

**MINUTES OF THE JOINT CHESHIRE TOWN COUNPERSONNEL COMMITTEE
MEETING HELD ON THURSDAY, NOVEMBER 20, 2014, AT 7:00 P.M. IN ROOM
207, TOWN HALL, 84 SOUTH MAIN STREET, CHESHIRE CT 06410.**

Present

Chairman Thomas Ruocco; Robert Oris and Peter Talbot.
Town Manager Michael A. Milone; Personnel Director Louis Zullo; Library Director
Ramona Burkey; Registrars of Voters Susan Pappas (R) and Tom Smith (D).

1. ROLL CALL

The clerk called the roll and a quorum was determined to be present.

2. PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE

The group Pledged Allegiance to the Flag.

3. REGISTRARS OF VOTERS SALARY ADJUSTMENT

Ms. Pappas referred to the letter of July 9, 2014 to Town Manager Milone and Council Chairman Slocum regarding the procedure for ROV salary increase. In accordance with the Town Charter the deadline for consideration of a salary increase must be completed 120 days prior to the November election. In 2014 this deadline was missed, and the Registrars were requesting Council consideration of a lump salary adjustment for 2015 and a percentage adjustment for 2016 based on the 2015 number.

The committee was informed by Mr. Milone that the deadline had passed when he received the July 9, 2014 letter, and this is a repeat of a same instance 10 years ago. In 2003, Town Attorney Burtula issued a legal opinion that the Council could pay the Registrars a "bonus/stipend" due to the untimely request for a salary adjustment. The amount of the bonus was not to be included in the base salary of the Registrar position. However, future Councils did include the amount into the base salary.

On June 12, 2012 the Council passed Resolution #062612-1 approving a pay plan for the Registrars of Voters of \$22,040 January 1, 2014 through December 31, 2014. Mr. Milone explained that the 1.023% increase to other Town staff would increase the Registrars' salary to \$22,915 on January 1, 2015, and \$23,442 effective January 1, 2016. Based on the Town Charter this salary adjustment cannot be included in the base wages, and the salaries of Registrars must always be a two year contract. The position is an elective one and the current term ends December 31, 2014; the salary adjustment must be made during the current term of office, effective January 1, 2015.

Mr. Ruocco clarified that the Registrars would be receiving a lump sum payment in each of the next two years, which is not built into the position's pay scale. Mr. Ruocco has no problem moving this matter to the Town Council. He noted he did not receive good feedback on the Elections Office this year, particularly in the way votes were counted. What the committee is considering is a performance and operational issue. Mr. Ruocco stated there must be a way to centralize the numbers more carefully, as the

process was chaotic and confusing in the recent election, particularly the 13th Senatorial District.

Mr. Smith stated the results of the tabulated tapes did not change and the problem was the spread sheet missing some math formulas. There are 3 tapes used; 1 on the wall, 1 in the ballot bag, and 1 at the ROV offices. This year the State allowed same day registration ballots, and 102 people were in the ROV office on Election Day requiring 50% of the staff to service them. The Registrar's Office staff left Town Hall at 3 a.m. as the process dragged on, and absentee ballots also had to be counted.

On the ballot this year there were many cross endorsements (17 or 18) and Ms. Pappas explained each vote goes into a widget from the State which must run all the figures and add them to the numbers. There was no test run prior to Election Day, and in the future she said a test run of the data must be done.

There was a brief discussion about working off prior spread sheets as a template with modifications for future elections. Ms. Pappas noted there was little assistance or guidance from the Secretary of State's office.

For clarification on the formula and adjustments to the Registrar salaries, Mr. Milone advised the union employees negotiated a 2.3% increase and this is the framework he used for the Registrar salaries.

\$22,040 would increase to \$22,547, January 1, 2015 to December 31, 2015.
\$22,547 would increase to \$23,065, January 1, 2016 to December 31, 2016.
In 2015 the increase would be \$507; in 2016 the increase would be \$518.

The next time the Council would make adjustments to the Registrars' salaries would be in May/June 2016. The lump sum payment will not go into the base pay at this time, but in 2016 the Council could decide to include the amount into the base pay.

MOTION by Mr. Talbot; seconded by Mr. Oris.

MOVED that the Personnel Committee approve payment of a lump sum to the Registrars of Voters in the amount of \$507 in 2015 and \$518 in 2016.

VOTE The motion passed unanimously by those present.

Ms. Pappas and Mr. Smith thanked the Personnel Committee for their approval of the lump sum payments. They extended an open invitation to Councilors to visit the Elections Department office.

4. Library positions amendments

Ramona Burkey, Library Director, Jen Cook, Senior Library Assistant and Mary DeTillio, Assistant Library Director, were present for this agenda item.

Ms. Burkey submitted summary information on the position amendments, which will result in a reduction in staff hours and savings at the Library. This year the Library had 4 retirements in 4 months. Ms. Burkey commented on the huge changes in how the Library works over the last 10 years with many services provided through technology and the Library being a virtual branch 24/7. Services such as technical support statistics, job searching, career programs, citizenship, literacy, business all contribute to local economic development. The Library has a program "Social Media for Business". Along with the expanded services there is continuance of the "traditional" services and administration of Arts Place, with another building and additional staff members. The Library has increased hours in the Summer and winter hours on Sunday totaling 65 hours a week.

In the past Ms. Burkey has requested additional staff hours which were not approved for the operating budget. This requires Library staff to spend more time handling duties which are out of the usual job responsibilities.

Ms. Burkey presented her proposal to the committee.

- Increase Reference Librarian position from 15 to 20 hours per week.
- Increase Technology Coordinator position from 25 to 30 hours per week.
- Increase Assistant Library Director position from 25 to 30 hours per week.
- Eliminate vacant 30-hour Page position; utilize savings from recent and pending retirements to completely offset the increase in staff hours with an annual savings to the Town.

Mr. Milone stated that CPFA did not have the technical expertise it needed. The Library now oversees and manages the Fine Arts Department staff, which now has e commerce registration on line. There is also cross promotion of programs between the Library and Artsplace. With the proposal from Ms. Burkey there will be standardization of staff scheduling which makes for a more efficient operation.

A spread sheet outlining the staff requests and offsets was submitted by Ms. Burkey for the committee to review. Green shows current position; purple is proposed plan; each line shows decrease and savings to the Town.

Requests

Reference Librarian, union position (add 5 hours per week)

Tech Coordinator, union position (add 5 hours per week)

Assistant Library Director, non-union position (add 5 hours per week)

Offsets

Children's Librarian, union position, retirement

Senior Librarian, union position, retirement

Library Page, union position, eliminate position.

Total staff hours per week reduced to 150 (from 165); Savings of \$15,009.80.

The Town's share of medical is 4.02; reduced from 4.14.

Mr. Zullo advised that the new staff will not go into the pension plan. Under the assumption of "couple coverage" in the medical insurance plan the cost is \$18,092, a savings of \$1,800. PPO cost is \$21,600, savings of \$2,160; HMO cost is \$19,800, savings of \$1,900.

Ms. Zullo noted the Reference Library position salary increased to \$30.34; at 15 hours a week the position is not eligible for the bargaining union until it is a 20 hour a week position.

Mr. Oris asked about the quantitative cost for the Town with a 401K plan and the true net effect.

In reply, Mr. Zullo said it is a 457 Plan with employee getting 6% of base wages. The Library is losing 3 people to retirement; there is no longer a pension contribution; and the Town will be making one 6% contribution; the net effect on the Town's pension contribution will be less.

Mr. Milone referred to the Children's Librarian salary of \$61,000, with the Town pension contribution of 8% to 12%, and the new position in the 457 plan is 6% of \$55,218.

For the Children's Librarian position, Mr. Ruocco noted there is a new hire at a lower rate of pay, and the person is not eligible for the pension plan.

The committee was informed by Mr. Milone that the 3 retirees equal 90 years of experience at the Library. Regarding the information on the chart, he will extend this information for both retirement plan and medical insurance benefits.

Mr. Burkey explained there could be some labor issues and challenges involved by reducing the number of bargaining unite positions and increasing non-union positions. With her proposal the union positions will stay the same.

Mr. Talbot asked about keeping the current Reference Library position at 15 hours, adding another 156 hour Reference Library position, and save \$4,500 rather than \$15,000, with bigger savings in medical insurance from .12 to .62. This increases the Reference Library by 10 hours as opposed to a 5 hour increase, and it is a double increase from 15 to 30 as opposed to 15 to 20.

According to Mr. Milone the Town would not get away with such a plan.

Mr. Oris commented on the Town's obligation when a union job person retires, and replacement with a union job.

If it's eligible for the bargaining unit, Ms. Burkey said that is the case.

Mr. Milone said that a union staff can be reduced with layoffs, but a union person cannot be laid off at the same time there is a job creation or increase for non-union person. There can be reorganization if the union feels there is parity in terms of still having the same number of union positions.

Mr. Zullo reviewed the history of the job elimination. It was originally a 35 hour Library Clerk position; the Town and union negotiated because the person was doing Page work; the position was negotiated to change the Clerk position to a Page position and reduce hours; the union position was maintained. The job was more properly fit. When this person retired the union membership was down to 17, and the union owned either the 30 hour Page or a 35 hour Clerk position. The Town determined it was not going to fill a 30 hour Clerk or a Page because Ms. Burkey felt Pages could be filled with part timers, less skilled people, and it would not be a union position. The union felt it would get the position for the lost position, and Mr. Zullo is sure the union would file an MPP against the Town.

If he had to argue on cutting a position to balance the budget, Mr. Milone said it could be done as long as concurrently there is no increase in hours in a non-union position or creating a non-union position. It has been done under the circumstances of lay offs and budget reductions.

Even with reducing staff Mr. Zullo said the Town must go to the union and negotiate the impact. There is the right to eliminate or reduce staff.

Mr. Oris stated a more logical way to handle this is when someone is retiring than actually laying them off...it is the more appropriate way to do it. To him, it sounds like the union is forcing the Town to do things in a way it does not want to do it. He would rather not lay someone off, but replace the position after a retirement.

For the Clerk to Page position, there was voluntary separation of employment, and Mr. Zullo said there was a 30 hour Page which was not needed. The Town went to the union and it was understood by both parties that when the 35 hour Clerk was reduced to a 30 hour Page the Library would never have a full time Page. Traditionally, Pages have been high school, college students, people returning to the work force...all non-union part time positions. Non-union Pages receive \$11 an hour, and the Library had a union Page making \$25 an hour, and this did not make sense.

Mr. Ruocco commented on a Library Page union position being eliminated, and a Reference Librarian increases to 30 hours a week and becomes a union employee. He asked about the Library keeping people at 25 hours a week.

This can be done, but Ms. Burkey noted it would not be beneficial to the operation of the Library. If the retirements had not happened, but the Library Page left without replacement of another Page, there would be an additional \$15,000 more per year spent.

Mr. Milone explained that Ms. Burkey inherited a mish-mash of an organization in terms of number of hours and schedule of staff. There was no uniformed approach to the scheduling as hours were worked on availability, not the needs of the Library. As there are retirements there is the opportunity for Ms. Burkey to rearrange the Library in a systematic way. Changes in the Library in the last 2 years are dramatic, and Mr. Milone said keeping the status quo would stymie the growth, creativity and progressive movement of the Library. He noted that Ms. Burkey has come up with a plan that saves money and is best for the Library.

A concern was cited by Mr. Oris on taking the Technical Coordinator and Assistant Library Director to 30 hours per week. He asked about the difference between 29 hours and 30 hours relative to pension and medical benefits. He requested this information be given to the Council.

Ms. Burkey said the difference is about \$4 an hour. She reported that administrative and technical people are difficult to recruit and maintain because of paying a large percentage of salary to medical benefits. People find full time jobs and leave the Library, and 5 people have been in the Technology Coordinator job in 9 years. This results in disruption to the operation of the Library, to staff and patrons.

Mr. Oris commented on the job being less attractive to candidates because of large contributions required for medical benefits.

The difference is going from 75% to 88% of benefit premium, and Mr. Milone said there is a need to create uniformity and scheduling of staff for consistency in the operation of the Library. The idea of keeping everyone in multiples of 5 is they work 5 days, with varied hours on some days, i.e. 4 days working 6 hours, and 1 day working 5 hours. This creates a chain reaction of events; there is a void of 1 hour in the person's work; this has to be picked up by someone else. This then goes back to what Ms. Burkey inherited from the former director, which is 17 hours, 19 hours, 21 hours. Uniformity and consistency cannot be created in the staff work schedules that integrate with other staff.

Mr. Milone stated that staff will add the additional columns to the chart to include pension and medical information.

Mr. Ruocco commended Ms. Burkey for the excellent layout of detail to the committee.

A question was raised by Mr. Talbot about any other union option to give the union their membership number.

Mr. Zullo said there is no other union option...20+ hours a week is a union job.

It was explained by Ms. Burkey that the person in the Reference Librarian position now, working 15 hours a week, is not in the union.

Mr. Talbot stated it is a shame that the Director cannot take care of the needs of the business through a retirement and still come out with a savings.

It is not easy to managing all of this and Mr. Milone said there are many restrictions, obstacles, legal challenges and limitations.

When the retirement was going to happen Mr. Zullo said it put into motion the plan proposed by Ms. Burkey...to increase the position hours.

MOTION by Mr. Talbot; seconded by Mr. Oris.

MOVED that the Personnel Committee approve the Library Position Amendments proposal submitted by Library Director Burkey, and forward the matter to the full Town Council for approval.

Discussion

Mr. Oris is fine forwarding the proposal to the Council with the additional information available at the December meeting.

VOTE The motion passed unanimously by those present.

5. **ADJOURNMENT**

MOTION by Mr. Talbot; seconded by Mr. Oris.

MOVED to adjourn the meeting at 8:30 p.m.

VOTE The motion passed unanimously by those present.

Attest:

Marilyn W. Milton, Clerk