

Select Board
Executive Session Meeting Minutes
Monday, March 27, 2023
Stow Town Building

Present in the Warren Room: Megan Birch-McMichael, Ellen Sturgis, Cortni Frecha, Ingeborg Hegemann Clark, and Town Administrator Denise Dembkoski

Present Remotely: Hector Constantzos

At 4:03p.m. Board member Frecha moved to enter into Executive Session pursuant to MGL c. 30A, Section 21 (a) (2), to conduct strategy sessions in preparation for negotiation with non-union personnel and to conduct negotiations with non-union personnel (Town Administrator);

And in accordance with Section 21 (a) (3) for the purpose of discussing strategy with respect to collective bargaining if the Chair declares that an open meeting may have a detrimental effect on the negotiating position of the public body;

And in accordance with Section 21 (a) (3) for the purpose of discussing strategy with respect to litigation (Opioid Settlement Litigation) if the Chair declares that an open meeting may have a detrimental effect on the negotiating position of the public body;.

The Chair publicly declared that in her opinion, holding these discussions in an open meeting would have a detrimental impact on the negotiation position of the Town.

Ms. Hegemann seconded the motion, and it was unanimously approved on a roll call vote.

To conduct strategy sessions in preparation for negotiation with non-union personnel and to conduct negotiations with non-union personnel (Town Administrator)

The Board discussed Ms. Dembkoski's current contract and reviewed the documentation she provided regarding what she's accomplished in her first 2 ½ years and comparable Town Administrator contracts. Ms. Dembkoski explained that the five new hires in the area in the last year have drastically driven up the cost of the position. She further explained that Stow and Bolton were very close in salary, but last month, the Bolton Select Board approved a large adjustment (retro to July 1, 2022) to bring the Bolton TA up to comps and that leaves Stow's TA position at almost \$30,000 less than the average salary. Ms. Dembkoski informed the Board that she put together a proposal as a starting point to discuss with the Board, and one that would bring her up to the lower end of the comparable salary range.

The Board reviewed and discussed the proposal, which included the following:

- Increase her salary to \$175,000 for FY24, then \$180,000 in FY25, and \$185,000 for FY26;
- Increase the car allowance from \$1,500 to \$2,500;

- Increase the cell phone allowance from \$1,000 to \$2,000;
- Authorize a 4-day work week. Ms. Dembkoski's current contract requires her to work 40 hours from Monday to Thursday and a half-day on Fridays, making her regular hours 46, not counting additional time in the office or meetings. This change would eliminate the half-day on Friday.
 - Along with this change, vacation and personal days would be converted to hours; and
 - Should a holiday fall on a Friday, the Town Administrator would be entitled to either the preceding Thursday or the following Monday off in observance of the holiday.

The Board discussed the comparable salaries in comparison to the community's annual budget. Ms. Dembkoski provided the Board with the percentage of the total budget that the TA salary was in each community. Stow has one of the lowest percentages for the salary out of the eight provided.

The Board would like to have a slide available at Town Meeting to show the discrepancy in area TA salaries for when the question on the increase comes up. Additionally, Mr. Constantzos asked if it was possible to show what the salaries were in 2020 for all these towns to see how they've changed over the three years.

Ms. Frecha made a motion to accept the Town Administrator's proposed contract terms as written. Ms. Hegemann seconded the motion and it was unanimously approved on a roll call vote.

Discussing strategy with respect to collective bargaining:

Ms. Dembkoski gave the Board an overview of the tentative agreement with the Fire Union. Should there be no concerns from the Board, Ms. Dembkoski would add the agreement to an upcoming agenda for ratification, as the Fire Union approves of the changes outlined.

Ms. Dembkoski also provided an overview of the police negotiations and where that contract stands at this point. She highlighted the areas that have not been agreed to yet and her rationale for proceeding with certain items.

There were no votes taken for this item.

Discussing strategy with respect to litigation (Opioid Settlement Litigation)

Ms. Dembkoski presented the Board with the new Opioid Settlement information for Teva, Allergan, CVS, Walgreens, and Walmart. She outlined the small amount of funding the Town is expecting over the next ten years and said the Police Chief supports joining the litigation as any funding would be used for educational outreach, materials, Narcan, and more.

Ms. Frecha made a motion that the Town of Stow join the new National Opioid Settlements with Teva, Allergan, CVS, Walgreens, and Walmart. The motion was seconded by Mr. Constantzos and it was unanimously approved on a roll call vote.

Ms. Sturgis made a motion to close the Executive Session and adjourn the meeting at 5:15pm. After a second by Ms. Frecha, the motion was unanimously approved on a roll call vote.

Respectfully submitted,

Denise M. Dembkoski
Town Administrator