

THE MINUTES OF THE WARRANT COMMITTEE MEETING MAY 22, 2002

Chairman Brusch called the meeting to order at 6:15 PM.

Members absent : J. Heigham, M. Widmer, and D. Hobbs

Also present: : Selectman Anne Marie Mahoney, Selectman Paul Solomon, Town Administrator Melvin Kleckner, Assistant to the Town Administrator Joyce Munro, Director of Finance and Administration Dr. Gerry Missal, and Town Treasurer Susan Kendall Freiner

Discussion of Warrant Articles for Town Meeting

Article 10 Position Classification and Compensation Plan (with 12 members present)

Chairman Brusch spoke to the Committee regarding Article 10. She informed them the previous classification system is in the 1999 Town of Belmont Annual Report. The actual classifications are not within the Warrant Committee's scope. However, the pay for each classification is within the Committee's scope of discussion. She mentioned it has been discussed to put this Article on hold until a potential Town Meeting in the fall.

Member Clark recommended keeping the Article and having Town Meeting vote on it tonight. He would like to tell Town Meeting that in the upcoming year, the Warrant Committee would participate more in and study the salary process. The problem with that is the classification system changes so infrequently. There will not be much difference between what the Committee can do now and what the Committee can do in September.

Member Hofmann asked if the "to be determined" salaries from an earlier classification worksheet had been determined. Chairman Brusch said the Board of Selectmen discussed that management at max salary get a cost of living increase (typically 3%). She further explained the Board of Selectmen took all of the management people who fall into the "to be determined" and figured out their 3% increase and put it into a pool. From that pool, the merit increases will be allotted.

Member Hilgenberg is concerned the Warrant Committee is asking the Town to vote for an override even while there are employees getting large raises. She was under the impression the classification plan was already approved. She will vote to not approve the Article tonight.

Member Curtis thinks the Committee should tell the Board of Selectmen and the Town Administrator they have not given the Committee time to review this, and the Warrant Committee should recommend the Article be taken off the Warrant at this time. He would like further information regarding the salary ranges and how they pertain to collective bargaining units.

Member Flewelling questioned the role the Personnel Board has in this issue. Chairman Brusch responded she was not sure how much the Personnel Board is involved. She

reflected that in prior years, information was given to the Warrant Committee much more in advance, including presentations, so they had a better handle on this topic.

Member Clark is concerned the Warrant Committee is asking voters to fund a budget that is built on something the Committee has publicly announced are not ready to vote on yet.

Member Oates agrees we need to find a politically neutral way to present this topic to Town Meeting.

The Committee asked Mr. Kleckner what would be affected if these Articles would be tabled to the fall. He responded not much would be affected, and noted this does not affect School, elected officials, and civil service employees. He also said the Personnel Board had made some recommendations, and they have been helpful regarding the performance based increases. Mr. Kleckner read the Town Bylaw regarding classification plans. Member Miller questioned if this has any impact on collective bargaining. He responded the contracts pertaining to FY03 are already in place based on the salaries in this new classification system. She asked if Town Meeting did not vote favorably on this, what would happen? He said this would not affect unions but management and non-union employees. Member Curtis pointed out this is all good reason to postpone the Article until the fall. Member Hofmann asked if a person were already at the top step, would they even get a cost of living in place. Mr. Kleckner answered cost of living increases were given out last year. Mr. Kleckner believes there are employees that are compensated higher than the old compensation range that is formally in place. Member Hofmann noted all of these issues really prove the point this should be put off until the fall.

Member Flewelling said if people have questions, then there is no real harm in deferring the Article. He questioned if that would affect employees for July 1, and Mr. Kleckner responded yes. Member Flewelling also pointed out he does not think there are too many people in Town that will relate this Article to the override.

Member Miller wondered since we have been paying people according to this scale already, if we have de facto approved this plan.

Selectman Brownsberger note there are many ways employees are being paid: collective bargaining agreements, appropriations that assume certain levels of compensation, and people are already being paid based on this new classification plan. In a certain sense, Town Meeting has already taken action to approve these pay levels and now they are doing it again in this framework. There is nobody that is not subject to the appropriations going on. His concern is the verbiage in the front, not the scales in the back. He would argue this should be approved.

Member White is afraid of sending the message, "The Warrant Committee hasn't had a chance to look at it, we are not voting for it, but you as Town Meeting go ahead."

Member Clark's view of the proposal is in the right direction. He believes the Committee ought to confirm the Board of Selectmen can go for a merit-based policy for management. He suggested Town Meeting uncouple the two articles tonight. The policy guide is simple enough to go through tonight. He thinks the Committee ought to make the point that we are using the Guide in the current budget, as indeed we are. But before the policy guide is adopted for the future, the Committee would like to understand it more. So before we adopt it as a stand-alone guide for future conduct, the Committee would

like to defer it to September. He is reluctant to cast doubt on what the Committee has already recommended or done.

Member Oates wants to make the point the Town has used this for the past few years, but the Committee would like to review it again.

Member Curtis said if there are no problems in deferring this Article, then defer it. Selectman Brownsberger does not mind holding off on this action until the fall as well. Based on this discussion, the Board of Selectmen will move to dismiss Article 10 tonight.

Member Hofmann made a motion, Member Hilgenberg seconded said motion, and it was unanimously voted to defer Article 10.

Articles 9 Personnel Policy Guide Revisions (with 13 members present)

Mr. Kleckner regrets the Warrant Committee is not comfortable with this classification study. He would prefer to have Town Meeting approve Article 9, and he pointed out the biggest issue is the performance based compensation part of this plan.

Member Hofmann made a motion, and Member White seconded said motion, to defer Article 9.

Mr. Kleckner reviewed thoroughly each change to the Guide. He clarified the change on page five that employees in the mid-point range (market rate) and above are within the performance evaluation range. Member Morley asked why not include this for employees from minimum to mid-point instead of considering them in the "developmental range." He and the Personnel Board are still in discussions regarding this point.

Member Hofmann deferred his original motion.

- Member Flewelling made a motion, Member Hofmann seconded said motion, and it was voted by majority in favor of recommending said
- Selectman Brownsberger, Chairman Brusca, Member Clark, Member Curtis, Member Flewelling, Member Hilgenberg, Member Hofmann, Member Miller, Member Morley, Member Oates, Member Schafer, and Member White voted to recommend said action.
- Member McCormick abstained from said action.

Member Flewelling made a motion, and it was unanimously voted to adjourn the meeting at 7:28 PM.

Respectfully submitted,

Kristina E. Frizzell

Interim Recording Clerk