

**Town of New Boston
Selectmen's Meeting
February 17, 2015**

<u>PRESENT:</u>	Rodney Towne	Selectman	
	Dwight Lovejoy	Selectman	
	Christine Quirk	Selectman	Absent
	Peter Flynn	Town Administrator	

Police Chief James Brace, Road Agent Dick Perusse, Planning Coordinator Nic Strong and Selectmen's Secretary Laura Bernard of the public were present.

A. CALL TO ORDER: A regular meeting of the Board of Selectmen was called to order by Rodney Towne at 6:00PM beginning with the Pledge of Allegiance.

Consent Agenda-The Selectmen signed the consent agenda. Dwight moved to approve the consent agenda. Rodney seconded the motion. All were in favor. 2-0

B. PUBLIC FORUM:

Road Agent Dick Perusse was present and noted that Ron Basha, a Highway Department employee since 2000, has said he plans to retire March 27. His position will be filled and Dick asked to start the hiring process now to allow time for Ron to train his replacement, learn the truck and plow route. The Selectmen agreed the position should be advertised and posted now. Peter noted a letter of retirement is needed from Ron.

C. APPOINTMENTS:

None.

D. OLD BUSINESS:

Item 1: Adoption of Public and Non-Public of January 19, 2015: The Selectmen reviewed the public and non-public minutes of January 19, 2015. Dwight moved that the minutes be accepted as presented. Rodney seconded the motion. All were in favor. 2-0

Item 2: Brief Overview of Deliberative Session-Peter Flynn: The Selectmen reviewed a printout prepared by Town Clerk Irene Baudreau as a result of the Deliberative Session where some Warrant Articles were revised. Approximately 60 people attended the Deliberative Session.

Item 3: Second Reading-Public Hearing-Personnel Policy Clarifications in Vacation Qualification: Peter reported he discussed the proposed changes to the Personnel Policy at the Department Managers meeting last week. Some Department Managers did not agree that the changes were a good idea. Peter said the policy can be reviewed as issues arise and the changes will not take any benefits away from employees. The purpose of this revision was to change

vacation time to an accrual system instead of making all vacation time for the year available on January 1 that is currently done.

Planning Coordinator Nic Strong was present to describe how she sees the policy affecting her. She has worked for the town for eighteen years and the policy of vacation time calculated based on length of service with all vacation time given at the beginning of the year has been in place since she started and prior, when other employees that still work for the town began. She calculated and described a couple scenarios for her to take vacation for two weeks of school vacation and two weeks in August and how it would not work. She suggested the town could discuss the policy for a year and have it ready to begin in January to allow employees time to prepare by saving some vacation time from prior years, a lot of long term employees could be grandfathered and language could be added to the existing policy if this was brought about due to a problem. She thought the new policy seems complex and unfair.

Dwight described a scenario he experienced where people didn't take accrued vacation time and were paid for long periods of time of vacation before they were allowed to retire and said there are issues with any vacation time system.

Rodney noted the town is not taking vacation time away but is taking flexibility away in some cases. The proposed policy is not complete yet. There are many more opportunities to review the policy and the goal of changing the policy is to protect the town in what it pays to employees before they earn the vacation time. In some cases legal costs are incurred dealing with this as well.

Nic suggested adding language to address concerns instead of overhauling the policy.

Rodney said he has experience with unions and never saw policy language to take vacation time away.

Police Chief Jim Brace was present. He has been working with the committee on the proposed policy language. His concern about the current policy is that it pays full time employees on the first of January – paying their vacation time forward. Employees have not earned vacation time as of January 1 each year and if they leave, they are getting the entire year of vacation.

Nic said the hire date and vacation time taken by each employee could be reviewed to make sure the vacation time taken was earned by hours worked.

Selectmen's Secretary Laura Bernard was present. She has been working with the committee on the proposed policy language and noted she was not aware of any employees who had worked a full year and accrued vacation time and then not received vacation time until the following year. The policy is currently run according to the calendar year and not hire date. She gave the example where she was hired in November and had to work a certain amount of time to accrue vacation time and once it was accrued had to take it right away. She said employee hire dates should be considered and vacation time should not be tied to the calendar year. The town also had a "use it or lose it" policy for vacation time in the past.

Rodney noted Nic starts each year with two weeks vacation time that she accrued in the first year of employment unless she was allowed to take an extra week at some point. Each employee's vacations need to be tracked.

Nic noted each year she and other employees received a spreadsheet from the town bookkeeper showing the vacation time available based on the number of years she worked for the town.

Jim said that was not happening in larger departments such as the Police and Highway Departments. The original hire date is needed for tracking and he asked if these records are available for each employee. The current system pays vacation time forward and it should be an accrual/prorated system to avoid instances when an employee left the Police Department with vacation time they didn't earn, due to the policy and other mistakes made. Flexibility could be allowed with a bank of vacation time.

Rodney noted the policy was reviewed a few years ago but it has gone astray and needs to be corrected to be fair and equitable.

Peter said the policy needs further revision. The committee will continue to its work to improve or make further changes.

Nic noted Fire Chief Dan MacDonald made suggestions at the Department Managers meeting for clarifying the procedure for requesting and granting vacation and tracking vacation time at the paycheck level. Peter said it is planned to be added to the weekly pay stub.

Rodney also said the employees should keep track of vacation time on their own to make sure the town keeps the calculation correct over time.

Dick suggested the policy be brought before all employees and Peter said an opportunity to discuss it will be provided to all employees.

Jim said not all may like the policy but the town needs a policy to protect it and the Department Managers. The part time vacation time accrual proration also needed revision and that is included in the proposed change.

Nic noted when the part time vacation policy was created part time benefits were given to retain quality specialized part time employees and to attract quality candidates when new employees are needed.

Jim noted if a part time employee is now grandfathered into a third vacation week that is ok but the policy will be different for new employees. Longevity should also be considered when employees ask for vacation time and the town decides to grant the request. Jim and Laura noted new or part time employees should not have the same vacation benefits as a long time full time employee.

Rodney said the onus is on the employer. More research is needed and the town will take time to make sure the policy is fair.

Nic noted part time employees are affected by the proposed policy when they are out sick and won't be accruing vacation time. This is a change to their benefits in the proposed language and should be changed before the policy goes into effect. Peter said he noticed this as well and plans to change it.

Jim noted he has been dealing with this for three years where part time employees earn vacation time weekly which means they earn vacation time faster than full time employees who earn monthly.

Rodney asked if the policy includes language that says benefits don't accrue if an employee is out on workers compensation or FMLA. Laura said it doesn't say that specifically. Laura read the policy aloud that said "generally no accruals will occur when an employee is on unpaid leave, such as FMLA leave." Jim noted administrative suspension should also affect accrual. Rodney said he has worked at places where vacation time is accrued if an employee is out on but sick not when out on workers compensation. Jim said that can be added to the policy if that is the direction the town wants to go in.

Laura asked if the proposed policy makes sense for new employees such as the planned upcoming Highway Department hire. Rodney said it is a step in the right direction but needs some adjustments. Peter wants to work it out so all are reasonably satisfied with the outcome and wants the policy to be reasonable.

Laura noted language was added to allow employees the opportunity to take up to approximately forty hours of unearned vacation time to be reimbursed with the final paycheck if the employee leaves town employment before earning that vacation time.

Jim suggested putting it out to all town employees to consider and describe if they would get a loss with the proposed policy, and bring that information forward to be considered. The proposed policy corrects issues for the town and employees are not expected to lose with these changes. Peter will ask employees to consider this as Jim suggested.

Nic asked for clarification of what policy the town is currently using for vacation time. Peter said it is being given as it has in recent years, full time employees received their vacation time as of January 1 and part time employees are accruing as they always have.

E. NEW BUSINESS:

Item 4: Review of Committee and Board Openings After April 1, 2015: Peter noted a list of people serving on town Committees and Boards was provided to the Selectmen tonight for informational purposes. No action is needed at this time.

Item 5: Discussion Regarding Election Day Schedule for Selectmen: The election is scheduled for March 10. Dwight will attend the morning shift, Rodney will arrive at 11:00 AM and Christine will close the election. It is a local election so two Selectmen are not needed at all times as was done at the recent state election.

F. OTHER BUSINESS:

Item 6: Town Administrator's Report:

- Riverdale Road Bridge Bid Opening: The preconstruction meeting was held today where permits were reviewed (all are in place), staking for new poles, dig safe and tree trimming and cutting review was scheduled for Thursday. Message boards and signs will be put up in April and the road will be closed April 15 to begin the construction process. The project is expected to be complete September 12 with final completion October 12.
- Foot Traffic Safety Committee: The committee will meet tomorrow at 4:00 PM.
- Parker Road Logging: A non-public session will take place tonight to discuss.
- Purchase of Land: Since changes were made at the Deliberative Session, the town plans to pay for the Mont Vernon Road land from the fund balance after the town voting March 10. The town sold the Lull Road land and money will be received.
- The Selectmen's report to be included in the Town Report is available.

Item 7: Selectmen's Reports:

None.

Public Forum:

Police Chief Jim Brace was present to meet with the Selectmen to discuss the following:

- Patrolman Leland Hunter resigned effective last Friday as he could not qualify with a firearm. The town had a training agreement with him and he agreed to reimburse the town in equal installments beginning next month. There are now two open positions with the Police Department. A candidate is in the hiring process but it could be August before both positions are filled. The town will be covered 24 hours as usual.
- Safewise recognized New Boston as the sixth safest city in New Hampshire. The Selectmen congratulated the town on this.
- Peter noted Jim received a letter from a constituent complimenting him on smooth traffic control at the school in the mornings. The Selectmen complimented Jim for this and Dick for keeping the roads plowed.
- Jim noted the Police Department needs its roof raked.

Item 8: Request for Non-Public per RSA 91-A:3, II: Rodney made a motion to go into Non-Public session per RSA 91-A:3II at 7:15 PM. Dwight seconded the motion. All were in favor. 2-0 Poll: Rodney-yes, Dwight –yes. The Board then entered non-public session after a poll of all members.

Move to exit Non-Public Session: Rodney made a motion to exit Non-Public Session at 7:25 PM. Dwight seconded the motion. All were in favor. 2-0

Dwight moved to seal the non-public minutes for two years, seconded by Rodney. Board voted 2-0 in the affirmative.

ADJOURNMENT: Dwight made a motion to adjourn the meeting at 7:26 PM. Rodney seconded the motion. All were in favor. 2-0

Prepared by Maralyn Segien