

FINAL



**WEARE BOARD OF SELECTMEN
MEETING MINUTES
February 11, 2008**

PRESENT: TOM CLOW, CHAIRMAN; DONNA M. OSBORNE, VICE CHAIRMAN, HELEEN KURK, SELECTMAN; JOSEPH M. FIALA, SELECTMAN; WENDY F. CLARK, SELECTMAN (entered the meeting at 6:43 p.m.)

TOWN ADMINISTRATOR: Fred Ventresco

RECORDING SECRETARY: Cherry Palmisano

GUESTS: Christine Hague, Terry Wahnowsky, Jan Snyder

6:14 p.m. Chairman Clow called the meeting to order.

Chairman Clow announced the Board will be reviewing the Town Mailer. Chairman Clow said all the articles that have a tax impact are noted in the Town Mailer.

Chairman Clow discussed the Bolton Field Article and said there was no way to determine the tax impact because they don't know about the bond.

Article 17 – The Board made amendments to Article 17 which now reads as follows:

The Board of Fire Wards along with the Fire Chief have assessed the needs of the department and are proposing with this article to place (2) full time fire fighters in the station (5) days a week. This will assure a timely response to emergency incidents during the week day hours. Over the last 3-5 years the timely response to incidents during the weekday hours has been extended due to the fact that most of our call personnel have full time employment out of town and are unable to respond to calls.

Along with these personnel being able to respond to incidents, they will be available to do minor repairs to equipment and facilities under the fire departments control.

Calls for statutorily required fire prevention inspections have also placed strain on the department. With the addition of these (2) personnel our inspection and preplanning requirements will be brought up to a recognized standard.

The addition of these personnel will provide timely response to your emergency incident if one should occur.
Anticipated Tax Impact = \$0.09

Article 18 – The Board made amendments to Article 18 which now reads as follows:

The Board of Fire Wards along with the Chief have looked into staffing the stations on the weekend days and holidays to assure a timely response to incidents during these times. The weekend staffing is important to provide adequate response when most of our community is at home and protect the visitors to our town.

By utilizing our existing part time personnel to staff these hours, it represents a substantial cost savings to the community and fulfills our mission to provide adequate staffing.

Staffing during the weekend and holidays is important to provide consistent response times during the daytime hours. Anticipated Tax Impact = \$0.03

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Article 21 – Selectman Kurk said she is nervous about this Article. Selectman Fiala said he thinks they need to get to a pay scale and it can be done a lot easier. Selectman Fiala said the goal is to determine salaries that employees can depend on for years. Selectman Kurk feels they need to do more work to come up with something. Selectman Kurk said in speaking with other towns they have steps and ranges and we don't have anything like that and she feels they need to. Selectman Kurk said the purpose of this exercise was to get employees who are far below a reasonable pay up to a reasonable average pay for the job they are doing.

Christine Hague said the Library went through the Benefit Review in the past and they had referred to it as wage adjustment.

Article 24 – Selectman Fiala questions if it is fact that is stabilizes the Town's tax base. *The Board made amendments to Article 24 which now reads as follows:*

Passage of this article would support acquisition of conservation easements from two land holders in the southern boundary area of Melvin Valley. Ownership would be retained by the land holders; however, the land holders would sell the development rights to their property. Easement costs are arrived at through the appraisal process. Passage of this article would assist the Conservation Commission in securing protections that would establish an approximately 500 acre open space area at the southern gateway to Melvin Valley. The total easement purchase price would be approximately \$550,000 with the balance of the funds to come from the Conservation Fund and potential other donations. Anticipated Tax Impact = \$0.22

Article 27 –*The Board made amendments to Article 27 which now reads as follows:*

This article is intended to clarify the uses for the money in this fund. Currently there is confusion and disagreement over which projects are capital items and which are maintenance. This change would allow for both uses. Further, it is necessary to have a source of funds to pay for professional services such as engineering, analysis, design and writing bid specifications. Anticipated Tax Impact = \$0.00

Article 35 – The Board discussed this is a technical correction to bring the appointments in line with present practice.

Article 37 – The Board discussed Mr. Steve Najjar made the amendments, at Deliberative Session, as a citizen not representing the Conservation Commission.

The Board discussed the Town Report and said the wages are included in the Town Report. Selectman Kurk commented that the Board needs to review the Town Report before it goes to print. The cover will be a picture of the new Town Office sign. Mr. Ventresco said when you open the book the upcoming year's warrant is first and the staff recommends putting 2007 next. The Board agreed not to change the order. The pictures were submitted in color and the pictures of Town buildings will be facing each other in the center.

MANIFESTS

Chairman Clow moved, Vice Chairman Osborne seconded, to authorize the Board of Selectmen to sign Manifest and order the Deputy Treasurer to sign checks dated February 14, 2008. Passed 3-0-2.

Accounts payable	\$145,617.98	
Gross Payrolls	\$50,690.72	(includes Credit Union, Taxes)
	\$4,417.22	(Fire Monthly)
	<u>\$525.06</u>	(Elections)
Total	\$201,250.98	

Selectman Clark asked if the pay stubs could include accumulative time for sick and vacation time.

Vice Chairman Osborne said in 2001 or 2002 she came to the Board with a rider waiver for spouses to ride in the Public Works trucks and would like all the rider waivers updated. Mr. Ventresco would like to check with Primex on this issue.

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Chairman Clow mentioned that he called Tammy Web, head of the Auditing team, and there are 2 things holding them up. The first is their own schedule and the other piece is from our end because pieces that weren't ready in November and there are discrepancies between the 2006 fund balances that don't match up with the 2005 end balances. Chairman Clow commented that the auditors could not really give them a time line completion. Mr. Ventresco said they pay them as the process goes along.

Selectman Kurk said she has been pushing Ms. Pelletier to get the audit in the Town Report. Selectman Kurk said in researching back to 1980 there has not been an audit in the Town Report. Mr. Ventresco said in contacting other towns they said they put the Auditors letter in the Town Report not the whole audit. Ms. Jan Snyder said the majority of the Town's would include the previous year's audit in the report.

Selectman Kurk reminded Mr. Ventresco to include the cheat sheet for the voters in the Town Mailer.

Chairman Clow said they will be discussing the wage scale.

Chairman Clow mentioned Selectman Kurk emailed him regarding the Chief's salary. Chairman Clow said he took Selectman Kurk's monthly figures and multiplied them out. Chairman Clow commented that the Library's salaries are up to the Library Trustees.

Christine Hague Wage said related costs also include retirement and unemployment which are not listed. \$6,651.73 plus \$984.70 for the Library bottom line.

Vice Chairman Osborne left the meeting at 7:30 p.m.

Chairman Clow commented on the piece that includes the salary for the Chief of Police. The question is where on that scale they would choose to place the present Chief at this time. Selectman Kurk said if you go by percentages 7.8% would be step 7. Selectman Kurk said they reviewed other towns and averaged them out and came up with an average of \$59,107. Selectman Kurk commented that to her a starting salary of \$60,000 was as equitable as they could come up with. Selectman Fiala said the Chief is elected not appointed and hopes that the salary would help them attract better applicants if the position would be contested. Selectman Fiala thinks the high is too high and the low is too low. Chairman Clow said they started this thinking everyone was going to end up on a step that was the same as their years of service. Chairman Clow said some positions were back stepped so no employee's salary would go down. Chairman Clow said the back figuring doesn't really calculate anymore. At step 7 the Police Chief would earn \$71,643.52 as a yearly salary. Selectman Clark said each step has a number when in reality each step should have a range low-mid-high – depending how an employee comes in to the position. Selectman Clark said with a definite number they are creating an issue. Chairman Clow said if you hire someone new, they come in with experience, then the Selectman have the ability to place them somewhere other than step 1 but should not be placed higher than step 3 as a new employee. The reason for that is to be fair to present employees.

Selectman Clark commented on not having a job description, so how they can place anyone into a position. Selectman Fiala said this is a starting point and they need to have something to show the voters. Selectman Kurk said the purpose was to get employees into an acceptable range. Selectman Fiala would be happy to place the Chief at step 7 on the scale. Chairman Clow would accept step 7 for the Police Chief as well. Selectman Kurk and Selectman Clark both feel the Library salaries and some on the Secretaries are the most out of range.

Selectman Fiala would like to move the Highway Secretary back one step and the BOS Secretary back one step and feels this still allows for healthy increases. Selectman Fiala would like to increase the Finance positions up one step. Selectman Clark said this does not mean that every employee gets a raise. Chairman Clow said this scale does not relate to the employee's year of service, but placement so that person would be adjusted to what that person should be earning and then goes forward from there. Selectman Kurk said when she sat down with Selectman Clark they discussed that the people who didn't get moved on the scale may not get a 3% increase because it would change the initial concept of moving employees to a reasonable wage. Chairman Clow said he never agreed to freeze some people in their pay, he agreed to bring employees up to reasonable scale not that

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everyone else would be frozen in place. Selectman Fiala said unless they have something that they are behind, whether perfect or not, the only way to get this for the employees is to be unified to this plan for this year. Selectman Kurk said if it was stopped there and just utilized for this year then she can agree. Selectman Fiala said if people get the idea that the Board is not with the article then they won't vote for it.

Selectman Fiala feels that most employees who have a job get a raise. Selectman Kurk wants the people to get the raise who are not within the average wage scale but has trouble accepting this as a final plan.

Selectman Fiala moved, Chairman Clow seconded to accept Article 21 with the amendments of placing the Police Chief at Step 7, BOS Secretary at Step 3, Finance at Step 2 and the Highway Secretary at Step 2 and corrections being made to the Tax Collector's line because it was misnumbered.

Selectman Kurk will support it as long as it is noted as a work in progress because there is still a lot of work that needs to be done to carry it forward for future years. Chairman Clow said he does not disagree with Selectman Kurk. Chairman Clow asked Mr. Ventresco to pull all the job descriptions that they have but does not feel it will change the pay scale. Chairman Clow said they need to have something to give the employees as the scale. Chairman Clow said it is better to not start too high – because they don't want to have to bring any salaries down. Selectman Kurk said they discussed Weare's benefits and until she can see all that in numbers she cannot work with it. She does not have all the information and is afraid of being locked into this wage scale and that there could possibly be something better. Selectman Kurk wants a way to be able to go further to work on this to get a better product. Chairman Clow sees them as accepting this, sharing it with employees and said there is nothing that stops the Board from revising it. Chairman Clow believes they have got starting salaries at a level where they wouldn't want to see them regress so if they made changes it would be in the other direction. Chairman Clow said he does not see them lowering step 1 in any position.

It was discussed for an employee to get the increase to the next step they need to meet the requirements. Ms. Terry Wahnowsky commented that the scale should not mean this is what you will get the next year; it should mean this is what you could get if you meet the positions requirements. Ms. Christine Hague commented on it being hard to do a job without adequate tools, secondly it is hard to give the raise to the employee doing the outstanding work and financially rewarded that employee because there is no money.

Chairman Clow said they are agonizing over being fair to the employees.

Selectman Clark commented on being able to give bonuses. The Board said there is no money.

Mr. Ventresco said when the Article was created it was not recommended as a contract. Selectman Fiala said his hope would be to use this until a new system was created and approved by the voters. Mr. Ventresco said they originally intended to ask voters to approve the funds not the scale. Mr. Ventresco cautioned the Board that he thought the original intent was not to approve the pay scale but just the amount and that this could be taken as entering into a contract in some form. Mr. Ventresco said if this was presented to the employees it could be taken as a contract as with the personnel policy it should always be stated this is not a contract. Selectman Fiala said that you start with one step and then every step represents a 3% increase. Selectman Fiala said last year they wanted to give the employees 3% and this is pretty much the intention on giving the employees 3% as long as they meet the position requirements. Selectman Kurk said this is not the product she wants to put her final stamp on. She wants to see the employees get on the proper scale. Selectman Fiala said they place employees on an appropriate level for that job and then each step represents a 3% increase. Selectman Kurk said what will happen if next year they get a default budget. Selectman Fiala said he thought they were doing this because they keep having the argument of whether the raises go in the default budget. Selectman Fiala said the raises go in the proposed budget but not in the default. Chairman Clow said he is just proposing it will go into the proposed budget for next year. Then when the review process takes place employees will have to earn at least a competent mark on their reviews to receive the increase. Selectman Kurk what happens if during the year they work on this and come up with something that is different, are they bond to this? Chairman Clow said he wants

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Selectman Kurks vote tonight, but does feel this is a package. Chairman Clow said if they vote on this for the time being it will be in place, but within the year they can work on all the pieces; job descriptions and making sure beginning wages are matched up to the scale. Chairman Clow does not think they can approve this tonight and not accept that it will be in effect the next year because he does not feel that is fair to the employees.

Ms. Hague said this is very close to the mark of salaries in the area. Selectman Kurk said she is talking about some place like New Market and she was sent their scales; range and scale with raise of 5% every 2 years. Selectman Kurk said she thinks it is inappropriate that they put a 12 year package in a default budget. Selectman Fiala said this gives the employees a sense of what to expect within 3 years. Selectman Fiala said if the employees get adjusted appropriately then will they meet the step. Selectman Kurk said there have been occasions when people in the Highway Department did not score a 3 on their review. Selectman Fiala said they will have to instruct the Department Heads to be diligent in their evaluations. Selectman Fiala said he is not sure the employees anticipating a 3% increase is the worst thing.

Selectman Fiala commented that they are saying if the employee reaches the goal they get the 3% increase and is seeing the increase every year as positive. Selectman Clark said stipend, elected and appointed people should not be in the scale. Chairman Clow said he stands behind this with the modifications that have been made. Chairman Clow said as a Board they always have the right to come back and make changes. Chairman Clow said they set these beginning rates and will not be able to back off from the rate. Selectman Kurk said in one of the categories they set the first step with the salary that the person is currently getting. Selectman Fiala said the current Town Administrator has a contract so they are not bound by this scale. Selectman Kurk fears that if she says yes to this, then she hopes to put together with Benefit Review something that is more applicable. Selectman Kurk is also afraid if she says yes than this is what all the employees can anticipate for many years to come. Selectman Fiala said to him this is very near to what he would like to see to carry forth and sees it pretty close to what he would like to see, very simplistic. Selectman Fiala feels the 3% is a fair increase. Selectman Kurk asked then why are other towns are going with 5% every 2 years. Selectman Fiala feels 3% is very fair if the employee is deemed confident.

Chairman Clow said because this is a 12 step scale it does not mean they are bound to it for 12 years. Chairman Clow said they are agreeing to this for a year and it could change thereafter. Selectman Fiala said they accept this until such time that another scale is put forth. Selectman Kurk said she wants the adjustments, feels they are fair, but is fearful that the better or wise system won't get a hearing because they are bound to this now and if she says yes, she is not sure she wants to commit to future years. Selectman Fiala told Selectman Kurk if she does not feel she is voting on employees getting this scale and then having to meet the requirements to get to the next step then she should vote against it. Selectman Fiala wants to know what Selectman Kurk will tell the employees to put in for wages. Selectman Kurk said a horizontal and vertical scale and feels there is so much more work that needs to be done. Selectman Fiala said Selectman Kurk is going to look into many different options but realistically will come up with a scale of 2.5-3% increase. Chairman Clow feels this is straight forward and honest and gets away from an inadequacy and employees being evaluated in different ways. Chairman Clow said this is based on a straight percentage and competency – either you make it or you don't.

Chairman Clow said for the year ahead of them it is true this would be in place. Chairman Clow said come budget time next year this is where they are probably going to point to tell department heads what to put in their budget. Chairman Clow feels if the employee on step 5 receives a competent evaluation then their supervisor would move them up to step 6 in the proposed budget and they would only get the raise if the proposed budget is passed. Selectman Kurk commented on them saying that elected and contracted was not in the scale. Selectman Fiala said the scale is to the position not to the employee.

Selectman Fiala said they are just trying to accomplish the first step. Selectman Clark said there is a number on step 1 but there is no range on that step. Selectman Kurk wants them to know that she intends to pursue this further. Selectman Fiala commented on this being equitable. Selectman Clark said the theory behind having a

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range is someone could go beyond the range. Selectman Fiala said they are intending to provide a pay scale. Chairman Clow said within the course of the year he does not feel it would be appropriate to change. Selectman Kurk said so this commits her to 08 and 09. Chairman Clow said they are talking about this year and feels it is appropriate to also believe they are committing to what they are asking Department Heads to put into their budgets.

Selectman Fiala moved, Chairman Clow seconded to accept Article 21 with the amendments of placing the Police Chief at Step 7, BOS Secretary at Step 3, Finance at Step 2 and the Highway Secretary at Step 2 and corrections being made to the Tax Collector's line because it was misnumbered. Passed 3-1-0. Vice Chairman Osborne was recused.

Selectman Kurk wants the Board to recognize that she will work on this throughout the year.

Ms. Hague said right now the Town is picking up the cost for the Library's Workers Compensation, she asked the Board for confirmation that it is covered.

Chairman Clow moved, Selectman Fiala seconded to recommend Article 21. Passed. 3-1-0. Vice Chairman Osborne was recused.

ADJOURNMENT at 9:20 p.m.

A True Record.

Cherry Palmisano, Recording Secretary