

At a Special Meeting of the Town Council holden in and for the Town of Gloucester on February 6, 2018:

I. Call to Order

The meeting was called to order at 7:00 p.m.

II. Roll Call

Members Present: George O. (Buster) Steere, Jr., President; Edward C. Burlingame, Vice-President; William E. Reichert and Patricia Henry.

Member Absent: Walter M. O. Steere

Also present: Jean Fecteau, Town Clerk; Gary Trembl, Director of Public Works; Diane Brennan, Finance Director; Ken Johnson, Building/Zoning Official; Karen Scott, Town Planner; and Jane Steere, Tax Collector.

III. Pledge of Allegiance

The Pledge of Allegiance was recited.

IV. 2018/19 Budget /Personnel - Discussion and/or action

Councilor G. Steere stated that we are here tonight to discuss the 2018/2019 Budget as it relates to Personnel. Councilor G. Steere stated that we have a request from Diane Brennan, Finance Director, and the Council will go through the letter and address each item.

Memo: Honorable Town Council

From: Diane L. Brennan, Director of Finance/HR

Date: January 29, 2018

Re: Personnel Changes for FY 2019 Town Budget

The budget process presents personnel items for council consideration. In order to prepare the document with those issues included, I am highlighting the changes for your consideration at this time.

I have a request to add a Clerk I position in the finance/treasury area to handle the growing concerns with personnel items. There is an additional duty to be performed in my office that relates to the operation of special details. I have outlined in greater detail the reasons for the personnel increase in a memo sent to the council and presented to the budget board. The budgetary impact is from **\$49,000 to \$67, 500.**

Discussion: Councilor G. Steere read the following excerpt of another memo submitted by the Finance Director:

“Payment of special details when worked began with a labor contract change in 2015. The administrative investigative assistant was taxed with the special detail operations job on top of his normal duties. This individual also assumes the role of many IT functions within the town. As police operations and IT functions consume more time, the process of the special detail billing and collections are becoming more difficult to manage. The nature of the activity is better suited for the treasury office. It involves payroll, billing and receiving payments throughout the year. There will always be a police component, but the activity is recommended to be handled in my office. This has been discussed with the police department and frankly they have been asking for relief for some time.

Back up in the office is a problem. I currently have 2 clerks that process payroll and accounts payable. The payrolls are on the same cycle. The office is running with a minimum staff and one bout of the flu could devastate the payroll side. An additional person would ease the urgency if an unfortunate situation were to come about.

The current work force in the town operates with a small staff. As turnover and personnel situations arise, the ability to respond with bodies is becoming a challenge. To employ an additional clerk in the event of any department experiencing a loss be it temporary or long term is a further reason for a new clerk. I would propose that to have greater familiarity with the town via the employment in the finance office may provide a smoother transition as other positions become vacant. The salary of a Clerk I is \$39,410. Benefit costs may fluctuate from \$9,569 to \$28,104 based on healthcare. Total estimated cost for the position range from \$49,000 to \$67,500.”

(End of excerpt)

Discussion: Councilor Burlingame suggested we go through each one individually and vote on each item separately. Councilor Burlingame stated that he is liaison to HR and there has been a problem when someone is out. Councilor Burlingame stated that one employee is on vacation this week, another is working on some family leave and another employee may be going out on jury duty. Councilor Burlingame stated you have three out of the pool and there may be some problem out there. Councilor Burlingame further stated that there may be some retirements going forward. Councilor Burlingame stated that he supports D. Brennan’s recommendation to add this position because somewhere along the line we will need it.

Councilor Henry stated that the years she was on the Budget Board and worked with the Finance Department, she is always amazed at the productivity that comes out of there, as she is amazed at the productivity that comes out of all the Department Heads and all of the offices. Councilor Henry commented that everyone works extremely hard. Councilor Henry stated she is at the town hall a couple of times a week. Councilor Henry stated that

there will be lots of demands coming down from the State that the Finance Office will need to deal with. Councilor Henry stated that there are two (2) ways the Council can approach this; we could fund it as full-time position or we could make it a 20-hour part-time position in the beginning, see how the person grows into that position and increase the hours later if necessary. Councilor Henry stated that adding a position is not something that the Council does easily. Councilor Henry asked Diane Brennan for her opinion.

D. Brennan stated that part-time would be better than no time, which is what she has now, but there is enough work for a full-time person. D. Brennan stated that we do not have a very good succession plan for anybody to take the reins when somebody leaves. D. Brennan stated that, since she has been here, there is only one office that hasn't had a number of personnel changes, and that is the Town Clerk's office. D. Brennan noted that she has hired at least 15 different people in the time she has been here. D. Brennan stated that is a lot of turnover.

Councilor Henry stated that she really feels that the need is there and a perfect storm could happen. Councilor G. Steere agreed with the request because he knows that office is busy and they are inundated with work regarding the State's requirements, and now they are going to be taking over the police billing. D. Brennan spoke regarding the billing for police details, stating that it is a labor intensive activity. Councilor Burlingame stated that it is a contractual obligation and agrees that it belongs in the Finance Office.

Councilor Burlingame stated that the motion should state a maximum of \$67,500. Councilor Henry stated that the salary for a Clerk I is \$39,400, and the range is bringing in the benefits.

MOTION was made by Councilor Henry to add a Clerk I position to the Finance/Treasury Office, to report to Diane Brennan, Director of Finance, at the level of \$39,410, including benefits; seconded by Councilor Burlingame.

Discussion: None.

VOTE: AYES- G. Steere, Burlingame, Reichert and Henry
NAYS-0

MOTION PASSED

Councilor G. Steere read the next item from letter which is to upgrade two existing clerks. The department has provided a letter to the council outlining the reasons to do so. The budgetary impact is **\$4,751**.

Discussion: Councilor G. Steere asked if this is to bring the clerks from Clerk I to Clerk II. D. Brennan replied that the two individuals are at different steps, and each would go up one step. Councilor G. Steere commented that those two clerks have been here for a while

and do a great job in that office.

Ken Johnson, Building/Zoning Official, stated that the recommendation made by the Town Planner and himself are that Denise Cadoret would go to Senior Clerk and Diane Wrona would go from Clerk I to Clerk II. K. Johnson noted that these two employees are the first ones that people see when they come into the Planning and Zoning Offices, adding that they do an outstanding job and take their jobs very seriously. K. Johnson further stated that they are reliable and are there all the time; these are the kind of employees that we have at Town Hall and we want to hold onto. K. Johnson asked the Council to look favorable upon the request.

Councilor Burlingame stated that there were issues with the Building and Zoning office over the years and one of the objectives we had was to make those offices more user-friendly, and we have achieved that. Councilor Burlingame expressed his support for this request because of the impact to the community on our ability to deliver.

MOTION was made by Councilor Burlingame to upgrade the clerks in the Building/Zoning and Planning Department with a budgetary impact of \$4,751; seconded by Councilor Reichert.

Discussion: None.

VOTE: AYES- G. Steere, Burlingame, Reichert and Henry
 NAYS-0

MOTION PASSED

Councilor G. Steere stated the third item is for an increase in hours for the GIS person due to a greater reliance on her work. Planning, building, the assessor's office, DPW, and EMA have provided information that utilizes our GIS system. The current budget is 7 hours for 50 weeks. This proposal is to increase to 8 hours for 52 weeks. The cost is **\$2,435**.

Discussion: Karen Scott, Town Planner, stated that GIS makes other departments more efficient and noted that Heidi Blank has worked for the Town for 12 years. K. Scott further stated that Heidi also works for a private consulting company and her billing rate is \$125 per hour. K. Scott stated that this increase would buy us a lot of skill and manpower, not only for Planning and Zoning, but for other departments that utilize GIS.

MOTION was made by Councilor Henry to increase the hours of the GIS person, Heidi Blank, from 7 hours a week for 50 weeks to 8 hours a week for 52 weeks, at a cost of \$2,435; seconded by Councilor Reichert.

Discussion: None.

VOTE: AYES- G. Steere, Burlingame, Reichert and Henry
NAYS-0
MOTION PASSED

Councilor G. Steere stated the fourth item is for the police department. The council has approved an SRO officer for the regional schools. The town would be receiving offsetting revenue for his time. The department is in the process of recruiting an officer to bring staffing up by one. The staff increase and cost would be less due to the SRO position. The net budgetary cost impact would range from **\$23,000** to **\$43,000** due to healthcare selection.

Discussion: Councilor Henry asked if we have a clearer number on this. D. Brennan stated that the Council has already taken action on this matter and this is just information for the Budget Board. Councilor Henry stated that there is a line item, it is already budgeted and it is going on right now, the SRO is already there. There was Council consensus that no motion is necessary.

Beginning July 1, 2018 employers are required to offer sick time based on hours worked. In response to this law, I am asking to provide **sick and vacation benefits for the part time planner**. Based on a 37.5 hour work week, I would recommend 5 days' vacation, 1 personal day, and 7.5 days of sick time. This is half of the time allotted to a new employee and has no measurable budgetary impact.

Discussion: D. Brennan explained that there was a change in state law that anybody who works over a certain number of hours gets sick and vacation time. D. Brennan noted that there is no budgetary impact and we are required to do some of this anyway. Councilor Burlingame stated that this is a change from the original contract and we are taking action to make sure we are in compliance with the law. D. Brennan stated that this comes close to what we have in the handbook regarding vacation and sick time. Councilor Henry asked Karen Scott if this works for her. K. Scott replied in the affirmative.

MOTION was made by Councilor Reichert that beginning on July 1, 2018, Karen Scott will be eligible for sick and vacation benefits in her position as part-time Planner, based on a 37.5 hour work week, recommend 5 days vacation, 1 personal day and 7.5 days of sick time; seconded by Councilor Henry.

Discussion: None.

VOTE: AYES- G. Steere, Burlingame, Reichert and Henry
NAYS-0
MOTION PASSED

Councilor G. Steere read: The last item is to address a concern in the current budget as it relates to department head salaries. The current budget includes increases for department heads to be in line

with other communities. As has been noted in the past, the ability to offer new hires the “market” rate for existing positions is an issue. Compensation to existing personnel may provide some security for maintaining current employees. Salary changes are to be carried to fiscal 2019 budget.

Discussion: Councilor Henry stated that she would like to preface the discussion by saying that she has been on the Council for just over a year and the Council has been talking about the sensitivity and necessity of having to bring department heads up to a)being competitive with surrounding communities and b)rewarding for specific jobs and tasks well done. Councilor Henry stated that the biggest part is staying competitive and she and Councilor Burlingame have spent a great deal of time on this in the last year. Councilor Henry stated that they tried to accomplish this earlier in the year, but other things were going on and the Council shelved it. Councilor Henry commented that we are at a critical point and we can’t just keep “kicking this can down the road”, we need to address it.

Councilor Henry further stated that she spent a lot of years in the private sector, but she was a teacher for 10 years which changed her perspective because everything you do as a teacher is public, your salary, your step, everything about you is public. Councilor Henry stated that in the private sector, when she sat down with her boss for a performance review, it was extremely private, and if she got a raise and another general manager did not, it was her business and nobody else’s.

Councilor Henry stated that everybody that she has come to know in her tenure as a Councilor does an incredible job for this Town. Councilor Henry stated that she has spent long hours, along with Councilor Burlingame, Councilor G. Steere and others, analyzing job descriptions and salaries as compared to other communities. Councilor Henry stated that the goal here tonight is to try to normalize some of that. Councilor Henry expressed hope that everybody can be respectful of this process and that it has been done with a great deal of thought.

John Tucker spoke from the audience and asked if the Council has numbers. Councilor Henry replied that the Council certainly does have numbers. Councilor Burlingame stated that the Council has a number for the Police Chief. J. Tucker again spoke from the audience but was inaudible. Councilor Henry stated that this is not an open forum and is not a public hearing, it is a special Town Council meeting to accomplish a few tasks. Councilor Burlingame stated that it is not a public hearing but questions can be asked about a motion once a motion is made. Councilor G. Steere stated that J. Tucker or anyone else can get up and ask questions.

Councilor Burlingame stated “we” went through an analysis of various cities and towns.

MOTION was made by Councilor Burlingame to increase the salary for the Police Chief by \$4,000, beginning July 1, 2018; seconded by Councilor Henry.

Discussion: Councilor Burlingame explained that the Police Chief salary in Charlestown is

\$90,000, in North Smithfield it is \$92,000, in Richmond, a community as small as ours, the salary is \$85,000, in Scituate it is \$96,000, West Greenwich, \$97,000, and there probably was at least a 2% increase on top of it. Councilor Burlingame stated that these towns are comparable to us with regard to population. Councilor Burlingame further stated that the Chief lead the department to get certification, for which the rank and file received a bonus in the Union contract, but the Chief did not get anything that year. Councilor Burlingame commented that Glocester was named the safest town in the state and this increase is warranted, goes back to pay for performance and if anyone wants to challenge him on it, they may “have at it”.

Councilor G. Steere asked what the Police Chief’s figure was the same year as the others noted by Councilor Burlingame. Councilor Burlingame replied that the salary was \$79,484 at the time and now it is approximately \$82,000, compared to the high 90’s, and we need to take care of it.

John Tucker asked if this motion was just about the Police Chief. The answer was affirmative. J. Tucker asked if the other town managers should be involved. Councilor Henry replied “I don’t think so”. J. Tucker asked if the other managers need to be appraised. Councilor G. Steere replied that the Council obtained comparable salaries on all position, and some were in line and some were not, some are way out of line. J. Tucker stated that he understands but he did not want it to be just one person.

Councilor Henry stated, as we said in the beginning and will say it again, that the Council looked at other department heads and felt that most of them were in line. Councilor Henry stated there are also other processes with raises that come along annually anyway. Councilor Henry stated that this is how the Council arrived to it.

VOTE: AYES- G. Steere, Burlingame, Reichert and Henry
NAYS-0

MOTION PASSED

Councilor Henry stated that the last motion she would like to make is regarding the Director of Finance, who is also the Director of Human Resources and Glocester School District Business Office Manager. Councilor Henry stated that when the Council looked at Diane’s salary and compared it to other towns and communities, she was well below. Councilor Henry stated that the salary at the time was \$78,200. Councilor Henry stated that the Council compared it to other communities like Burrillville, which is at \$91,500, but the bigger issue is that the other towns and communities don’t have Glocester School Department Manager and HR Director. Councilor Henry commented that Diane wears three (3) hats and does three (3) functions, so when compared to other communities, it is extremely below the pay grade.

Councilor Burlingame stated that Charlestown, which is not a really big community, pays

their Finance Director \$91,000 and the School Business Manager \$104,000, totaling close to \$200,000. Councilor Burlingame stated that Exeter, a much smaller community than ours, pays the Finance Director \$39,000 and \$111,000 for the Business Manager, for a total of \$150,000. Councilor Burlingame further stated that the Regional School Business Manager is paid in excess of \$95,000, just for the Region. Councilor Burlingame stated that there is something out of balance here that has to be fixed.

Councilor Henry stated that she also feels very strongly about compensating for the quantity of work because this person is at meetings probably three (3) nights a week. Councilor Henry stated that she doesn't need to say any more and she would be glad to answer questions about it.

MOTION was made by Councilor Henry to increase Diane Brennan, Finance Director, an additional \$10,000 per year to bring the salary up to \$90,972; seconded by Councilor Reichert.

Discussion: None.

VOTE: AYES- G. Steere, Burlingame, Reichert and Henry
NAYS-0

MOTION PASSED

Gary Treml, Director of Public Works, asked if he could make comments. Councilor G. Steere told G. Treml to come on up. G. Treml stated that a new person was hired for the Finance Office at the last Council meeting and in March of 2019, she will receive a \$2,500 bonus, or whatever you call it. G. Treml asked if the employee will also receive the negotiated contract pay raise of 3% on July 1st. D. Brennan stated she would not recommend that. G. Treml asked when the next contract is negotiated, will the \$2,500 offset whatever is negotiated, or will the increase be tacked on top of any incremental pay increases. Councilor G. Steere replied that the following year it probably would, but not this year. G. Treml stated that if the increase is 3% each year on top of the \$2,500 for both years, it will probably be about an 18% to 22% pay raise over the three (3) years.

G. Treml stated that he has another question that he does not know if the Council can answer. G. Treml asked if an entity like the Department of Public Works can negotiate a separate contract even though they are not in a union. Councilor G. Steere stated that this is not the forum and Tim Kane, Town Solicitor, would have to advise.

Councilor G. Steere stated that he would ask anyone if they wished to speak, but there is no Open Forum on the agenda.

V. Adjourn

MOTION was made by Councilor Burlingame to ADJOURN at 7:40 p.m.; seconded by Councilor Reichert.

Discussion: None.

VOTE: AYES- G. Steere, Burlingame, Reichert and Henry
NAYS-0
MOTION PASSED