

Special Town Board Meeting held April 26, 2017 at 4:00 P.M. at the Town Hall in

Schroon Lake N.Y.

Present:

Town Supervisor: Michael Marnell

Councilpersons: Clara Phibbs, Roger Friedman, Meg Wood

Town Clerk: Patricia Savarie

Highway Superintendent: Dana Shaughnessy

Also Present: Jon Senecal, David Clark, Jim Roblee, Denise Paradis, William Van Gorp, Brent DeZalia, Jessica Botterbusch, Jane Bouchard, Richard Hall, William Jenks, Skip Mahler, Chip McCray

Supervisor Marnell called the meeting to order at 4:00 P.M. with a salute to the flag.

Wage and Salary Administration Program

Supervisor Marnell stated that most of the information that Public Sector collected is not correct. They did not compare salary, health benefits and what percentage the employees pay for their Health Insurance also Health Insurance is paid in full at retirement. Full time and part time employees are paid the same and in some Towns the part time employees are paid more since they have fewer hours and no benefits. They didn't consider holiday pay and I'm not happy with what they came up with. Just last year we gave a dollar raise the highest ever in one year. Wages can not be changed in mid year we did not budget for that, we can not make changes in 2017.

Councilman Friedman stated that part of this was to get a handle on this so the Board is treating everyone fairly. Sometimes we don't know if there are recommendations for employees or if we have left someone out, unless you look at a personnel sheet to see what the hourly rate is, sometimes there is not a department head to advocate for an employee and this was an opportunity to look across the board.

We did the original over 10 years ago and I think it was wise to take a look at and make sure we are in the range where we need to be. I think there are a couple employees that are way under payed and the Board should take care of it. We wanted Public Sector to look at the two departments that have changed the most, the Sewer and Water Department. Both of them have demands that are greater then the other departments in Town. The Sewer Department has a higher criteria, which we found out when we hired someone new for that Department. They have to have a higher degree in education now and it is not a position you can change, so the grade has changed. It has taken to long to get to this conversation, but as Mike says there has been a lot of inconsistency's. In a lot of Towns employees pay 25% of their Insurance and we should have job evaluations. Right now we have min., mid. and max, one of the

things the Board could do is have a starting salary and then have evaluations done by the Department heads, these are the bases for increases in salary along with the basic structure we have. Councilwoman Wood stated why would you have a mid? If you do that then after a number of certain years you are going to be guaranteed a higher wage. Jane Bouchard stated that the Library Staff have an annual review by the Library Board. Councilman Friedman stated do those reviews come to the Board? Jane stated no. Dave Clark stated that he and Jim Roblee were also reviewed by the state at least twice a year and that review comes to the board. If we are not doing our job it will show up as a mark on our license.

Councilwoman Wood stated if every employee is given a job description upon employment so that they know what is expected from them, then we can review them based on that and sit down with them a few times a year to evaluate them. Councilman Friedman stated that you could do a committee of 2 or 3 so it doesn't rest on the shoulders of one person and no conflict of interest. We are very lucky to have the employees that we have. Supervisor Marnell stated it will never work with elected officials involved because they will not write someone up afraid you will lose votes so your not going to be honest. Jane Bouchard stated that one of the things you did last time was to have Public Sector come in and sit with each employee to discuss what they do, the civil service job descriptions are very out dated. Jim Roblee stated yes they are, when we went to advertise to hire a new operator at the Sewer Plant they were using specs from 1970.

Dave Clark asked is this going to be a guideline? and what are the guide lines? I'm not understanding where we are going from here. Does it change per employee or is it something set in stone that we are going to follow? I would like to see something that is set in stone for new hires and old hires. Jon Senecal stated that if you had committees with a couple employees along with a couple Board Members and worked as a group. Denise Paradis stated like Meg said, do we need a mid point? How do you have a step between someone who just starts and someone who has worked 10 years and they come in at the same rate. Supervisor Marnell stated that was the way it use to be, if someone was more qualified then someone who as already there they started at the same rate. Supervisor Marnell gave an example when Jim Roblee started and made the same after probation as John Welch did. Jim Roblee said yes and we went to the Board many times to change that so seniority would make more and every time it was thrown to the side and nothing was done. Denise Paradis stated it says right here the first thing "Employees should feel that they are being paid fairly in relation to what other employees in the organization who are doing the same job are being paid" but where is your experience, by your time served? Councilwoman Wood stated do you automatically get raises because you have been working x

number of years? Denise stated I know but should it be the time served or by what you do? Councilwoman Wood stated if someone is not serving you well for 10 years why should that person get more then someone who is just starting out and is a go getter.

Jim Roblee stated that when I was at the Highway I took a cut in pay of \$3000.00 a year when I was training at the Sewer Department. Once I had my license I had to go to the Board four or five times over two years to get back up to an HEO level and I haven't had a raise since then except for a cost of living that every other employee has gotten. With all the upgrades we have gone through. I approached the Board a number of times on it, I asked the same thing over and over What is mid point? What is Max? I have never gotten an answer. Councilman Friedman stated the time frame even though we have never made a decision was 10 years for experience but one of the things that we have never taken into account is an employees expertise. Jim stated, there is nothing there for that 10 year, I don't see anybody getting bumped up for 10 years, I know I never saw one. When is this going to happen? Councilwoman Wood stated I think your job should have been bumped up because your job description changed and it became much more responsible. Jim stated the Board was well aware of it and well aware of the upgrades, they were told of the upgrades in advance. I came to the Board for 3 years in a row and I asked for \$600.00 more and I never got an answer, I was refused every time. I know things were promised to me and they never happened. You really need to get organized with something in writing. You cant have this gray area, its really going to hurt. Councilwoman Wood stated it sounds like the real fundamental issue is, the value of the time served compared to the responsibility that seems to be part of the major issue. Jane Bouchard stated yes, part of it, but also the person who has worked for 10 years and has experience should not be paid the same as the person just starting. Supervisor Marnell stated that the employee who has 10 years of service gets 3 weeks of vacation and the employee who has just started gets 1 week. Pat Savarie suggested they might want to consider going to steps like the School does. Denise Paradis stated yes then you come in at a step with experience. Councilwoman Wood asked, so does that mean you are given a step automatically? Pat stated yes about 1/2% per year and then if there was a raise you would get that to. Dana Shaughnessy stated what this company has come up with is going to create a lot of gray area and a lot of chatter because the way it is written up is not even close to right. Jim Roblee stated years ago at the Highway after you had been there so many years they would give you a percent increase in your wage. Councilman Friedman stated as we went through the recession we gave nothing, so basically this schedule stopped in its tracks, there were no changes in numbers.

Dana Shaughnessy stated an employee should not come in at the same rate as say Skip Mahler,

but they should come in at a decent rate, as Supervisor Marnell said it is getting harder and harder to get drivers and for me if I loose one driver it would hurt. My part time drivers don't get benefits so they should get a little more, we need to attract qualified people. When the Town hires a carpenter or and electrician they are always given more since they are part time help. Supervisor Marnell stated you need to keep salaries about average throughout the County. The Waste Water Plant you do need to have more education then most jobs but the best you can do is be average if you take all the Towns in the County. Jane Bouchard stated that the other thing you need to keep in consideration is the NYS minimum wage it is going up to \$15.00 an hour. After all these years of service I will be at minimum wage and that makes me upset. My staff will be below minimum wage pretty soon. Councilman Friedman stated that one of the things when you look at Town wages and benefits the direction that the Health Insurance is going, your benefits are more then your take home pay. Somewhere you have to have a base line we know its far from perfect you have to have some kind of frame work and I think what Dave said awhile back is that maybe we need a committee of 2 or 3 people along with 2 Board members to sit down and say what do we do? Do we keep the min, do we get rid of mid, do we throw it all out. I think evaluations to a degree are very good but they have to be objective and its hard to make decisions like that. Councilwoman Wood stated everyone is doing a really good job so you should not worry about getting a bad evaluation. Councilman Friedman stated one of the things as a board member we need to keep in mind is retention and keeping our workers happy. The past 6 or 7 years have been tough with working with the 2% cap, most taxpayers do not complain. The retention is very important and the Health Insurance. This year we offered two plans, only a few went with it. That would have saved the Town money and the employees money, but it was different and change is difficult. The plan we have now is the Cadillac plan but at sometime it will probably cease to exist, because no one is using it. I think the committee is a pretty good idea.

Dave Clark stated is anything going to get done this year? Supervisor Marnell stated, no not this year, it is not in the budget. Jim Roblee stated that when we had our Budget Workshop you all were aware of it. I have hit my max and Billy should be ay mid, so why was that not in the Budget? Dave Clark stated I was also at min and you told me you were waiting to see where the Ambulance Squad was coming in for a budget and that has nothing to do with the Water and Sewer Department Budget. I just met with 350 Water Department employees and there wasn't a one of them that hadn't raised water rates in the past ten years. We have been twenty years since we raised ours. The other Towns raise theirs every three to five years. Councilwoman Wood stated she would like to set up a Committee now and set up dates to meet. Dave Clark stated I just want to see if it's going to be worth the time if it's already set

in the Boards mind that nothing can be done in the next two years. I have been asking for the past nine years to be put at max and I get the same answer, well let's wait till this gets done. I've worked 29 years and I'm still not at max. Councilman Friedman stated right now we are at the end of April and you blink and the next thing you know summer is over and then we are in the budget season. You are talking 3 or 4 months and that's when we need to have everything done for next year. We don't know what's going to happen with raises but one of the things I said before we need to know what to do and this is what the committee can do. If there are employees left behind we need to know that and then we need to work out how we want to structure this policy. I think it needs to be a blend of experience and expertise factored in with an evaluation.

Jon Senecal asked how many will be on the committee? Councilman Friedman stated five members would be good. Councilwoman Phibbs stated when you start doing committees none of us are qualified to evaluate the employees, that is management's position. It is not hard for Mike and Dana or whoever else as to what is going on and we are the ones who made the mess. I feel sometimes as to the way you get rid of a problem is form a committee, I don't work that way. They are doing their job, what we have a problem with is this new document from Public Sector and we need to work on it as a Board. Councilman Friedman stated we need to have this done at budget time, the most important thing we don't know is what the process is for giving raises. Is it the 10 years that they automatically go up to the mid-point or is it a blend of experience and time of service. Supervisor Marnell stated you are going to have to forget that mid-point the time has come where the County waited 3 or 4 months to get guys to drive truck. Councilman Friedman stated we need to have a system and a process to raise people for years of service across the board, that is why we need a committee. Councilwoman Phibbs stated I'm not in favor of a committee, I don't think we have a problem evaluating employees. We need to get smarter in asking Public Sector what to do. We don't need to go to a committee, how did we get to where we are because we gave one person a raise and not the other, that's a flaw on our part and we need to work on that. I'm not making any decisions today, we came here today to gather information.

Rich Hall asked if someone has been here 10 or 15 years, they must be doing their job or they would not be here. Councilwoman Wood stated if someone is not doing their job, then management needs to do something about it. Rich Hall stated I'm just saying they must have been doing their job or you were not doing yours. Supervisor Marnell stated try firing someone it is very hard. Rich Hall stated I understand that and there is all kinds of paperwork to do for that. Supervisor Marnell stated paperwork is not the word for it, otherwise you would have been fired, Cathy wanted to fire you. Rich Hall stated I understand that, if you want to get into that we can because I got plenty to say about her. If you get mad

at someone you get mad, it is what it is, everybody does it, and we do it. So how is a committee going to work and who is qualified besides Mike up there to do anybody. Who's qualified to judge how people do their job, the Board has no idea what Chip and I do when we work. I have questions for the Board all the time that they should know and they don't know, how is that possible? It's tough to have a committee for that, who on the Board will be qualified to do it? Supervisor Marnell stated you can't judge someone unless you have done the job. I could judge Skips job but not what Dave and Jim do because I don't know all that they do. I would know eventually because the state would be sending notices. Councilwoman Phibbs stated the point I'm making, if you worked in the system you are where you are. What are you going to do now, put me over to Jim and talk about the Sewer Plant and figure out if he does a lousy job? I think we would know if he wasn't doing his job.

Dave Clark stated I think seniority plays a big part of it because we know a lot more than someone just starting. Councilman Friedman stated you are 100% correct and we need to figure out how you factor that in. Councilwoman Phibbs stated seniority is a part of it and its called knowledge and experience. Dana Shaughnessy stated we need to make sure the guys who are here right now are getting paid more then the guy just starting. Jane Bouchard stated if you do steps each year and gave a little then you wont be giving a big increase all at once. Is anyone at high-point? Supervisor Marnell stated just one. Jim Roblee stated he had 31 years in, Dave has 29 and Skip has 30 and none of us are at max yet. Councilwoman Wood stated that policies should be reviewed ever couple of years. Councilwoman Phibbs stated that there are flaws in the Wage Statement. Councilman Friedman stated we try to compare apples to apples the best we can. Jim Roblee stated that they are not even close with our grade on this wage statement. Dave Clark stated that the medical should not be considered because it changes year to year and should not factor into it. Jessica Botterbusch asked what about the employees who get no benefits because we are part time? What incentive do we have? Dave Clark asked when is anything going to happen here? I have been waiting 9 years for something to happen and I hear next budget , next budget. Dana asked would you like something from each department heads to help steer you along? Councilwoman Wood stated sure you can do that, then the Board could bring it back to you before a final decision is made.

Jon Senecal asked are you going to start in June to be ready for budget time? Councilwoman Wood stated we should start it as soon as possible. Dave Clark stated he thought you should do it separately by grades, then you can compare everyone on the same scale at that point. Councilman Friedman asked who would like to serve on the committee? Jane Bouchard and Jon Senecal both agreed to be on it. Jim Roblee stated if you make promises to employees follow up on them and have

something in writing so there is no gray area or for the board to say, its the first they have heard of it.

Councilwoman Wood stated I would like to know what our next step is. Councilman Friedman asked should we have a meeting with Public Sector? Councilwoman Phibbs stated we need to find out what the gray area is and move forward. I believe your health benefits are worth more then your bring home pay. Councilwoman Wood stated if we can get the Department heads together and get some constructive criticism and thoughts and ideas and then have Public Sector come back after we receive that and merge that into everything we are trying to clarify. Supervisor Marnell stated you can do better then that, you can make anybody with 20 years maximum. Councilwoman Wood stated what if they are given the max and then given more responsibility? Jane Bouchard stated then the Board would reclassify the position. Councilman Friedman stated I think we need to get information from the department heads and send it to Public Sector and sometime in May we should meet with them. We need some type of structure and a guideline when a new employee is hired or someone who has 29 years so they can understand where it is going. Right now when an employee comes to the Board and has 10 years they ask for mid and that's the only thing I know.

Department Heads will get back to the Board with suggestions. Councilwoman Wood moved to adjourn at 5:32 P.M., seconded by Supervisor Marnell; carried.

I, Patricia J. Savarie, do hereby certify the foregoing to be a true and correct transcript from the minutes now on file in my office and of the whole such original minutes.

Dated: May 10, 2017 _____
Town Clerk