Town of West Boylston Personnel Board

Minutes of Meeting

November 8, 2018

In Attendance:

Personnel Board Members: Larry Chism, Chairperson, Francesca Harris, Laura Carney

Vanessa Kuzmanovski, Christine Mazeika were unable to attend.

Others Present: Anna Shaw – Library Director, Kate Halpin – Library Trustee Chair, Sue Smith – Children’s Librarian, MaryEllen Cocks – Library Trustee

Mr. Chism called the meeting to order at 6:00 p.m.

1. Approval of the Minutes from the October 23, 2018 meeting. Ms. Carney made a motion to approve the minutes, Ms. Harris, seconded, so moved.
2. General Overview – Job Classification Project

Mr. Chism provided attendees an introduction to the job description/wage study project. He provided each person with a printed handout of the Job Classification Project document.

He then presented some history of how the project evolved - from a previous effort performed by a consultant which was never implemented as it was deemed insufficient. The Personnel Board members who were present introduced themselves and provided a brief description of their backgrounds.

The priority with the current project was to create consistent job descriptions and initiate a wage study. An explanation was given for the speed in which the initial project results were proposed to be brought to a vote at the town meeting. Where the Board has been immersed in the project for some time, the impact to individuals was admittedly an oversight. The Board now wishes to postpone voting until a thorough evaluation is done and individuals can have their concerns addressed.

The handout was reviewed outlining the project. Mr. Chism stated it is a work in progress and more needs to be done with additional resources added, including the inclusion of information from DOR to engage some additional expertise at the state level.

It was noted that the current version job descriptions may not be entirely aligned, and the department heads will have additional opportunities to provide input to ensure the job descriptions are an accurate depiction of each job.

Ms. Carney stated the importance of producing job descriptions based on the duties and responsibilities of the job title, not necessarily what the person in the job currently does. This is important for backfilling vacant positions and also making sure the job description is accurate. Employees may take on special projects they like or perform other duties as they see fit, but those extra activities may not actually be a requirement of the job.

Ms. Harris explained the job rating tool, stating each job description has the same categories and points are assigned to each category to determine levels and grades. She worked alongside Ms. Kuzmanovski but they graded the jobs separately to ensure the work was consistent and objective. The grading manual was reviewed with the department heads by Ms. Mazeika and Ms. Scheipers.

Mr. Chism stated that the points are based on characteristics of the job, and by combining the total points it places the job within a bracket or grade level. Other tools were considered, but the point grade tool seemed to be the most objective. The Board understands more discussions need to happen between supervisors and subordinates. The next steps in the process are to get more information out to employees, explain what has taken place thus far, and to be transparent. The Board of Selectman has approved an application for the town to get help from DOR and we are awaiting a response. As soon as there is a response, it will shared. The goal is for everyone to be comfortable with what is being done and we want to do a good job.

Ms. Carney states that the work done on the salary comparison in like towns is just one piece of information. Like towns are not necessarily close in proximity but have like criteria such as funds available for town programs and similar demographics.

Mr. Chism states bringing more comparable communities in rather than just a few may be helpful. Hopefully expanding the list to 7-10 towns with DOR’s guidance.

Ms. Smith asked if the comparison between towns considered things like housing, buildings, and land and the fact that there is so much conservation land in town that cannot be built upon? She sees towns who have so much more stuff than we do.

Ms. Carney responded towns nearby may not have similar budgets or use their money in the same way for programs, and that is one reason “like towns” were polled but that there was much more to be determined once the Board sees what information they can get from the state.

Ms. Smith thanked the Board for their hard work on the project.

Ms. Shaw asked a question regarding whether the information from the DOR will be better? And will the wage scale be revisited once the DOR information is received?

Mr. Chism responded that there will be more information and the DOR will have more expertise in this specific area. Until they come into the equation, at which point we will have more information, the Board will continue to have meetings and review job descriptions to make sure they are in line. Department heads will be kept in the loop, and the Board will offer the opportunity for more meetings with individuals if necessary. Mr. Chism offered to make himself available for individual meetings if necessary. The Board wants to make sure everyone is comfortable with the process and in a good place with the work that is being done.

Ms. Shaw asked a question regarding how the job grades were determined.

Ms. Harris responded the points for each job are totaled and the band in which the points total falls into determines the bracket or grade. For example 200-300 points would be a grade 5 step 4.

Mr. Chism added that steps 7 and 8 were consolidated due to the fact no one fell into those steps.

Ms. Shaw responded she has 2 employees who fall into those steps and it is a sore spot. She added across other towns, library employees are paid much more. The town employees are at rock bottom. Also asked was a question as to how the points were added (manually or with a spreadsheet). Is the Board confident the numbers are accurate?

Ms. Harris responded the numbers were added separately by her and Ms. Kuzmanovski, and they were then entered into a spreadsheet and totaled. She is confident they were added correctly.

Ms. Shaw stated some individual’s retirement may be impacted by the grade change. The employee may have been hired and promised a certain amount. They already are underpaid. Also, when the current employee retires, it may be harder to fill the position.

Ms. Smith brought up a point that a person that’s been here forever may retire and not have the equivalent of corporate wages. She does the job because she loves it. She may retire in a year and has done a great deal of programming work in order to keep the town’s library on top. There is so much that would need to be done and she worries that the job description will not reflect the skillset required.

Mr. Chism stated that the projects and additional skills would need to be reviewed, and if the job description was modified to include extra contributions, it may end up being viewed as a more senior level position. It is important that the job description is accurate and not over or under exaggerated.

Mr. Chism mentioned the possibility of money being appropriated to assist with the wage reclassification and also that there may be consideration of grandfathering employees who would be negatively impacted. He said no decisions had been made at this point.

Ms. Shaw asked about next steps and when the one-on-one meetings would begin.

Mr. Chism responded that he would be flexible with his schedule and that possibly a couple of meetings could be scheduled between now and the end of the year. He stated that there was no sense of urgency in getting the vote done at the May meeting necessarily. That it would be nice but, it is necessary and more important that the conversations and meetings need to be had first. We will not move forward until the project is right.

Ms. Cocks thanked the Board for their respect and commitment. She was present when the first project was worked on and it was not the same level.

No one present had further questions or concerns.

At 6:40 pm, Mr. Chism asked for a motion to adjourn. Ms. Harris made the motion, Ms. Carney seconded.