

*BOARD OF SELECTMEN
EXECUTIVE SESSION MEETING MINUTES
Monday, March 28, 2022*

ATTENDANCE: Chair Ed Watson and Selectmen Kathleen Kastrinelis, Jason Naves, Bill O’Neil, Daniel MacDonald

ABSENT:

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

At 6:30pm, 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 O’Neil moved the motion, seconded by Selectman Naves, and it was unanimously approved with a roll call vote.

Chief Valentine said the incentives are “insulting”. He is the lowest paid fire chief in Massachusetts. Even at the final figure as in his proposal, \$99,000, he would still be the lowest paid chief. In some cases, he is paid less than a lieutenant in a department. There are no other surrounding chief positions that require a degree. He answers all calls and puts in countless hours. He is a credentialed fire chief and the requirements to maintain those credentials are redundant in comparison to the incentives proposed by the Board. He asked the board, ‘Am I not doing a good job?’

Board responded that there have been no complaints about the job that is being performed and there has not been any negative complaints.

Selectman Kastrinelis stated that the Board was informed by the Chief that the Chief was just about done with getting a degree and that the Chief had the EMT certification. And neither of those are true.

Chief Valentine stated he thought he had received his EMT certification through the program due to the need for EMT personnel during COVID. He still needs to take the exam and the refresher courses through Trinity. Those classes with Trinity were on hold due to the pandemic. He is still a certified EMT in RI. He is working on getting an associates degree and registering with Northshore Community College. He plans to start back up in the Fall.

Selectman Kastrinelis stated the budget is very tight. We gave a fair offer and one we are able to afford. We advertised for a Chief with a degree and we are giving the Chief an opportunity to stay here and get those credentials with a monetary incentive to do so. That is not an insult it is a reward for working on the path that was laid out in the job advertisement that was applied for 3 years ago.

Chief Valentine stated he knew the budget was tight and his budget only increased 2.5%.

Selectman Kastrinelis stated that the department budget was cut to accommodate the increase so that is an inaccurate. And there are concerns about being able to pay the two new full time firefighters next year.

Selectman Naves stated that the current contract proposal provides the monetary increases that are closer to what the Chief is looking for but that the language is not clear. The language should be updated to state, 'The Chief will be granted a two thousand dollar (\$2,000) salary increase after the successful competition of 13 credits, 26 credits and 39 credits.' Is that more acceptable?

Chief Valentine stated yes, it is better and that he assumed the way it was written was only a one-time addition of \$2,000.

Selectman MacDonald asked about doing a one-year contract to see if there was more room in the budget to do a larger increase the next year.

Chief Valentine stated he wanted a three year for security.

Selectman Naves made a motion to update the language to add '13, 26 and 39 credits' and that the Town Administrator would finalize the contract with the Chief for signature, seconded by Selectman Kastrinelis. Chairman Watson called for a roll call vote – all voted affirmatively.

Selectman O'Neil made a motion to adjourn at 7pm, seconded by Selectman Naves. The Chair called for a roll call vote and it was unanimously approved.

*Respectfully submitted,
Rebecca Oldham*