

**DUNBARTON BOARD OF SELECTMEN  
MINUTES OF MEETING  
THURSDAY, JANUARY 29, 2013  
TOWN OFFICES – 7:00 P.M.**

**PUBLIC HEARING - EMPLOYEES REVIEW OF UPDATED PERSONNEL PLAN**

The Dunbarton Board of Selectmen held their scheduled Public Hearing for employees' review of the Personnel Plan at the above time, date and place with Les Hammond, Chairman, presiding.

The following were present:

Les Hammond, Chairman  
Ron Wanner, Selectman  
Ted Vallieres, Selectman  
Line Comeau, Town Administrator  
Alison Vallieres, Recording Secretary

**Members of Boards/Committees and Town Officials:**

Travis James, Planning Board and Town Hall Theatre and Restoration Committee  
Linda Landry, Town Clerk  
Patrick Bowne, Transfer Station Manager  
Dan Sklut, Police Chief  
Chris Remillard, Police Patrolman  
Jacqueline Pelletier, Police Officer  
Michael Gorham, Police Officer  
Eric Blow, Police Officer  
Jeff Crosby, Road Agent  
Peter Gamache, Highway Employee  
Jon Wiggin, Fire Chief  
Tamara Bowne, Fire Department

**Members of the Public:**

Brad Asbury  
Donna Fleming

Les Hammond, Chairman, opened the Public Hearing at 7:00 p.m. with a full Board of Selectmen present along with Line Comeau, Town Administrator, and Alison Vallieres, Recording Secretary.

Les Hammond, Chairman, explained that the Board of Selectmen has been working on the Personnel Plan update since April of 2012. The original plan was written in 2000 by Jeff Nelson, Police Chief. There were many problems with the existing plan which needed to be updated. The Town has eight (8) full-time employees and approximately twelve (12) part-time employees plus elected officials such as the Town Clerk, Town Treasurer and Tax Collector. The benefits portion of this plan applies only to full-time employees. The Board of Selectmen has gone over this plan and now are looking for employee input.

Les Hammond, Chairman, asked for comments for the people present as follows:

**MEMERS OF THE PUBLIC::**

**Brad Asbury** - Stated he wanted to thank all the Town employees. If there are any changes that are not positive, they should not be considered. Employees should be treated fairly. If there are any changes that should be made, they should be made for incoming employees only. In all fairness, negative changes should

not be made on this group of employees. They are underpaid to begin with. There have been three changes over the past three years. Why now have there been changes?

Les Hammond stated that several of the changes the Board of Selectmen made were for legal purposes. We had not done a thorough analysis of the plan. We had never gone through the entire Personnel Plan. The Federal Government has made changes that we had to get in sync with. We used a template from the LGC Office and there was some down sizing from that template. The Town has picked up a lot of costs for personnel recently, mostly for retirement and benefits. We are trying to fit it into the budget process.

Brad Asbury asked how much money are the changes saving? Would think that before any changes are made you would know how much they will save, that is why the changes are being made. Other than that, why are we making changes. Why are we doing this?

CHANGES - LONGEVITY AND PERSONAL DAYS:

The Board of Selectmen noted there are some changes in the new plan that will affect the employees. The two changes are Longevity Payments and Personal Days.

Brad Asbury stated when these employees came on board they didn't have a contract but they understood the benefits they would have. These are minimal savings. I don't know why we would treat our employees this way. These employees were grandfathered into the system.

Board of Selectmen noted the August 9, 2012 change related to retirement and Sick Leave going directly to the employee upon retirement, etc. The September 6, 2012 change was as follows:

*Amended September 6, 2012*

*\*\*Upon retirement from the Town of Dunbarton, vacation pay and with 30 credible years of service 1/3 accumulated sick pay will be paid directly to the retiree. This will apply to all hires after September 6, 2012.*

The Board of Selectmen stated that these changes only apply to new employees and not the ones already on board. The amendment allows for payment of 1/3 Sick Leave upon retirement and applies to new hires only.

Donna Fleming stated she would like to understand the changes between the blue and green book. We should be putting more effort into trying to maintain the people on staff now.

The Board of Selectmen explained that the employees who are already getting Longevity will continue with the amount of Longevity but the present amount will be rolled into their salary instead of getting a payment once a year.

Donna Fleming stated that the employees that have not reached the eight years are not going to get Longevity ever. Why would you do that to two employees? The employees get \$390 after eight years. It is a fairness issue. Why wouldn't these employees be grandfathered?

Ron Wanner stated that we are trying to work out a Step Increase/Merit increase Plan. It is still in the planning stage but we have set aside monies in the 2013 budget for this. My expectation is that the Step Increase Plan would be in effect this year. There would not be a lapse. When we started this process, we had a plan about three times this thick that fits the template for 240 towns in the State.

Donna Fleming asked if Dunbarton was one of the Towns that sued LGC because of overcharging, etc. and do they owe Dunbarton monies?

It was noted the settlement was because LGC overcharged for benefits, etc. The Town of Dunbarton has received "Holiday Credits" as part of the settlement even though we were not included in the Towns that sued.

**EMPLOYEES' COMMENTS:**

**Eric Blow** - Stated he wanted to thank Mr. Ashbury for his comments. A Step Increase should be instituted. Once you reach the top of the system, there is no further to go. Should be able to retain the people who are at the top of the pay scale. At least as far as the Police Department is concerned, there is a high liability involved. If you don't have the people with experience, it may be cheaper in the long run to maintain the Longevity bonus.

Les Hammond stated he did not think money is the answer in maintaining people.

**Eric Blow** stated he felt money is a consideration as "part of the pie".

**Dan Sklut, Police Chief** - stated that the Personnel Plan serves to attract and maintain employees. The changes made to benefits are substantial. It is very difficult to attract candidates for police officers. I have provided you with documentation on the costs to replace employees. I think the changes that you are trying to implement are "penny wise and pound foolish". There are other towns that pay more to begin with. These employees are going to leave us. When a new police employee gets out of the Police Academy, they reach a point after three months when they can work on their own. They don't have the work experience to continue on their own. Their experience is in working in a town like this with only one employee at a time. May be relying on other officers from other towns. Benefits and pay is not here and they move on to another town. To train them at the Academy is very very disruptive. People who live in Dunbarton deserve more than this. The Police Department personnel who are here are against this plan. Can't speak about the other Town Departments. You may be spending more money in lawsuits.

**Michael Gorman** - Stated he has been working for the Police Department almost ten years. These things don't affect me personally because he is part-time. I think everyone in this town in the Police Department are qualified people. I think the key is we all care about each other. The Fire Department helps out greatly. We need to work together and be in a good mood and move forward as a team and taking away the Longevity and more "pieces of the pie" does not help. We need to be moving forward.

**Jeff Crosby, Road Agent** - Stated that his understanding about the Longevity is that employees who are already getting Longevity, it will be rolled into their salary. My employee in the Highway Department is under that threshold and therefore gets nothing. Stated he would be in favor of a Step Increase instead of a Merit Increase which just recently came to the table. If that is included, shouldn't it be included in the Personnel Plan? What are the chances of this ever happening?

**Linda Landry** stated she is one of those people who have not reached the eight years, therefore she does not get the Longevity payment rolled into her salary. Asked if there would be a Step Increase or Merit Increase.

The Board of Selectmen noted that the Step Increase is included within the 2013 budget. Just have to work out the details before implementing it. Would be included as an Amendment in the Personnel Plan.

**Ron Wanner** stated he was not in favor of a Merit Increase. Would be in favor of a Step Increase which is fair to all employees. The employees received a CPI of 3% this year. The Board of Selectmen makes the final decision regarding the implementation of the Step Increase.

**FLMA:**

**Donna Fleming** asked why there no FLMA references included within the Plan.

**Ron Wanner** stated that basically we could not get any answers. The Town is complying with the law and will chase down the law.

**BUDGET INCREASES::**

Les Hammond noted that some of the factors the Board of Selectmen are looking at are increases in the budget. We have had to come up with \$40,000 - \$50,000 extra for retirement, CPI and benefits, etc. The City of Portsmouth is getting rid of employees. Most of the Town budget is for personnel.

Brad Asbury stated he didn't see a lot of money being given the employees. Don't feel you should balance the budget on the backs of the employees.

Ted Vallieres, Selectman stated that during this process, whenever we came to things re employee benefits, etc., we reached out to a lot of other towns to see what they were doing. Also, we got the benefits from the State. We went to twenty larger towns in population than us. The State Longevity is \$600 after twenty years. The Town of Dunbarton is \$52.50/week or \$2,730/year after twenty years. We are trying to balance things out.

Brad Asbury stated that it is okay for them, but you shouldn't be taking away from Town's employees.

#### STEP INCREASES AND CPI:

Eric Blow stated that when you get to a certain point, you can't make any more money, you lose a little bit, you are not getting just a little bump.

The Board of Selectmen noted that when they did this Plan, they were not considering a Step Increase. The employees are also getting a CPI of 3%. If we decide to go with the Step Increase, we would probably not put back the Longevity.

Dan Sklut stated that the CPI is only a Cost of Living increase. It is not really a raise. Employees are not getting more buying power. There is no guarantee they will get it each year. A Step Increase is something to get ahead. Longevity is a reward to employees staying with the Town for a long time.

#### OVERTIME:

Jeff Crosby - Stated he had a question regarding Overtime. Am not thoroughly convinced about this. This directly affects the Highway employee. Noted on page 9, it states "Sick days, holidays, vacation time, leaves of absences, and other time off benefits are not counted as "time worked" for purposes of overtime." Does this mean that if an employee works a week with a Holiday, that time worked on a Saturday does not count for overtime?

The Board of Selectmen pointed out that there is a clause "or when called in to work for emergencies" which would cover the employee to receive 1 1/2.

It was noted that this clause (or when called in to work for emergencies) should also be included in the last paragraph relating to law enforcement personnel and also to make it clear it includes all employees when called in for emergencies. Board of Selectmen agreed with adding this clause.

Dan Sklut stated that Police Officers are presently getting 1 1/2 for working on a Holiday. That has been eliminated in the Personnel Plan. My officers are going to be working Christmas Day, New Year's Day, etc. for straight time when other employees are staying home with their families. They are going to work 66 hours a year, for one employee to work to pay for this benefit. This is a big mistake. Employees are going to leave.

Eric Blow - Stated there is no stipulation for part-time employees getting paid 1 1/2 for working holidays, etc. You should probably change this. This is a negative for part-timers. We come in and work on a holiday and do not get paid 1 1/2. This may make it difficult for scheduling. Sometimes, there is only one trooper covering the entire county on a holiday. May take 1 1/2 hours to get there for a home invasion, etc.

Les Hammond, Chairman, noted that the benefits package within the Personnel Plan does not affect part-time employees. You are not going to be able to stop situations like this. Have to take the hours that you are budgeted.

Chris Remillard stated that with regard to the Holiday issue, I take that very personally. I have worked three years full-time. Overtime is an incentive to work the Holidays knowing you are getting 1 1/2 time on a holiday. My working sixteen hours on Christmas Day, the incentive was 1 1/2 overtime. It is a large morale booster. To see that go away is very unfortunate.

Jeff Crosby stated what happens with the rest of the employees? It is a raw deal for my employee. Winter is the slowest time of the year. The employee decides to take a Vacation Day on Monday and a Holiday is on Tuesday and he gets called in to plow snow. Because he took a Vacation Day, he doesn't get overtime. Is that fair?

The Board of Selectmen noted that because he was called in to work as noted in the Personnel Plan, he would be paid 1 1/2 for hours worked when he was called in, etc.

The Board of Selectmen agree to change the wording on this statement to make it clearer.

PERSONAL DAYS:

Jeff Crosby stated that the Personnel Plan takes away Personal Days. These are an incentive not to take Sick Leave throughout the year. If you did not take any Sick Leave, you got two Personal Days. Now employees will be taking Sick Leave because there is no incentive not to.

Les Hammond noted that the employees are allowed to put 40 hours per year, once they reach their maximum of 240 hours, into a Sick Bank on a yearly basis. They can draw on this Sick Bank for an extended illness, etc.

Jeff Crosby stated that the Sick Bank was already in place before you took away the Personal Days.

CALL BACK TIME:

Tamara Bowne asked if there was any provision for the 3 hours call back time as in the previous plan.

The Board of Selectmen noted they will include that within the new Personnel Plan.

FIRE FIGHTER PART-TIME STATUS:

Jon Wiggin - Asked about the employees part-time classification. His Firefighters should be considered part-time employees. We need to make a reference to them somewhere within the Personnel Plan. They are paid from the Town budget and are paid compensation on an on-call basis and are Town part-time employees.

PROBATIONARY PERIOD - POLICE DEPARTMENT/FIRE DEPARTMENT::

Jon Wiggin also asked about the Probationary Period. Stated the Fire Department has a Probationary period of one year. This is written within the regulations of the Fire Department. Would suggest that on Page 6 under the paragraph "Limitations of the Probationary Period" the words Fire Department be added to law enforcement personnel.

SICK LEAVE:

Dan Sklut stated that with regard to Sick Pay on Page 11 where it states "Sick pay may not exceed eight hours per day or 40 hours per week", how does this relate to the Police Department where they work 12 hour days and 32 and 48 hour weeks.

It was noted that they would take the actual hours scheduled to be worked, either 12 hours or 8 hours depending on the schedule. If the day taken was a scheduled 12 hour day, they would submit a request for 12 hour vacation or sick leave.

Dan Sklut also stated that Sick Leave cannot be taken during the Probationary Period. This means that the Police Department personnel cannot take Sick Leave for one year. Other employees have a six month probationary period that they cannot take Sick Leave. This should be the same for all employees. It should be six months.

**PERSONAL DAYS:**

Dan Sklut also stated that the fact that the Personnel Plan takes away Personal Days leaves no incentive not to take Sick time. Taking away the incentive. Someone may schedule their doctor's appointments during the regular work day instead of Saturdays or days off and/or call in Sick when they could be working. This will be disruptive to scheduling. Will need a second employee to cover, etc. It is going to be disruptive dealing with those things at the last minute. You are going to have employees coming in when they are sick. The Board of Selectmen should reconsider this.

Les Hammond noted that part of this issue is the employee that takes Sick Leave a day a month just because it is there. Is this the employee we want? If they don't use the Sick Day, they lose it.

Board of Selectmen agreed to review the Personal Days issue.

**ACCUMULATED SICK LEAVE:**

Patrick Bowne, Transfer Station Manager, asked if there was any discussion regarding allowing Sick Leave to be accumulated more than 240 hours. Stated he was at his maximum of 240 hours and loses a day a month with the exception of the 40 hours he puts into the Sick Bank once a year. Within four months, he is at maximum and will be losing 80 hours a year Sick Leave. Have the Selectmen considered increasing the maximum Sick Leave to 300 hours?

Les Hammond stated he looked at Sick Leave as a form of insurance. We can't eliminate abuse of Sick Leave.

Line Comeau stated she would like to see them allow Sick Leave and Vacation Time to be paid to the employee upon either leaving the Town employment and/or retirement and not just allow it for retirement with no minimum years of work (Personnel Plan states after 20 years).

**FIRE DEPARTMENT PERSONNEL:**

Tamara Bowne, Fire Department - Asked if the Fire Department is included within the Personnel Plan.

It was noted that the Personnel Plan applies to everyone. The Fire Fighters are on-call basis and are classified as part-time employees.

**NO SMOKING POLICY::**

Patrick Bowne asked about the No Smoking Policy. Does this mean there is no smoking within Town Buildings?

The Board of Selectmen agreed that this is the case. A smoking area would be outside at least 25 feet from a Town Building.

**There being no further discussion, the following motion was made:**

**MOTION:**

**Ron Wanner made a motion that the Dunbarton Board of Selectmen adjourn the Public Hearing for the Review of the Personnel Plan with Town Employees at 8:45 p.m. Ted Vallieres seconded the motion. The motion passed unanimously.**

**Respectfully submitted,**

**Alison R. Vallieres, Recording Secretary**

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**Les Hammond, Chairman**

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**Ron Wanner, Selectman**

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**Ted Vallieres, Selectman**