 they justify the request and get approval of the Personnel Board.

The Town's sick leave buy back policy is that any employee who retires from the town with at least 100 sick days accumulated can buy back any days above 100 at 25% of the salary, up to \$2,500 total. Educational benefits for all town employees (95% of the Personnel Board budget) are managed by the Personnel Board, which approves the student's declared major but not individual courses taken as long as they are degree related, and documents performance. The bulk of the educational reimbursement is from the Fire Department employees. The Police Department education benefit only includes courses taken toward an Associate Degree. Another budget item includes payment to a town employee who became disabled in 1955. This cost to the town is \$4,000 each year, and is to increase the disability annual payment to \$12,000.

The 5% increase between Steps is consistent with what other towns give, according to the Benchmark Survey. Unions also include an approximately 5% increase between Steps. This 5% increase has been in effect since before 1954. Mr. Johnson noted that the increased number of Steps has raised the ceiling. Ms. Wilfert noted that in town there is not much movement between Grades, so the Steps are the only increase for most employees. Movement between grades does happen in the Police, Fire, and DPW Departments. Currently, among town employees who are not unionized, there are only a few employees who are not at maximum Step. The Personnel Board does job re-grades every four to five years. They look at each position by description, requirements, and responsibilities, and may make an adjustment to one or two positions at most. Employees provide job descriptions to their department heads, who will sign it and forward it to the Personnel Board. Ms. Wilfert reported that the Personnel Board will no longer be reviewing performance evaluations for town employees. The Board will file the evaluation forms without review. The Personnel Board does not have any oversight of performance evaluations.

Mr. Titus and Mr. Malloy are currently meeting to discuss the Personnel Board Bylaws to determine if any changes are needed. The Government Study II Committee also made some recommendations which are being discussed. Any changes to the Board Bylaws will have to be

approved by the Annual Town Meeting, and by the State. Ms. Wilfert is anticipating several Personnel Board Articles on the Warrant for ATM 2010, to cover all contingencies.

It is the Personnel Board's duty to make the recommendation on adjustments to salary. They have historically not denied the increase unless the town financial team specifically requests this. They do not anticipate any large change in the budget for FY11, unless the Board of Selectmen and Town Manager request a change. There is currently a hiring freeze, so there will not be any new-hire physical/emotional assessments required unless someone retires.

FY11 Budget and Planning

On 10/19 there was a Department Head meeting with Jim Malloy and Marianne Bilodeau, and each department reported on major issues in their department. Ms. Bilodeau presented some information on the GIC committee. Mr. Malloy gave information on state aid cuts. Mr. Malloy would like to meet with AFC, and Ms. Lown would like to schedule an extra meeting if possible for this presentation. Mr. Malloy will be making major changes to both the budget process and information disseminated. Ms. Lown asked committee members to go through the last Budget Book and list any items they would like to continue receiving. Ms. Lown would like to continue to get the budget report broken down by line item.

Mr. Malloy also presented information on the new State Ethics Law, which may have significant financial impact on the town, mostly for training costs. The town has a four hour minimum call requirement for some union contracts, so for employees to come in to do one hour of training will cost four hours of salary. Mr. Malloy has filed an appeal for relief from this cost.

Capital Planning Expenditures Committee will be meeting within the next month. Mr. Malloy is planning to add a system of grading/evaluating projects and a five-year plan of expenditures to the Capital Planning Expenditures report. Ms. Lown proposed that the town consider establishing a Capital Expenditures Stabilization Fund as part of a long-term capital expenditure plan, which could be used to offset or avoid the need for debt exclusions or to cover short-term borrowing.

Mr. Meachen put together the minutes from last year's meetings summarizing ideas the AFC had come up with for cost-savings, including moving the town to a bi-weekly payroll.

Ms. Lown reported that the Governor's office has made more 9C cuts, but there is no specific information on how the cuts will affect Westborough yet.

Government Study Committee II Report

Ms. Lown noted that the changes outlined by the Government Study Committee II will have a large impact on how the town administers Human Resources. These changes will include moving an aspect of the HR function out of the legislative branch (Personnel Board) and into the executive branch (HR Director) of town government. GSCII did not make specific recommendations on the HR role in town, other than to make sure that all legally required functions were being done, and that all these tasks were not assigned to one person who would be overburdened by this function. Ms. Lown reported on several options followed by other towns for accomplishing these tasks. Mr. Malloy may be able to give more focus to this discussion. Mr. Arnold requested any specific questions for the GSCII be sent to him in advance so that the GSCII can prepare answers. Mr. Arnold also noted that the committee has not met since May, but has not been disbanded.

Special Town Meeting Recap

Ms. Lown noted 650 town members attended. Joe Harrington, Town Moderator, thanked Ms. Bilodeau and Ms. Emery for helping fulfill the Town Manager duties in Mr. Malloy's absence. Mr. Harrington also thanked town members for attending, and noted that there were still 260 people in attendance at 11:20 p.m. Mr. Harrington requested that the AFC print additional copies of the Report and Recommendations Booklet for the next meeting. Mr. Harrington noted that he has a questionnaire asking for feedback at the main registration tables. He has gotten some feedback on the method of counting votes, and will more strongly emphasize the process for taking a count at ATM. Mr. Harrington also received a written comment on the order of the Articles, which the Board of Selectmen will answer. Mr. Harrington also was pleased to see the results of town meeting posted on the town web site. Ms. Casemyr also noted they were sent out to town members who are registered with the Public Notices system. Ms. Lown suggested the AFC give a verbal explanation on what is included in the Booklet to town meeting members. Mr. Harrington will add a time for the AFC to present the Booklet.

Mr. Harrington and Ms. Lown noted the articles included in the local Westborough News as helping to inform residents. Mr. Linnane will be meeting with Mr. Walden to go over the DPW presentations on Articles. He feels more could be done to inform and educate town members prior to Town Meeting on the different aspects of the projects. Ms. Casemyr was very pleased to see the number of townspeople in attendance, and also to hear the debate that occurred on town meeting floor. She noted the discussion was civil, and many good comments were made.

Liaison Updates

Mr. Linnane reported that the DPW held an equipment auction and raised over \$30,000. Mr. Linnane has requested some Water Treatment Plant information from Jack Goodall so he can better understand the process.

Ms. Lown noted that Ms. Bilodeau has been holding meetings with town employees to explain the GIC option.

Mr. Johnson noted that the AFC needs to get better about reviewing the DPW Articles prior to ATM, and asking for more detail on engineering plans and actual costs. Ms. Lown suggested asking Carl Balduf to explain any projects that require engineering explanations.

Mr. Meachen will meet with John Badenhause on 11/10.

Comments and Concerns of Committee Members

Mr. Johnson would like to discuss the Steps / Lanes system with Mr. Malloy, and look for options for changing it. Just because something is done every year does not mean it is still the best way to do it.

Adjournment

Ms. Lucas moved to adjourn the meeting at 9:42 p.m.