

Selectmen Workshop Minutes

Friday, March 7, 2003

Attendance: Ada Brown, Chairman; Betty McDermott; Charles Leavitt; Dana Desjardins; Christine McClellan; Jack Cooper, Code Enforcement Officer; Denis Morse, Fire Chief; Elizabeth Cummings, Finance Director; and Don Willard, Town Manager.

1. Call to order. Ada Brown called the meeting to order at 4:00 pm at the Town Office.
2. Review of selected budget issues discussed at the February 24, 2003 meeting.

a. Town Salaries

DISCUSSION: Mrs. Brown opened by saying that she did not want to go into Town Meeting with the Selectmen being split in their vote for the budget. She asked that they cooperate in finding a middle ground on the disputed subjects. Mr. Leavitt wanted to be sure that the budget is moving in a positive direction with fiscal responsibility. He noted that he had great respect for the Town's employees and volunteers but felt the Selectmen must be careful and prudent in the budget. He felt that the past was a starting point for the future but needed to make upward changes in the budget carefully. Mr. Desjardins said that their decision to add family medical benefits recently was a first step and that bringing our employees to comparable pay scales should be done over time. He felt that each year the salaries should be reviewed with area comps in mind. He felt that if this had been done in the past that this big jump in salaries would not be suggested now. He thought that the increases were deserved but that they should be attained over a three year span. He indicated the failing economy recently as being the reason. Mr. Willard said that the employees are very appreciative for the increased benefits, but he felt that they were deserving of having comparable remuneration for the area. He thought it would be acceptable to guarantee the employees their increases over the next three years as well as a CIP addition. There was discussion about the School Committee budget public hearing held last evening (3/6/03).

Mr. Leavitt asked to have a framework of analysis for salaries which would be used in the future to keep Raymond's pay scale the same as surrounding municipalities. He felt that the pay scale should represent the job, the expertise brought to the job, and at least a CPI increase annually. Mr. Willard suggested forming a step pay plan which will be influenced by the area rate scale and effort expended by the employee. Chief Morse suggested that next year prior to beginning the budget formulation, the Selectmen and School Committee meet together to set a budget vision for the year. Mr. Willard noted that once the Town is at the current scale, salaries will probably only need the CPI increases. Mrs. Brown felt they could entertain all Town employees receiving a CPI increase and those that are looking to being brought up to area scale receive that amount in the next three years in equal parts. Mr. Willard noted that the under compensated salaries might show small increases over the next three years above the present amount which could be adjusted in those two remaining years' budget.

b. CEO/Tech Position.

Mr. Desjardins felt that the two positions CEO and Technical were incompatible. He agreed that there should be a part-time CEO person to cover what Jack Cooper can't and also to learn about the CEO work in Raymond thereby providing a replacement for Jack when he decides to retire. He also noted that the environmental issues would be better served with more help in the CEO office. He asked if expanded permitting fees might not offset the expense of the part-time position. Mr. Willard noted that Mr. Cooper was working on a revised fee schedule, and it should be ready by next week.

c. Digital Broadcasting.

Mr. Desjardins felt that they should go ahead with the digital broadcasting studio which would be good for the Town in making meetings more available to the residents but also useful to the school. He felt that this could require a part-time position. Mr. Willard questioned whether this work could be done by a part-time position considering the number of hours that Kevin Woodbrey now works for the Town voluntarily. It was discussed as to whether Kevin would consider staying on as a volunteer and train a part-time person or whether he would continue to do the work voluntarily as he has been. Mrs. McClellan agreed that we should go ahead with the digital improvements. Mrs. Cummings thought that before they invest in new equipment there should be someone on staff whether paid or volunteer who is going to be responsible for taking care of it. Mr. Leavitt had concern that this issue was entirely set up in the Town's budget and not in part on the School's budget since they will be getting benefit from it. Mr. Willard said that he had suggested that the Town and school share the position but that the idea didn't receive affirmative review from the School Committee. Chief Morse suggested offering Kevin a flexible hour deal and have money in the budget for a part-time person whom Kevin can train. Mr. Willard

said he would discuss the possibilities with Kevin. Mr. Leavitt wanted to reevaluate what the Town is doing and how this endeavor can be coordinated with the school. Mr. Willard suggested going ahead with the hardware purchase and delete the rest of the budget with the exception of setting an amount for temporary help. Mr. Leavitt wanted to set aside for another year the \$75,000 for the digital equipment and investigate getting the personnel needed first.

MOTION: Christine McClellan motioned to reconsider their previous vote involving these items in the Administration budget. Seconded by Betty McDermott.

VOTE: Unanimous.

c. Dispatch Office.

Denis Morse reported that this week the Town of Poland notified Raymond they would be leaving our dispatch service to go with Cumberland County for a price of \$20,000. Chief Morse recommended that the Selectmen allow him to offer them the same service for \$20,000 in order to keep them with Raymond for the future cooperative efforts he was working on. He added that if Naples joins our dispatch service it will bring us further toward becoming regional. He said that the towns of Gray, Poland, and New Gloucester are already trying to work cooperatively. He reviewed the history to date with Cumberland County. Mr. Willard said that he would like to see Poland stay with us. He explained if they went Raymond would be losing \$60,000 and if they stayed Raymond would lose \$40,000 but have the potential for regional cooperation. The Selectmen agreed.

d. Fire Department Budget

Chief Morse noted the increases to the payroll and clothing budget. He said that he was combining some lines and at the same time cutting the amount that the combination would have been separately. He indicated that some training and equipment fees have been moved to the stipend line because of a loss of members which won't need the training but the Fire Department will use the stipend to get responders from other municipalities. He truly felt that in the years to come the services charged will cover the expenses for mutual aid.

Mr. Leavitt thanked especially Denis Morse and Dana Desjardins for providing disclosure and insight over the years and the Town staff for getting the information he needed in order to make good decisions. He said he was happy with the budget changes suggested.

3. Adjourn.

MOTION: There was a motion and second to adjourn.

VOTE: Unanimous.

ADJOURNMENT: Ada Brown adjourned the meeting at 5:40 pm.

Louise H. Lester
Town Clerk