

**Board of Selectmen
December 1, 2014**

Present: Kenneth S. Paul, Chairperson; Richard C. Edwards; Connie M. Twombly; Teresa A. Williams, Town Administrator; and Toni Bodah, Secretary.

The posted meeting was called to order by Mr. Paul at 5:03 p.m. **Mr. Edwards moved to enter Non Public Session under RSA 91-A:3, II (a). Ms. Twombly seconded the motion. Roll call vote: Ms. Twombly – ‘aye’; Mr. Edwards – ‘aye’; Mr. Paul – ‘aye’. The motion passed unanimously, and the Board immediately entered Non Public Session.**

The Board returned to public session at 5:30 p.m. Those joining the session in progress: Chief Ken Fifield; Lt. Mark O’Brien; Wayne Robinson; Cindy Bickford; Angie Casperonis; and Leigh Nichols.

The Board considered an appropriation for 2015 highway construction projects and reviewed a list of potential roads to be addressed. The Board also considered lighting for the ballpark. Mr. Robinson had previously suggested to Ms. Williams that the Board may wish to consider establishing a capital reserve fund for this project. Mr. Paul noted that since the lights are needed only for practices at this time, we might be able to purchase a generator with a light tower. Chief Fifield noted that his department may have access to several such towers for free. Mr. Robinson joined the session at this time and agreed that the generator/light tower combination would serve the purpose. We will wait to hear more from Chief Fifield and/or Lt. O’Brien.

The Board then reviewed a list of potential road projects prepared by Fred Clough, as well as estimates prepared by FR Carroll. Mr. Paul referred to the adverse effects of having funded minimal road work for a number of years in an effort to avoid an increase to the tax rate. After considerable discussion, the Board decided to include an appropriation of \$193,000 in the Highway Construction Projects CRF. The exact roads to be addressed will be determined in the spring when firm costs can be provided.

Ms. Williams has received a request from a Selectman from Webster that the Wakefield Board of Selectmen consider inclusion of a warrant article that would direct the State of NH to reform the State’s funding for education. Ms. Twombly suggested checking with State Rep Bill Nelson to see if the State Representatives are in favor of this article, as well as whether the Town of Brookfield plans to include this article on their warrant.

Mr. Paul welcomed the staff members present to discuss the new wage chart recently distributed. He noted that MRI had developed and maintained a pay chart for several years. Then Chief Fifield took over the project. The purpose of the chart is to know what surrounding towns are paying in order to retain staff to the extent possible. However, we must also keep in mind that we are using taxpayer money. Ms. Williams added that the original chart was developed by LGC, who also updated it for a number of years. Eventually, MRI assumed the project.

Mr. Paul referred to the information received from a number of towns, noting that it is difficult to compare every possible detail of each position. He then asked whether the staff had any questions.

Ms. Bickford asked whether the Board considered the benefits offered by surrounding towns—such as short-term disability, life insurance, etc. Chief Fifield advised that information was originally included. At that time, Wakefield lagged in some areas and excelled in others.

**Board of Selectmen
December 1, 2014
Page 2**

Although the current focus was more on pay rates, he believes Wakefield is still competitive in other areas. Chief Fifield noted that several years ago Wakefield added its own form of disability coverage in the form of an extended sick time policy for its employees.

Mr. Paul noted that we can compare the percentage of insurance costs paid in other towns, but that information does not have much meaning without comparing the individual policies.

Ms. Bickford stated that she did research for her position last year, as requested. She believes that the current chart compares her position to towns whose assessing technician does not have the same qualifications that she personally has. Ms. Bickford listed specific work that she does, and also advised that Meredith (used in the current chart) has a full-time assessor, map & lister and a technician who is not certified. Ms. Williams clarified that information from Alton (listed on the chart) was used for most positions; however, information from Auburn was used to compare the position of Assessing Technician. Additionally, towns that responded to her questions indicated that the employees in those towns have similar certifications and workloads as the Wakefield technician.

According to Ms. Bickford, DRA has indicated that most individuals with her certifications work for private companies rather than municipalities. Mr. Edwards asked whether Ms. Bickford could do the same job as Rod Wood. Ms. Bickford advised she would require additional certifications. Ms. Williams noted that the Board will need to determine the process by which it will get employees to where they should be on the current chart. Ms. Twombly asked whether Ms. Bickford utilizes her qualifications in her job right now. Ms. Bickford stated that she does, adding that she could not process deeds without those qualifications. Otherwise, the contracted assessor would need to accomplish that task.

Chief Fifield referred to the cycle of pay rates on the chart. There will be years when averages go down, and pay increases in such a year would be lower. In general, the averages on the chart will gradually increase. The Chief believes that everyone understands that it may take time to "close the gaps." Mr. Edwards believes the gaps should be closed in steps; Mr. Paul believes they should be closed all at once. The Board confirmed that increases are also based on job performance. Chief Fifield stated that the Town will not be able to eliminate loss of staff to certain communities, but it should be able to stem the flow.

Mr. Nichols asked whether the Board considers existing qualifications when they consider starting pay. Mr. Paul stated that one should take that into consideration and referred to rates listed under the added category of "probationary" status. Mr. Edwards noted that not all positions require qualifications an individual may possess. Mr. Nichols provided a scenario. Mr. Paul stressed that starting pay needs to be worthwhile to attract applicants. Chief Fifield stated that the relevant department head should recommend a higher start-rate if qualifications of the applicant warrant same. Ms. Twombly agreed that the Board needs to rely on recommendations made by department heads.

There being no further business, the meeting adjourned at 6:55 p.m.

**Board of Selectmen
December 1, 2014
Page 3**

Respectfully submitted,
Toni Bodah, Secretary

Approval of Minutes:

Kenneth S. Paul, Chairperson

Richard C. Edwards

Connie M. Twombly