

Westbrook Board of Selectmen
Regular Meeting
Monday, July 11, 2011
Mulvey Municipal Center

Call to Order

First Selectman Bishop called the meeting to order at 3:30 p.m.

A quorum was established with the following Board members present: First Selectman Bishop, Selectmen Hall and Ehlert. Also in attendance: Andrew Urban, Director of Finance, residents, members of the Press, and Town Hall employees.

Executive Session

Mr. Bishop made a motion to go into Executive Session at 3:31 p.m. to discuss strategy regarding negotiations with Town Hall employees union; invited guests: Gabe Jiran, Labor Counselor and Andrew Urban, Director of Finance. Mr. Hall seconded the motion. The motion passed unanimously.

Regular session resumed at 4:30 p.m.

Public Session – Discussion with regard to wages and benefits for non-union employees of the Town

Mr. Bishop reported that, at this time, no decisions have been made with regard to wages and benefits for non-union Town employees. The BOS solicited comments and feedback from the Town employees.

Ms. Lovelette commented that she is happy with the benefit package and would like it to remain the same.

Ms. Recchia stated that the “Swords” report, developed several years ago, found that Westbrook Town Hall employees are underpaid compared to their counterparts in surrounding towns. She suggested the Town institute a “step plan” to make wages competitive.

Mr. Bishop reported on the recent wage data provided by Randi Frank and CCM. Due to costs, the Town utilized data provided by CCM. CCM data indicated that overall, wage increases in surrounding towns range from 0% to 2.4%, with an average of 1.8% to 2%.

Ms. Bratz questioned the justification of recent pay increases for two employees, some increases were 12%. Mr. Bishop responded that the BOS recently took action to fill a position in the Selectman’s office. The terms and responsibilities of the position have increased for this new position. This position had been staffed with a temporary employee. Kim Bratz responded that as a long term employee, she would like the same respect given to new hires.

Mr. Urban reported that he recently filled a part time accountant position at 5 to 10 hours per week. Mr. Urban continued that funding for this position is in the current budget. Mr. Urban reviewed the process used to post for this part time Accountant position.

Ms. Bratz requested a plan from the BOS regarding wages and benefits. Mr. Ehlert responded that a plan would be available in August. At this time, the BOS is requesting feedback.

Mr. Jiran briefly outlined the process and parameters available to the Town in “building an insurance plan”. Currently, the Town has a “traditional plan”.

Ms. Kelemen expressed concern over the disparities between benefit costs to union vs. non-union employees. As a union employee, she feels she is being punished with higher costs. Mr. Jiran commented that while there can be no direct discussion regarding union negotiations, this input is valuable.

Mr. Bishop agreed with Ms. Kelemen (regarding the disparities) and responded that the current contract was in place when his tenure began. One goal is to develop parity, in incremental steps, between the plans.

Mr. Jenkins was concerned that a 1 to 2% raise in insurance rates could ultimately result in pay decreases to employees. Mr. Urban responded that he will share, with each non union employee, a calculation of the net impact of raise and insurance.

Ms. Recchia questioned Westbrook's position on benefits as compared to other towns. Mr. Urban responded that the data indicates that Westbrook has a "rich" plan for non-union employees.

Ms. Angelini was disappointed that there was no "plan" presented for discussion. Mr. Bishop responded that was not an unrealistic expectation; however, a "plan" will not be presented at this meeting. Ms. Angelini reported on the salary of Town Clerks in surrounding towns including Essex (\$53,900), Durham (\$54,485), Old Lyme (\$50,266) and Westbrook (\$46,233). Ms. Angelini expressed concern that the experience of individuals would not be taken into consideration when increases are determined. Ms. Winger added that certifications should also be taken into consideration.

Ms. Brainerd commented that many town positions do not "fit" the CCM data. Mr. Bishop responded that the CCM data was used as a guideline and continued that the data does not take seniority into consideration.

The BOS thanked Town employees for their participation and feedback. No action was taken.

Set Date for Town Meeting

Mr. Hall made a motion to set Wednesday, July 27, 2011, 7:00 p.m. as the date for a Town Meeting. Mr. Ehlert seconded the motion. The motion passed unanimously.

Mr. Bishop reported that a Joint meeting of the BOS and BOF will be scheduled for July 20, 2011 to discuss appropriations, in particular, the boiler project at the High School.

Request for Deputy Treasurer Stipend

Mr. Bishop reported that Jane Butterworth, Treasurer, has submitted a request for a \$1,200 appropriation for a stipend for the Deputy Treasurer.

Mr. Bishop made a motion to request an appropriation from the BOF in the amount of \$1,200 for the Deputy Treasurer stipend. Mr. Ehlert seconded the motion. The motion passed unanimously.

Appropriations

Mr. Bishop made a motion to forward a capital appropriation request to the BOF in the amount of \$62,400.00 to update the WPCC Engineering Plan and to refer the request to a Town Meeting for approval. Mr. Hall seconded the motion. The motion passed unanimously.

Mr. Hall made a motion to forward a capital appropriation request to the BOF in the amount of \$72,000 to make drainage improvements to Grove Beach, S. Broadway and Clinton Roads. Mr. Ehlert seconded the motion. The motion passed unanimously.

Mr. Ehlert made a motion to forward a capital appropriation request to the BOF in the amount of \$10,000 to repair jetties #5 and #6. Mr. Hall seconded the motion. The motion passed unanimously.

Mr. Bishop made a motion to forward a capital appropriation request to the BOF in the amount of \$75,000 to relocate the town garage. Mr. Ehlert seconded the motion. The motion passed unanimously.

Town Center Land Purchase

Ms. Parulis reported that the Town Attorney Michael Wells is in the process of preparing a draft contract for the Town Center Land Purchase. This document should be available at the next BOS meeting. This would ultimately go to a Town Meeting for approved; however, no action is needed from the BOS at this time.

Status of Bills/Invoices – none

Appointments/Resignations

Mr. Bishop made a motion to accept the resignation submitted by Darcey Collins from the WPCC. Mr. Hall seconded the motion. The motion passed unanimously.

Mr. Hall made a motion to accept the resignation submitted by Marcia Munson from the Police Advisory/Traffic Authority Board. Mr. Ehlert seconded the motion. The motion passed unanimously.

Mr. Bishop made a motion to reappoint Mike Oryl to the Police Advisory Board/Traffic Authority retroactive to July 1, 2011. Mr. Hall seconded the motion. The motion passed unanimously.

Mr. Bishop made a motion to reappoint John Riggio as Tree Warden retroactive to July 1, 2011. Mr. Hall seconded the motion. The motion passed unanimously.

Mr. Bishop commented that Mr. Riggio has taken additional courses for re-certification.

Clarification will be obtained regarding the Assessor position/appointment. No action taken at this time.

The following letter received from the Westbrook Council of Beaches was read into the minutes:

“Dear Noel,

Please accept the Westbrook Council of Beaches’ nomination of Michael Polo to the Police Advisory Board/Traffic Authority.

Sincerely,

Barbara Scala
Pres., Westbrook Council of Beaches”

Vacancy and Nominations

Mr. Bishop reported that the Asst. Animal Control Officer resigned several months ago. As a result, Sandy Rankin, Animal Control Officer, has been doing extra work. She also utilizes her own vehicle and Mr. Bishop recommended that an additional \$60 per week be paid to Ms. Rankin. Mr. Urban added that these funds are paid out of the Dog Fund, not the General Fund.

Mr. Bishop reported that specs are being developed for a joint Animal Shelter with the Town of Clinton in anticipation of a \$100,000 Grant from the State. The administrative details will be worked out on receipt of the Grant.

Pension Board Vacancy

Mr. Bishop reported that a letter will go to the DTC and RTC to fill positions on the Pension Board.

Mr. Urban was aware of an interested individual and will pursue.

Finance Department Appointment

Mr. Bishop made a motion to add to the agenda a discussion on the appointment of Kim Zdon in the Finance Department. Mr. Hall seconded the motion. The motion passed unanimously.

Mr. Bishop reported that normally, the BOS approves the appointment of personnel to positions in the Town Hall. Unfortunately, Mr. Urban was not aware of this protocol and Ms. Kim Zdon was recently appointed without BOS approval.

Mr. Urban reported that Ms. Hess is currently handling 90% of the accounting workload. While Peter Evankow spends 6 to 7 hours per week processing payables, Mr. Urban felt it was necessary to hire additional staff (19.5 hrs. per week). He prepared and posted a job description internally and no one applied for the position, therefore, he offered the position to Ms. Zdon.

Mr. Bishop made a motion to approve Ms. Zdon, consistent with the job description and salary offered. Mr. Ehlert seconded the motion. Discussion followed:

Mr. Ehlert expressed concern that the proper protocol may not have been followed and that the job was only posted internally for one week. Mr. Bishop commented that his understanding was that all positions must be posted for 2 weeks as advised by Labor Counselor Gabe Jiran.

Mr. Urban reported that there is no defined posting period in personnel manual. He discussed the post with Atty. Wells and Mr. Wells informed him that he was not required to be posted externally.

Mr. Hall commented that the BOS should develop a clear, written policy of posting, hiring procedures and the responsibilities of the Board of Selectmen to approve said positions. These procedures will be discussed with the Union.

The motion passed unanimously.

Approval of Minutes

Mr. Hall made a motion to approve the BOS meeting minutes dated 6/27/11 as presented. Mr. Bishop seconded the motion. The motion passed unanimously.

Other Business

Mr. Herb Peterson reported on a vendor selling BBQ at his property on 79-87 Boston Post Rd. This vendor has the proper certifications and health inspector documentation and is operating legally.

Adjournment

Mr. Bishop made a motion to adjourn the meeting at 5:45 p.m. Mr. Hall seconded the motion. The motion passed unanimously.

Respectfully Submitted,

Attest,

Suzanne Helchowski
Clerk

Noel Bishop
First Selectman