

*BOARD OF SELECTMEN
EXECUTIVE SESSION MEETING MINUTES
Thursday, May 19, 2022*

ATTENDANCE: Chair Ed Watson and Selectmen Kathleen Kastrinelis, Jason Naves, Mark Parenteau, Daniel MacDonald

ABSENT:

ALSO PRESENT: Rebecca Oldham, Town Administrator; Robert Valentine, Fire Chief

At 6pm, Chairman Watson opened the meeting.

Chairman Watson stated in accordance with MGL Ch. 30A §21(a)2, the Board will now convene in executive session to discuss strategy in preparations for negotiations with the Fire Chief.

Selectman Kastrinelis moved the motion, seconded by Selectman Naves, and it was unanimously approved with a roll call vote.

Chief Valentine explained he updated the proposal to remove requirement for the EMT Certification and the Associates/Bachelors Degree and altered the compensation for the next three years. He kept the Board's proposal that the 40% buyback of sick time be reduced to 30% in line with all other employees.

Selectman MacDonald said it seems like a good compromise.

Selectman Watson states he is paid less than some lieutenant positions in neighboring communities.

Selectman Naves stated he thought everything was agreed upon at the last meeting and asked what had changed. Chief Valentine responded he said he would think about to over vacation and he did and presented a new proposal.

Selectman Kastrinelis asked the Chair where he got the new proposed contract. The Chair responded that he got it from the Chief and then gave it to the Town Administrator. Selectman Kastrinelis stated that at the last meeting the Board voted for all communications to go through the Town Administrator and for the Town Administrator to finalize the contract.

Selectman Kastrinelis stated at the beginning of the process we were led to believe you would be able to meet the qualifications that were required as part of the job description. You said you were working on the fire chief accreditation and degree, but then there was a pandemic and we were on lock down. So we said okay. We understand things stop, the Board then voted later that year to give you the additional money for the EMT certification and for the fire certification, as we were told you received both. Now we are removing required qualification for an approved job description. My concern is transparency and ethics. We posted this job requesting these qualifications. If we opened up the search without those requirements, then we could have received a different pool of qualified applicants. It is not ethical and it is not fair. Additionally, come to find out the EMT certification was never received and the EMT is required as a term of your current contract. I have some reservations about changing the job description that was posted because you do not feel that those qualifications are relevant.

Selectman MacDonald says the job description you reference says relevant experience and the chief has done a good job.

Selectman Kastrinelis stated we had a group of fire chiefs help us write a job description and the Board agreed to post that description with those requirements.

Selectman MacDonald stated this is a new day and a new board. And in my professional opinion this job description should not hold us hostage.

Selectman Kastrinelis called for a point of order and asked that Selectman MacDonald stop addressing her in an insulting manner and shouting.

Chairman Watson state Selectman Kastrinelis had the floor for 10 minutes and not it is time for Selectman MacDonald.

Selectman MacDonald stated he would not belabor the point.

Selectman Kastrinelis continued, stating her concern is how we treat our employees and how we conduct our contracts. You agreed every time you were going to do those endeavors. So you have breached the current contract. Why wouldn't you already work with what we are offering you?

Chief Valentine stated I am not in breach of contract. There was a worldwide pandemic. I am meeting those requirements. My experience over the last 42 years exceeds a bachelor's degree. During the pandemic and after I was able to go to the Chief Fire class and I passed it with flying colors which exceeds the bachelor's degree.

Selectman Kastrinelis asked then why not continue with the contract presented to you?

Chief Valentine stated because this is a negotiation and I am running a fire department. He felt as if he is fighting a battle with the economy and he needs a raise he can survive on. He wanted the money up front.

Selectwoman Kastrinelis stated that she had no problems revising the language to reflect that the monies be received up front as long as those qualifications and requirements remained.

Chairman Watson stated let's move this forward. We have a right to negotiate with the fire chief. I think we are lucky to have someone who can do the job like he has. I think we have a good deal.

Selectman Parenteau stated that education does not mean much to him and he is self taught and that he wants to take care of people at Town Hall because he was not and that is why he left. Everyone in the station likes you so I think that you are doing a good job.

Selectman MacDonald made a motion to accept the counter proposal from the Fire Chief and sign the contract, seconded by Selectman Parenteau. Chairman Watson called for a roll call vote 4-0-1. Selectman Kastrinelis voting in opposition.

Selectman Parenteau made a motion to adjourn at 6:49pm, seconded by Selectman MacDonald. The Chair called for a roll call vote and it was unanimously approved.

*Respectfully submitted,
Rebecca Oldham*