

**Town of Auburn
Joint Personnel Board
Board of Selectmen, Library Trustees & Police Commission
November 3, 2022**

Selectmen Present: Keith Leclair, Michael Rolfe and Thomas Carroll

Library Trustees Present: Nancy Mayland, Elizabeth Michaud and Alternate Trustee Cindy Berling

Police Commissioners Present: David Dion, and Patrick Bergeron

Also Present: Finance Director Patricia Rousseau and Town Administrator Christian Sterndale

Absent: Police Commissioner Joseph Rossino

Mr. Keith Leclair convened the meeting at 7:00 PM

Approval Of Minutes-

October 19,2021

Mr. Bergeron made a motion to approve the Minutes

Nancy Mayland second the motion.

All were in favor.

Discussion on health insurance rates-

Mr. Leclair started the conversation to mention that the health insurance rates for 2023 were announced at 17.9%. He proceeded to inform the board that Mimi Friolet has been working with other health insurance providers for other rates to be considered for 2023.

Mr. Bergeron added that the rate hike is uniform across the board for all health insurance providers. Mr. Leclair had mentioned that he had not heard that. Mr. Bergeron shared that his company had seen an increase of 13.50% and had changed plans to bring it to 7%.

The discussion had moved on to the next topic.

Discussion of Possible personnel changes to merit recognition-

Mr. Leclair mentioned that currently employees who have reached the top of the pay scale of a step 20 receive a one-time bonus of \$500.

Keith addressed Ms. Rousseau to confirm the payout of the bonus to those employees. Ms. Rousseau shared with the board that the increase happens on the anniversary date of that employee.

Mr. Leclair mentioned that he did some reviews this year with employees that expressed the discontent with the \$500 bonus. He proceeded to inform the board that it could be roughly 1% or less depending on what grade the employee was on. Whereas a typical Step increase is 2% for all other employees.

Mr. Leclair asked Ms. Rousseau how many employees currently were at the top of the scale. Ms. Rousseau had confirmed about 3 or 4 employees were currently at that point. He asked the board for any comments or recommendations of possibly changing the policy.

Ms. Mayland asked if those employees just get a COLA and no step. Mr. Leclair confirmed her question and told her that the \$500 was instead of a step. Mr. Bergeron asked if the normal step was a 2%. Mr. Leclair confirmed yes. He also mentioned that this is not compounded like COLA is it's a one-time pay to the employee as a merit recognition.

Mr. Leclair recapped the reason for the discussion was to consider if we leave the current policy as is that those employees receive \$500 for the merit increase or should we change it.

Ms. Michaud asked for clarification on if it was just a 1% increase. Mr. Leclair said that it depended on the labor grade and that it could be more or less.

Ms. Mayland asked if we are discussing if we should increase it or change it to a percentage. Mr. Leclair said that is what was on the table for discussion. He recalled that merit recognition did not exist 5 years ago, and Ms. Mayland agreed.

Ms. Michaud if the average step is 2% that maybe they should make it uniform for the employees at the top of the pay scale. Keith had commented that it would be extending the 2%. Ms. Mayland disagreed and said that it's not compounding like a regular step. He mentioned that it's compounded based on the COLA and Ms. Mayland agreed but added that it's not compounded on the step Mr. Leclair agreed. All board members agreed.

Mr. Leclair reiterated that it's currently \$500 and the discussion is about if they increase the amount, make it a percentage, or keep it as is. Mr. Dion spoke, he said he liked the 2% and Ms. Mayland agreed. Mr. Dion reasoned that the step is 2% and we should change it from \$500 to 2% to keep it even.

Mr. Bergeron had asked about possibly increasing the wage scale to reflect a higher step. Ms. Mayland did not agree nor did Mr. Leclair. Mr. Bergeron then brought up the possibility of doing a wage study to keep up with salaries.

Mr. Dion thought changing the \$500 to a 2% would keep it fair.

Mr. Leclair asked if anyone wanted to make a motion.

Mr. Dion made a motion to change the longevity to 2%. Ms. Gates from the audience said that they were not discussing longevity and that they were discussing the merit increase. Mr. Dion amended his motion to reflect the wording.

Mr. Dion made a motion to change the merit increase from \$500 to 2%.

Ms. Michaud second the motion.

No further discussion.

All were in favor. Motion Passed

Consideration of Cola-

Mr. Leclair mentioned the COLA is an average of social security and CPI Northeast bringing the COLA for 2023 to 7.95% effective on April 1, 2023. He asked Miss. Rousseau if the base cost for salaries is \$2,494,411, she confirmed yes. He explained to the board that the first year cost for COLA would be an additional \$115,072 with second year at \$198,306. Conversation carried on stating the COLA and step would be roughly \$165,000 bring base, step, and COLA to 2,659,372 for the total cost. He asked the board for any discussion or thoughts.

Mr. Dion commented that the cost of living is not a raise, and that the COLA is there for employees to afford expenses and utilities in order to survive. Taking away the COLA would do a disservice to town employees. He believes that they should give the COLA and Ms. Mayland agreed.

Ms. Mayland made a motion to recommend the 7.95% COLA.

Mr. Dion Second the motion.

No further discussion.

All were in favor. Motion Passed

Consideration of Step-

A discussion took place outlining what the boards duties are regarding motions vs recommendations. Mr. Sterndale stated that the board can only vote on personnel policy changes and recommend budget items.

Mr. Leclair mention needing to make a motion on step increases.

Mr. Leclair made a motion to recommend the 2% step.

Ms. Mayland 2nd the motion.

No further discussion.

All were in favor. Motion passed

Consideration of Longevity-

Ms. Mayland asked how long an employee had to work for the town to be eligible for longevity. Mr. Leclair answered at least 5 years in order to receive it. He discussed that 2022 is \$10,450, 2023 will be \$11,050.

Mr. Leclair asked if anyone wanted to make a motion.

Mr. Rolfe made a motion to recommend the 2023 longevity as presented.

Mr. Dion 2nd the motion.

No further discussion.

All were in favor. Motion Passed

Any other business-

Mr. Bergeron mentioned doing a new wage study because one hadn't been done since 2011. Mr. Leclair stated that it would have to be budgeted for. He did also inform the board that there are several items driving the budget cost such as: \$700,000 – \$800,000 up in the budget causing a \$1 increase on taxes without the school budget, \$160,000 in COLA and step, \$50,000 in health insurance, two departments asking for a parttime employee to go fulltime, the fire department asking to add 2 fulltime employees to the roster, the cost in energy prices increasing the budget \$100,000, rumors of the school budget being up \$1 million, and also next year the town wide valuation costing \$130,000. Mr. Bergeron asked if the valuation would raise taxes. Mr. Leclair mentioned that it wouldn't necessarily raise the taxes and that in fact it may

cause the taxes to go down. All agreed that waiting till 2024 to do a new wage study.

Mr. Bergeron did ask about possibly looking into what the town covers in cost for health insurance. Mr. Leclair mentioned that it wasn't something they wanted to consider at this time, and it was common for what is covered. Mr. Leclair asked Ms. Rousseau what the town currently covered. She mentioned that the town covers 90% for a single and 85% for a 2 person and a family for medical coverage.

Ms. Deeb from the audience asked what the duties were of the personnel board were. Ms. Mayland mentioned that the make changes to the personnel policy and recommendations for budget. Mr. Leclair stated that the final decision for budget must go through the Budget Committee. Ms. Deeb stated that the police commission did not have the power to give her a raise, Ms. Mayland agreed and said that the personnel board can only do what was in the scope of the discussion that was had tonight. Mr. Leclair also confirmed that it must go through Selectmen and Budget Committee. Mr. Dion stated that several years back they wanted to give Ms. Deeb a two step raise. It was brought to the previous town Administrator and was denied because it had to be presented to the personnel board. Ms Mayland mentioned that there is noting stated in the personnel policy that allows that to happen.

Mr. Sterndale mentioned that the Joint Personnel Board authority is only what was collectively given. He did also state that they have precedence in a political sense not legal.

Mr. Dion mentioned that he would like to also see the town do a new wage study at some point to bring employees up to speed. He also stated that Mr. Herman mentioned that it should be done every 5 years. Mr. Leclair said he did not believe that it is required.

Ms. Gates from the audience wanted to mention the verbiage used in the personnel policy was not the way that the board had voted on the merit increase discussion. She read from the personnel policy on page 18-19 (4:1.3) that "If awarded, a merit increase shall be a one-step increase for the appropriate labor grade and step for the employee."

Mr. Leclair also read on page 18 of the personnel policy, "For employees who have reached the maximum of step 20, the town will consider the issuance of a merit increase recognition of a lump sum \$500 payment for full-time employees in lieu of a step increase at the time of the employee's anniversary date of employment with the town based on a positive performance review.

Mr. Leclair did state that it was in the policy as a merit recognition, and we should amend our motion to stat merit recognition not a merit increase.

Mr. Dion agreed and amended the motion for merit increase to state merit recognition.

Ms. Michaud second the motion.

No further discussion.

All in favor. Motion passed

Adjourn-

Nancy Mayland made a motion to adjourn.

Keith Leclair second the motion.

No further discussion

All in favor.

Adjourned at 8:05 pm