

Town of West Boylston Personnel Board

Minutes of Meeting

March 24, 2015

In Attendance: Maryjane Baer, Kelli Blank, Paul Bohanson, Rich McCarthy, Christine Mazeika, and Town Administrator Leon Gaumond

Maryjane Baer called the meeting to order at 7:10 p.m.

Leon Gaumond explained that the minutes of the Executive Session should not be accepted until it is a matter of public record and the matter is resolved.

The second item on the Agenda was an update on the grievance matter involving the Director of the D.P.W. and the Administrative Assistant for the D.P.W. The lawyers for the party and the Town spoke and asked Mr. Gaumond to:

1. Meet with the two parties and try to alleviate the problem. Mr. Gaumond met with them today and drafted a resolution to be reviewed by Town Counsel, then by the two parties.
2. Address the communication issue between the two parties. Mr. Gaumond is working with E.A.P. to have a mediator come in on Friday. Mr. Gaumond thinks that a mediation session may help.

The grievance matter may or may not be resolved. It may come back to the Personnel Board at some point.

There were 2 issues; workplace rule would involve the Personnel Board and the discrimination issue would involve the Board of Selectmen (BOS). Lawyers wanted to prevent it from going to either place. Mr. Gaumond is not sure if either or both issues will go away.

Maryjane Baer: Did the Director recognize there was an issue:

Leon Gaumond: Yes

Rich McCarthy: Can you email us an update after the meeting on Friday?

Leon Gaumond: Happy to do this.

The third item on the agenda was COLA for non-union employees. Mr. Gaumond presented the budget last Friday.

Leon Gaumond: I want you to know the Budget process. It has been a difficult year to present Budget. Revenues have been good, but not what was expected. The State is looking at \$1 billion deficit. I am expecting Level Funding and that what I budgeted for.

The Budget included a 1.5% increase for Union and Non-Union employees even though the Police, D.P.W. and the new Fire Department Unions haven't negotiated their contracts at this time. Mr. Gaumond will be using \$ 20,000 of non-recurring funds to balance the budget.

Mr. Gaumond also announced that he will be leaving in 5 weeks for a new position.

There was a discussion about COLA and Mr. Gaumond was proud of the COLA over the years and the fact that during particularly “bad” years the Town experienced no large layoffs, no furloughs, and no 4 day work weeks that other Towns had to turn to. We did lay off one non-union employee and 2 union positions were not filled.

The Town saved money in health insurance by limiting the Unions’ multiple choices of health insurance providers. The health insurance went out to bid. At the onset, the split was 90/10, it is now 80/20 and for new employees it is 70/30 which is more in line with municipal government. Co-pays were raised to keep costs low. The Insurance Advisory Committee, IAC, came in with recommendations to keep costs lower at a time when they have been ballooning.

COLA has been able to happen due to health insurance savings.

BOS haven’t endorsed budget plan at this time, including COLA. The active Personnel Board should give a recommendation at the Annual Town Meeting. Per Mr. Gaumond, we did not need to make a decision tonight.

Paul Bohannon: What if no Local Aid numbers by Town Meeting?

Leon Gaumond: The State Budget has never been done by Town meeting. The numbers are usually close. At the MMA breakfast last week, I asked State Representatives from both parties if the numbers I was presenting were close and they said they were. Any modifications to the budget are usually done at the October Town Meeting. One year the State cut local aid and if that were to happen, the Town would use reserves, savings.

Maryjane Baer: Are you expecting any State relief for the winter costs?

Leon Gaumond: State is giving us \$ 44,000 for pothole funds. West Boylston’s snow removal funds are short about \$ 250,000.

Maryjane Baer: What is the action step for the Personnel Board with regards to COLA?

Leon Gaumond: The Personnel Board will make a recommendation to BOS at Town Meeting. The process is: Town Administrator to BOS to Finance Committee and at Town Meeting the Personnel Board makes its recommendations.

Kelli Blank: What do we have to benchmark this to?

Leon Gaumond: We compare to other Towns.

Maryjane Baer: How does Finance Committee work with budgets?

Leon Gaumond: I do the entire budget. The Town Administrator form of government gives the Town Administrator authority to prepare and present the budget. I build budget from the request forms given to the Department Managers. I request: A Level Funded Budget, a Level Services Budget, 1% increase in payroll and any new programs. I work with each Town Department.

Maryjane Baer: Do you negotiate with the Unions each year?

Leon Gaumond: Police and D.P.W. have 3 year contracts that are on the same schedule with the new Fire Department Union. All contracts expire 6/30/15.

Kelli Blank: Is the 1.5% determined by the Town's budget or is it benchmarked with other Towns?

Leon Gaumond: The Town does better than other Towns. Comparing Towns is a good reference. By the end of the week I can give the Personnel Board some type of MA survey.

Forth item on the Agenda is discussion on Wage and Classification Project.

Mr. Gaumond gave the Personnel Board the final Classification and Compensation Study and all of the non-union employees' Job Descriptions compiled by Don Jacobs.

RFP for this went out to bid. Town received 3 bids and went with the lowest bidder, by far, Don Jacobs of Holden MA. Mr. Jacobs had previously done the study years ago.

Part I was to approve the Job Descriptions. BOS asked the Personnel Board to do this.

Part II was a review of the parameters of classification of wages – internal and external equity.

Maryjane Baer: I want to review the information, some of it is good. Some of it is boiler plate for Don.

Since the Town doesn't have an HR Department, there is a lot to review and talk about, perhaps before we meet with him.

Maryjane Baer: I spoke with Mr. Jacobs on the telephone, at length. Mr. Jacobs is itching to talk to the Personnel Board. He wants to focus on the process and feels that the Personnel Board needs to understand the process before anything else can happen. I had questions about the methodology – the employees filled out the job description and managers reviewed. We will need to give Don a defined time period when we meet with him.

Leon Gaumond: We don't pay on merit. This causes huge morale issues as some of the Department Managers are elected positions.

Don came with a merit driven process. If, I was doing all of the evaluations consistently, merit would be alright. Each manager would do merit increases differently whereas merit is driven by other things.

We have a 5 Step raise process: hire at Step 1 or 2 and in rare cases Step 3. The steps are every 2 years, so at the end of 10 years an employees' only raise is COLA.

Don's plan is an 8 Step plan, with a Step increase every year up to year 8. There is an opportunity through merit to reach the "magical end of paid grade". Town can give bonus or merit after Step 8. Every 3 – 5 years there would be a new salary range.

For example, Nancy has been here for 30 years and this would give the Town an opportunity to reward long term employees.

This process was started during the previous fiscal year; there are changes in the rates due to COLA. Not necessarily his fault.

Maryjane Baer: Has Don been asked about the cost of implementing the salary schedule?

Leon Gaumond: Perhaps he will be doing this.

Maryjane Baer: Let's invite him in for ½ hour meeting. He has been a Town Administrator and consultant in the past. He does wage and classification studies.

Kelli Blank: What is the benefits percentage?

Leon Gaumond: The Town Accountant may be able to give you that number; the benefit costs are separate in the budget.

The Town should keep up with the classification and job descriptions. This should be built into the methodology and done automatically every 3 – 5 years.

I will be leaving this recommendation: Every year the Personnel Board reviews 5 job descriptions and keep up with salary surveys.

HR Policies were done years ago. I will give you a copy of the Collins Report.

Next meeting will be **Tuesday, April 28, 2015 at 7 p.m.**

7:00 p.m. Don Jacobs

7:30 p.m. Very Important COLA discussion

Leon Gaumond: April 30, 2015 will be my last day. I will ask one person on the BOS to "adopt" the Personnel Board. I will let them know that they don't have to come to meetings. I will also prepare a lengthy document for the new Administrator.

Kelli Blank made a motion to adjourn the meeting at 8:35 p.m. Maryjane Baer seconded.