

Town of



Amherst Massachusetts

PERSONNEL BOARD

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Meeting Minutes

Personnel Board September 20, 2018 First Floor Meeting Room, Town Hall, 9:15am

Present: Tony Butterfield, Catharine Porter, Charles Scherpa, Chris Hoffmann.

Absent: Rebecca Woodland.

Others present: Deborah Radway, Joanne Misiaszek, Connie Kruger, Sonia Aldrich, Paul Bockelman, Sean Hannon, Jennifer LaFountain, and Theresa Fleurent

Old Business:

- **Agenda Review/Additions** –None.
- **Minutes** of May 2018 minutes approved as presented, voted 4-0

New Business

- Proposal to update the Part Time Hourly Employee Salary Schedule to comply with the January 1, 2019 increase to MA minimum wage presented by Ms. Radway. The minimum wage in Amherst and in the state is currently \$11.00/hour. It increases to \$12.00 hour on January 1, 2019. The MA minimum wage will subsequently increase by \$0.75 each year until 2023 when it is \$15.00/hour.

The existing July 1, 2017 salary schedule contains 6 salary levels, each with 9 steps. To meet the new \$12.00 threshold and to ensure continued differentiation between steps, a 2% cost of living adjustment was applied to the whole salary schedule similar to that provided to other employee groups. Any step then still below \$12.00 per hour was adjusted to that amount. All hourly wages on the part time schedule will meet or exceed \$12.00 per hour.

Mr. Butterfield asked if this salary schedule will impinge upon on the starting wages for the Full time employee Salary Schedules. Ms. Radway replied that all regular current full time base wages are already above \$15/hour.

Following discussion, the Personnel Board voted 4-0 to recommend to the Select Board that they adopt a Salary Schedule for Part time Hourly employees to be effective 1/1/2019 that provides an across the board 2% cost of living increase over the July 1, 2017 Salary Schedule, and further, to raise the minimum wage rate to \$12.00 per hour. The Personnel Board also recommended to the Town Manager that Department Heads be encouraged to budget for a provide step increases for those part time hourly employees eligible to receive them. It was noted that this proposal does not seek to provide a greater impact on wages than is required by law, leaving any consideration to do so to the new Town Council.

- Preview of Charter and Personnel Staffing Changes – The Town Manager provided a summary of changes in the Charter that will lead to some personnel changes:
 1. A new position of Clerk to the Council is created and is hoped to be filled by the newly appointed Town Clerk;

2. Creation of a separate License Commission will require support staff for that entity. The Manager is looking to house the new function within the Conservation and Development/ Inspectional Services area on the 2nd Floor. This will create a “one-stop shopping” for all seeking licenses/permits in one central location. Job descriptions are being created and a request for reclassification of an existing position may be made at a future meeting.
3. The Charter creates a “Community Participation Officer”. The Town Manager hopes to reconfigure an existing IT position that administers much of the Town social media, the website and some software applications management. This position will administer all public facing end user software and will work with town manager’s office staff and Council to create new participation avenues. A position description is in process and a request for classification will be made at the Board’s next meeting.
4. Finance Director-Treasurer. This past summer, the Town Manager asked a retired Town Manager with a deep background in municipal finance to assess the strengths and vulnerabilities of our finance department staff (Assessors, Treasurer-Collector, Accounting and Town Clerk). We have a mature group, averaging over 20 years of service. Several plan to retire in the next 3 years. We are down 3 staff with senior level departures and the ambulance billing function contracted out. The consultant’s report was reassuringly positive- we have a devoted and experienced crew who have stepped up to fill the voids.

However, it was noted that the effort cannot be sustained over the long term and functional area leadership is needed. The Acting Collector expressed interest in advancement and wants to learn the Treasury function. The Acting Treasurer intends to retire in the near future and wants time to train the Acting Collector. We resurrected the Finance Director-Treasurer model to support this effort. (John Musante held this title before he was promoted to Assistant Town Manager.) The goal is to provide reinforcement above the Assistant Treasurer (with FD-T) and below the Collector (adding front counter help) to enable the training time to allow advancement and succession planning.

There was much discussion regarding these changes and the desire to promote from within. Mr. Scherpa felt we should promote from within when it is evident we can do so and perhaps also save some money. Ms. Kruger said the path of least resistance is not always the wisest path for the community. Ms. Radway shared the logic behind creating the Collector position as a stepping-stone for the current employee who has demonstrated growth capability.

Sean Hannon, IT Director, spoke to the Community Participation officer tasks. He stressed the need to publicize and sustain the Town narrative and to distribute clear information in a consistent, recognizable and branded manner. Ms. Kruger agrees there is a need for this position.

Jennifer LaFountain, Acting Collector, advocates for a fair classification by taking into account that with her promotion to Collector her Assistant Collector position will not be filled therefore she will continue to do both jobs and the department will be down by one position. Jennifer also points out that the Collector position should grade out in similarity to other department head classifications.

Mr. Butterfield acknowledged that people are passionate about opportunities and excited about the changes. These positions will need classifying by this board in October. Emphasis will need to focus on the position and tasks, and not the person in the position.

5. Mr. Butterfield acknowledged the impending January 2019 retirement of Deb Radway and sought to clarify the Human Resources and Human Rights Director position in particular the Human Rights piece. If those duties are removed, where and who would do those tasks. There are internal conflicts

sometimes felt with issues that arise between Town issues and citizens and/or employees. Ms. Kruger feels that Human Rights requires a legal background and training. Mr. Scherpa asked that the HR Director job description be brought to the next meeting for review.

6. Other Personnel and Recruitment Update- (Ms. Misiaszek) Tyler Martins has been hired as a new Patrol Officer starting the Western Mass Police Academy in October. He is a Westfield State University grad and is fluent in Portuguese/Cape Verdean. Other active recruitments ongoing at this time include a shared Finance Customer Assistant II, and an Information Specialist with over 60 diverse applicants.
 7. Staffing Update- (Joanne) There have been 2 exits since July: 1 retirement in Library, 1 medical in Dispatch). There have been 5 new hires since July: Executive Assistant to the Town Manager, Town Clerk, Parking Enforcement (internal promotion), Emergency Dispatcher and DPW Mechanic.
- Next meetings are scheduled for October 17th 9am, November 20th (Tuesday) 9am.

Meeting Adjourned 10:45am
Joanne Misiaszek,
Note taker