

Selectmen's Meeting Minutes

Monday, January 13, 2020 at Town Hall

Present: Chairman Mike Darcy, Selectman Steve Diorio, Selectman Bernie Rideout, Selectman Mike Carrier, Selectman Megan Kondrat; T.A. Collins and Kim Worden.

6:00 p.m. Chairman Darcy called the meeting to order.

Selectman Diorio made a **motion** to approve the manifests of January 13, 2020 and the public and non-public minutes of January 6, 2020, second by Carrier. The vote is as follows: Darcy-I; Diorio-I; Rideout-I; Carrier-I; and Kondrat-I; Motion passes unanimously.

New Business:

There were four abatements on the agenda: Abatement for Jeffrey Freyenhagen, 685 Plain Rd., for 2019 in the amount of \$769.98; Abatement for Darby Patterson, Map 12 Lot 19, for 2019 in the amount of \$364.55; Abatement for Christopher Beckwith and Sara Glidden, 323 Old Chesterfield Road, for 2019 in the amount of \$1778.43; and Abatement for Craig Finnell, 25 Brattleboro Road, for 2019 in the amount of \$310.04. These were all abated in Vision but not in BMSI tax system. These were discussed and the abatement request was due to the same reason on all. Selectman Diorio made a **motion to approve** the slate of four abatements for a total of \$3223.00, second by Rideout. Motion passes unanimously.

Next presented was a Town Hall Rental Request by Hinsdale High School for Winter Semi-Formal for Saturday, February 8, 2020 from 6 p.m. to 10 p.m. Selectman Rideout made a **motion** to have the Chair sign and approve the Town Hall Rental Request, second by Kondrat. Motion passes unanimously.

T.A. Reports/Requests:

T.A. Collins is working on the warrant, a public hearing handout, and the Town Report. Abutters re: the Auction at Town Hall on 1/25 have been notified by the auctioneers.

Board Comments:

Selectman Diorio will be attending a Budget Meeting tomorrow and a School Board Meeting on Wednesday.

Selectman Carrier had a Conservation Committee Meeting. Gordon Schofield and Sarah Bomba have not been reappointed. It was directed that they will need to appoint them in a meeting by vote and let Kim know to prepare appointment papers for Selectmen.

Selectman Carrier brought up the existence of a political sign near School Street. Discussion followed on whether or not it was in the state right-of-way. If in state right-of-way, nothing should be done. If on town property it could be taken down.

T.A. Collins brought up the topic of revisiting vacation for four or five employees that have been employed for 20 years and longer. There was previous discussion in possibly adding an extra week vacation for those employees. T.A. Collins indicated that currently vacation time earned for 1-5 years is 2 weeks; for 6-10 years is 3 weeks; and 11 plus years is 4 weeks. Discussion followed.

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Selectman Diorio made a **motion** to rewrite the Personnel Policy to reflect that a 20+ year employee would be given an extra week of vacation and a 30+ year employee would be given an extra week, second by Carrier. Motion passes unanimously.

Frank Podlenski, Highway Superintendent was present for discussion and his concerns re: Minutes of 12/23/19. Chair Darcy read that portion of the minutes referring to what he said:

"He noted they cannot comment or speak on the highway department as an investigation is going on."

Chair Darcy acknowledged that but didn't feel it was made in the way it was interpreted. Frank Podlenski noted that he didn't take other comments he had seen seriously until he read this in the minutes and was concerned. It sounds like his department is under investigation and he doesn't want it interpreted wrong. Chair Darcy noted that this resulted as they were informed that Mr. Mulligan was initiating an investigation. Chair Darcy also said we are *not* investigating the Highway Department. Discussion followed.

In regards to the minutes of December 23, 2019, the Selectmen want to clarify that the Board of Selectmen are not investigating the Highway Department and are not insinuating any wrong doing on the part of the Highway Department.

James MacDonell, Tax Collector stated that he would rather this discussion be in non-public. If discussion was on an elected official, he agreed it should be public. If deputies were discussed, he felt non-public. T.A. Collins noted that the Town Clerk does not want discussion in non-public. Discussion started with Julie Seymour, Town Clerk.

The Selectmen had discussion with Julie Seymour, Town Clerk. Julie indicated that she was trying to explain and give information to show that, with the Compensation Policy and hours that she must be open to the public, it puts her well over full-time. She explained that if she works over 35 hours, she gets paid 35 hours; if she works under, vacation time is deducted to get to 35 hours until vacation is used up. She is asking for that to be changed and needs for that to be changed. In order to have her window open the minimum hours, she works at least 35 hours and more than that with elections. She explained that she gets 8 days' vacation and if she is out, it comes out of her vacation. Her benefits are in danger if she is not making 35 hours on a particular week. She said in 2016 it was 81 hours, in 2017 it was 57 hours, and in 2018 it was 119 hours. She gave Selectmen information earlier showing multiple interruptions. T.A. Collins noted that the Compensation Policy is based on the (allowable) way to get benefits. Chair Darcy asked questions and for clarification on whether it should be treated as an average and whether the Town Clerk has an option as to how hours are applied. He understands how salary works but felt there seems to be a disconnect in the way it's applied. It seems we are penalizing for using less than 35 hours but not compensating for hours over 35. T.A. Collins explained why this was created in the past, noting no reflection on Julie, that Julie is doing a great job. T.A. Collins is going by what's written by the town attorney. T.A. Collins explained that the policy came into play when a prior person was here. T.A. Collins noted that the Town Clerk is an elected official and the Town has to protect its investment in another Town Clerk (in the event she doesn't run) in order to protect the Town. Julie felt that could be changed by going back to the Town and putting the position back to a one-year term. Julie felt that it's terrible that happened (in the past) but for someone who works hard, that is wrong and she doesn't believe the townspeople know how this compensation policy works. Discussion followed with Selectmen re: fairness and possible solutions. It was agreed that further discussion is needed. Chair Darcy noted that both sides need to find a way to come together and create a solution. Julie was thanked for coming in.

James MacDonell, Tax Collector, offered to wait on his discussion until after PD conversation.

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Select Board was joined by Lt. Melissa Evans and Interim Chief Andy Lavoie and introductions were made. Interim Chief Lavoie indicated he works for MRI and on August 1st, he retired as Chief of Nashua PD. Lt. Evans spoke with the Board about starting pay being offered for new hires. Currently, starting pay is \$22 and hour to obtain a certified officer. She proposes increasing that to between \$24 and \$25 per hour. An uncertified officer is almost \$20 per hour. The proposal was to increase that up to \$22 per hour, still lower than state average. It was noted that there are also sign-on bonuses.: \$7,000 if certified and \$10,000 if certified in NH. Discussion followed. Interim Chief Lavoie stressed the need for officers and that the current three deserve massive kudos. If officers are certified and ready to go, this cuts months off. The current lack of manpower is not sustainable. Selectman Carrier agreed that non-certified officers are not ready for the road for at least a year. Hours for training, time at academy and equipment costs are around \$90,000 for a new officer, non-certified. Selectman Kondrat would like to think about this longer and is not ready to make a decision.

Selectman Diorio made a **motion** to accept Lt. Evans' recommendation of starting pay for non-certified officer at \$22.00 per hour and starting pay at \$24 to \$25 per hour for certified officer, second by Carrier.

Discussion continued with Selectman Rideout's concerns of not wanting to increase the budget, Selectman Carrier's concerns of the need to act now, and Interim Chief Lavoie's concerns of the need to look at the budget. He is not prepared to answer those questions yet as he just started. He noted that OT has been completely expended with six months to go. Allocation of funds for a certain number of officers (keeping the same amount of money with reduction of total officers) was also discussed.

A vote was taken on the motion (to accept Lt. Evans' recommendation of starting pay for non-certified officer at \$22.00 per hour and starting pay at \$24 to \$25 per hour for certified officer). The vote is as follows: Darcy-I; Diorio-I; Rideout-I; Carrier-I; and Kondrat-No; Motion passes.

Lt. Evans proposed having a paid intern to do marketing and fix the current website. The idea is for \$10 per hour for around ten hours per week. Discussion and questions followed. Selectman Kondrat asked if this has been looked into for internship as a credit. She would be more in favor if area schools/colleges offered a credit to the student vs. a paid internship. After further discussion, Chair Darcy asked for a rough idea of timeframe, hours, and options to be done for next week.

Interim Chief Lavoie asked what the Board is looking for in terms of budget, indicating he needs direction. Chair Darcy would like areas identified that could be trimmed, to see more efficiency. Selectman Diorio felt Lt. Evans' input to the Interim Chief was important. Selectman Carrier added: getting other officers' input as well.

James MacDonell, Tax Collector, was present for discussion. He indicated his biggest problem is currently he juggles his town job with his job fixing printers. Last year he tried the thought of combining positions and it didn't take off. He asked where the Town needs to go with his position and indicated that if it stays the same, it doesn't work for him. If he stays, he needs to talk of salary and benefits. He gave the Board a handout of salaries in New Hampshire. \$22,823 is his annual salary, He is underpaid compared to his colleagues. He loves his job, but only as long as he can keep doing it as he is now; there is only so much longer that this will be a viable option. Eventually he will not be able to get a deputy for 8 hours per week and he can only do what he can due to having this particular deputy. Selectman Diorio asked about his hours. James responded that currently they are a blended number and the set number of hours is 1275 per year at grade 7, minimum. He has been here six years and is stuck at minimum. James indicated that the salary survey is from what the association put out last summer and 2/3 of colleagues didn't respond. He assumes most are full time. He noted the only true analogue, with our size and quarterly collection, is New London. The Board wanted opportunity to process this and agreed to further discuss this at a workshop with the Tax Collector and Town Clerk on January 20th at 6.

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Citizens Comments:

Sean Leary talked about the Sports Sign-up Sheet. The new form needs to be loaded on the website. He will send it to Rick Carrier and copy Jill.

Lisa Prince noted that the PD website puts arrests in town on there. She asked if other departments did that. The response was that they do. She also asked whether the discussions re: compensation are full-time or part-time and are the hours justified to be increased.

8:03 p.m. Selectman Diorio made a **motion** to enter into non-public under RSA 91-A:3, II (a) personnel with Karen Johnson, second by Kondrat. The vote is as follows: Darcy-I; Diorio-I; Rideout-I; Carrier-I; and Kondrat-I; Motion passes unanimously.

8:09 p.m. Regular meeting reconvened.

Selectman Diorio made a **motion** to seal the minutes, second by Rideout. The vote was as follows: Darcy-I; Diorio-I; Rideout-I; Carrier-I; and Kondrat-I; Motion passes unanimously.

8:10 p.m. Selectman Diorio made a **motion** to enter into non-public under RSA 91-A:3, II (a) personnel with Lt. Evans and Interim Chief Lavoie, second by Rideout. The vote is as follows: Darcy-I; Diorio-I; Rideout-I; Carrier-I; and Kondrat-I; Motion passes unanimously.

8:22 p.m. Regular meeting reconvened.

Selectman Kondrat made a **motion** to seal the minutes, second by Rideout. The vote was as follows: Darcy-I; Diorio-No; Rideout-I; Carrier-I; and Kondrat-I; Motion passes.

8:24 p.m. Selectman Rideout made a **motion** to enter into non-public under RSA 91-A:3, II (a) personnel, second by Diorio. The vote is as follows: Darcy-I; Diorio-I; Rideout-I; Carrier-I; and Kondrat-I; Motion passes unanimously.

8:34 p.m. Regular meeting reconvened.

Selectman Rideout made a **motion** to seal the minutes, second by Kondrat. The vote was as follows: Darcy-I; Diorio-I; Rideout-I; Carrier-I; and Kondrat-I; Motion passes unanimously.

8:34 p.m. Selectman Rideout made a motion to adjourn, second by Carrier. Motion passes unanimously.

Respectfully Submitted,

Kim P. Worden
Secretary