

Westbrook Board of Selectmen
Regular Meeting
Monday, September 12, 2011

Mulvey Municipal Center, 866 Boston Post Road, Westbrook

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, Selectman Hall and Selectman Ehlert.

Also in attendance: Andrew Urban, Director of Finance, Municipal Employees and residents.

BUSINESS

Executive Session

Mr. Bishop made a motion to go into Executive Session at 3:31 to discuss a personnel matter involving the performance of an employee. Mr. Hall seconded the motion. Mr. Gabe Jiran, Legal Counselor, was invited into the Executive Session. The motion passed unanimously.

Mr. Urban was invited into the Executive Session at 4:00 p.m. Mr. Urban exited the Executive Session at 4:25 p.m.

Regular Session resumed at 4:30 p.m.

No action was taken.

Hurricane Irene – Employee Compensation – Municipal Employees and Elected Officials

Mr. Bishop briefly outlined protocol related to employees work hours during Hurricane Irene. Several employees (hourly employees, salaried employees and Elected Officials) worked at the Town Hall prior to the Hurricane and at the EOC during and after the Hurricane. The Town Hall offices were closed Monday, August 29, 2011 and August 30, 2011. The hourly workers (non-union employees) have been compensated for their hours.

Timesheets have been received from some salaried union employees. As the union contract is “silent” on this issue, Mr. Bishop reported that Gabe Jiran, Legal Counselor, recommends that the item be discussed with the Union representatives prior to compensating union employees.

Per Mr. Bishop’s instruction, Sharon Lessard, a salaried, union employee was compensated for her work during the Hurricane. Mr. Maynard suggested that Ms. Lessard may have been paid as, at the time of the storm, her position was transitioning from hourly to salaried.

Ms. Lessard reported that George Pytlik, Assistant Director of Emergency Management, requested that Jill Brainerd, Joan Angelini and Sharon Lessard report to the EOC during the Hurricane. These individuals had participated in Emergency Training at the Essex Town Hall on August 18, 2011. At that time, these

individuals were informed that they should submit timesheets for their hours and that the Town would apply to FEMA for reimbursement.

As per Don Izzo's (Director of Emergency Management) instructions, Mr. Bishop did ask employees/elected officials to submit timesheets as required for FEMA reimbursement. Mr. Bishop apologized for any perceived slight to the elected officials as this was not the intent of his request for timesheets. He commented that if they worked, they should be compensated; however, there is no mechanism in place to pay elected officials and the BOS needs to address the issue.

Timesheets have been received from elected officials documenting hours worked during the Hurricane event.

Ms. Angelini, Town Clerk, reported that she volunteered to join the Emergency Management Team and was recently trained at the Essex Town Hall. She worked during the Hurricane to "do what needed to be done" and did not take compensation into consideration.

Ms. Bratz, Tax Collector, reported that she never asked for compensation for her hours during the Hurricane and only submitted a timesheet because the First Selectman requested one. She was disappointed that this issue was being discussed in public and feels it reflects unfavorably on elected officials.

The need for an accurate Emergency Policy/Plan that includes personnel must be established for future emergencies.

Mr. Ehlert suggested that elected officials and salaried employees submit to the Selectmen, in writing, their intent/expectations regarding compensation for hours worked during the Hurricane. He continued that if Westbrook is filing for assistance from FEMA, these individuals should be compensated.

Don Izzo, Director of Emergency Management will schedule a de-briefing meeting to discuss Hurricane and related issues.

Mr. Hall thanked individuals for their efforts during the Hurricane. He reported that individuals should be paid for the hours they worked during the storm. He asked for patience as clarification is needed from the Union and FEMA.

Implementation of Salary Adjustment and Health Care Cost Share

At the September 1, 2011 BOS meeting when the compensation and benefit package was presented to employees, some non-union employees expressed disappointment that the 3% wage increase will be decreased as a result of a higher cost share for health benefits.

Mr. Urban recommends that since the new health package does not begin until 10/1/11, the increase in cost share should also begin on 10/1/11. Mr. Urban continued that overall, non-union employees will see a positive pay increase of approximately 2.2% after cost share increase. Employees will be re-enrolled and will receive package information as well as a new card. Ms. Brainerd commented that in past years, re-enrollment was not necessary.

Mr. Urban reported that health care costs continue to increase at double digit rates and the Town cannot afford to continue to offer a \$5.00 co-pay. Comparable contracts from around the state were reviewed.

Several employees expressed concern that the BOS did not discuss the package as a Board prior to it being presented to employees. Also, due to the recent hurricane, some departments were not able to attend the BOS meeting when the package was presented to employees.

Mr. Maynard questioned why the salaries of elected officials are increased mid-term. Mr. Bishop commented that the Board of Selectmen and the Director of Finance requested that their salaries be frozen during the current budget year.

Mr. Urban will schedule a meeting with employees and Ganim representatives to review the insurance plan.

Mr. Hall made a motion to increase non-union employee's share of the health care contribution effective 10/1/11. Mr. Bishop seconded the motion. Discussion followed.

Mr. Ehlert commented that as a result of this action, the Union may wish to re-open their contract. Mr. Urban responded that the only element of the plan changing is the cost share.

Vote on the motion as follows: Mr. Bishop and Mr. Hall in favor, Mr. Ehlert abstained from voting. The motion passed.

Mr. Maynard commented that as a tax payer, he would like to see the entire town under the same plan, paying a 20% cost share as the teachers. Ms. Angelini responded that while the increase in cost share is warranted, she feels that the wage discrepancies between Town Hall employees and teachers must be addressed.

Mr. Bishop made a motion to add to the agenda a discussion on Fire Department insurance, Emergency Management antenna request for an appropriation, WPCCR resolution and Energy Assistance. Mr. Ehlert seconded the motion. The motion passed unanimously.

Westbrook Fire Department Insurance

Chief Mike Jenkins expressed disappointment that he was not consulted in the determination of insurance to be provided for the Westbrook Fire Department. He was also concerned that the Fire Department was never given a copy of the policy for review. Chief Jenkins commented that the elected Board of Fire Commissioners should have been consulted prior to any changes in insurance.

Mr. Urban responded that the previous carrier, Trident Insurance, refused to renew the policy; prompting the Town to "shop" for insurance. Mr. Urban outlined the town's recent insurance history, i.e. MIRMA, CIRMA and the several policies held throughout the town including workman's comp., accidental death etc. He continued that a presentation was made to the Fire Department prior to the changes being enacted.

A copy of the policy will be provided to the Fire Department. A meeting with USI and the Fire Department is scheduled for 10/14/11.

Mr. Ehlert suggested Mr. Urban meet with Chief Jenkins and USI prior the 10/14/11 meeting.

Open Space Ordinance – Tom Odell

A copy of the Conservation Commission's Open Space Designation proposal was included in the BOS packet. Mr. Odell commented that the Commission is not suggesting that the Town Forest be placed under the Conservation Commission's management.

Mr. Hall made a motion to designate Open Space as recommended by the Conservation Commission. Mr. Bishop seconded the motion. The motion passed unanimously.

WPCF Funding Request

Mr. Bishop made a motion to authorize the First Selectman to sign the Clean Water Fund Grant agreement contingent upon Town Meeting approval and review by Town Counsel. Mr. Hall seconded the motion. The motion passed unanimously.

Please note, at the BOS meeting dated 7/11/11, the BOS unanimously voted to move this capital appropriation to the BOF for further action.

Request from Sharon Lessard – Energy Assistance Staffing

Included in the BOS packet was a request to hire a part time Energy Assistant. There is adequate space available downstairs and this Assistant will work during the Town's normal operating hours.

Mr. Ehlert reported that funding for energy assistance has been decreased significantly. He suggested the Town contact our representatives for assistance.

Mr. Bishop made a motion to forward an appropriation request to the BOF in the amount of \$4,050.00 to provide seasonal staffing to assist residents applying for Emergency Energy assistance. Mr. Ehlert seconded the motion. The motion passed unanimously.

Vacancies and Nominations

First Reading – Sharon Lessard – two year term – Regional Mental Health Board

Harbor Ordinance

At the 7/20/11 Special BOS meeting, the BOS took action on an amendment to Chapter 8 of the Westbrook Code of Ordinances adding a new Article V entitled Mooring Regulations for Patchogue River Mooring Field. The language in the Ordinance was subsequently changed. A copy of this change was included in the BOS packet.

Mr. Hall made a motion to amend the Ordinance as presented and forward same to Town Meeting. Mr. Bishop seconded the motion. The motion passed unanimously.

Protocol for Use of Contingency Funds

This item was tabled for future discussion.

Town Meeting Date

Mr. Bishop made a motion to set Monday, October 3, 2011 @ 7:00 p.m. as the date for a Town Meeting. Mr. Ehlert seconded the motion. The motion passed unanimously.

Appropriations

Hurricane Irene Expenses

Included in the BOS packet was a recommendation from Mr. Urban, Director of Finance, regarding funding of Hurricane Irene related expenses.

Mr. Hall made a motion to forward an appropriation request to the BOF in the amount of \$400,000 to fund expenses incurred as a result of Hurricane Irene. Work will be performed in advance of FEMA reimbursement and the BOF will determine the source of funding. Mr. Ehlert seconded the motion. The motion passed unanimously.

Harbor Patrol

Mr. Bishop made a motion to forward an appropriation request to the BOF in the amount of \$4,709.50 for the replacement of the radar unit on the Town's harbor patrol boat. Mr. Hall seconded the motion. The motion passed unanimously.

Cupola Request

A request received from Loren Baker in the amount of \$17,600 for Riggio Cupola Window Replacement and Restoration was included in the BOS packet.

Mr. Ehlert reported that in the past 2 years, significant funds have been provided for window replacement at the Riggio Building.

Mr. Bishop made a motion to table the Cupola Window Replacement discussion. Mr. Ehlert seconded the motion. The motion passed unanimously.

EOC Antennas

Mr. Ehlert made a motion to forward an appropriation request to the BOF in the amount of \$12,000 to repair the EOC communication antennas damaged as a result of Hurricane Irene. Mr. Bishop seconded the motion. The motion passed unanimously.

Please note that the \$400,000 requested for Hurricane Irene expenses will include the \$12,000 antenna request. However, it was determined that the antennas need to be repaired ASAP and cannot wait until Town Meeting approval on October 3, 2011.

APPROVAL OF MINUTES

Mr. Hall made a motion to approve the minutes from the August 24, 2011 BOS meeting. Mr. Bishop seconded the motion. The motion passed unanimously.

Mr. Bishop made a motion to approve the minutes from the September 1, 2011 BOS meeting. Mr. Hall seconded the motion. Mr. Bishop and Mr. Hall voted in favor. Mr. Ehlert abstained from voting. The motion passed.

ADJOURNMENT

Mr. Bishop made a motion to adjourn the meeting at 6:50 p.m. Mr. Hall seconded the motion. The motion passed unanimously.

Respectfully Submitted,

Attest:

Suzanne Helchowski
Administrative Assistant

Noel Bishop
First Selectman