

**MINUTES OF THE CHESHIRE TOWN COUNCIL PERSONNEL COMMITTEE
MEETING HELD ON TUESDAY, JANUARY 5, 2016 AT 7:30 P.M. IN ROOM 207,
TOWN HALL, 84 SOUTH MAIN STREET, CHESHIRE CT 06410**

Present

Personnel Committee Chairman Thomas Ruocco; Committee Members Sylvia Nichols and Peter Talbot. Council Members Oris and Ecke entered the meeting at 8:00 p.m. Staff: Town Manager Michael A. Milone; Personnel Director Louis Zullo; Human Services Director Michelle Piccerillo; Ramona Burkey, Library Director; and Senior Center Director Stephanie Ferrell.

1. ROLL CALL

The clerk called the roll. A quorum of the Personnel Committee was determined to be present.

2. PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE

The group Pledged Allegiance to the Flag.

3. CHANGE IN HOURS FOR SENIOR CENTER DISPATCHER POSITION.

Ms. Piccerillo stated her request for an increase in the Dispatcher position work hours from 24 to 30 per week. She explained the reasons for the request, including the need for someone in the office more hours, dissatisfaction with employable seniors from an outside agency, and the negative experience using this system. The change in the position hours would have the Dispatcher on duty Monday to Friday, 8:30 a.m. to 3:00 p.m., and after 3:00 p.m. there is little call activity and volume.

According to Ms. Piccerillo, the Senior Center has five (5) vehicles (4 buses and 1 livery car), transporting about 1200 elderly and disabled riders per month. This is a system that must be run efficiently and staffed by a Dispatcher who is familiar with the routine, the riders, and who can maintain continuity of the daily schedule.

In FY 2015-16 the cost and impact on the budget will be \$2,500; for a full fiscal year the impact will be \$5,000; and the person will receive the full benefit package with a lower premium payment, about \$3,600. The total cost is \$8,600 for the 30 hours per week. Ms. Piccerillo pointed out the fact that with the current sale of the two older buses (about \$4,500 each) it is close to the cost to the Town for the 30 hour per week Dispatcher.

With another new Senior Center bus in Fall 2016 the older bus will be auctioned off, and Mr. Milone noted that staff continues to look for grants to offset costs. Regardless of whether there is approval for the extra 6 hours per week, he stated the 6 hours per week must be filled, without relying on volunteers. The Town would have to hire someone at \$12 to \$15 per hour for 6 hours, costing about \$3,700 and \$4,600. The result is increasing the Dispatcher hours by 6 per week, or hiring someone for the 6 hours per week. The transportation activity continues to grow and is becoming critical,

with the need to have someone with knowledge and continuity of operating the Dispatcher Center.

Ms. Nichols raised a question about the "substitute person" if the Dispatcher is out sick or on vacation, to cover the work hours, and if someone is trained to cover these hours.

In response, Ms. Ferrell explained a staff person will sit in, or an experienced bus driver will be called in to work the hours. The bus service is for Cheshire residents only. Bus riders pay 50 cents each time they step on the bus, and often riders donate more for the ride. There is a bus fund for the Senior Center Transportation - The Jitney Bus Fund.

Ms. Nichols commented on this being a needed service to the elderly and disabled riders, and the need to operate the system efficiently.

The committee was told by Mr. Milone that with the reorganization of the Human Services Department, the Senior Center hours were dramatically cut back. The Council did approve some extra hours effective January 2016, and the Center will be more active when the renovations are completed. He noted the Center works with a bare minimum staff.

By using the money from the sale of the older buses, Ms. Flynn-Harris asked if this would take away from other senior services.

Ms. Piccerillo stated all monies are used for senior services.

Ms. Ferrell reported the last buses were auctioned in 2010. Even with the Dispatcher on site for 30 hours a week, there will still be some calls after 3:00 p.m. but staff or drivers can handle them. On Thursday there is one volunteer on duty until 4:00 p.m. who efficiently handles the call center.

The importance of having someone on duty who knows the system was cited by Ms. Nichols. She is not in favor of increasing the payroll, but the services to seniors and disabled riders must be done properly; 6 hours a week change is not significant; and she understands the full time benefits coming into effect and the need to provide services that are properly managed. There could be difficulties if the service is not done correctly. Ms. Nichols stated that to have the buses they must be serviced properly or cut off driving time at 1:00 p.m.

Mr. Milone explained that for five years the Senior Center has tried to work with alternatives for this important service to seniors and disabled riders. He has concerns about calamity or problems, and there is too much at stake.

The issue of doing the service with one person working 24 hours and another person working a 5th day was raised by Mr. Ruocco.

Mr. Milone does not believe this will work, and he noted the point in the department letter about reliability and continuity which is important for the dispatcher services. To have someone for only 2.5 hours a day to fill in for the Dispatcher would have a cost of \$3,700 to \$4,600 a year. Another issue of concern is reliability of a person working 2.5 hours a day, and how long they would want to continue doing the job. This would be a very inefficient way of trying to dispatch and handle the transportation network.

The committee was told by Ms. Ferrell that The Association for Training provides employable senior citizens that are re-trained to work 20 hours a week. Because Cheshire is not on a good bus system, it is difficult to get people come to work as they needed transportation. They are making minimum wage, have gas and expenses to get to work, and do not show up to work, or leave without notice.

Ms. Nichols has dealt with these type of personnel issues with her work, and said that, historically, it does not work to have someone come in the middle of the day to work 2.5 hours. She said the transportation services must be provided appropriately. A change in cost will add to the bottom line, but it is not significant enough for her to object.

It was stated by Mr. Zullo that even funding a 6 hour person still have wage costs, and the difference becomes the \$3,600 for the benefit increase.

Mr. Talbot commented on the funding sitting in the Jitney Bus Account and it covering some of the costs for the increase in hours requested.

MOTION by Ms. Nichols; seconded by Mr. Talbot.

MOVED to recommend the approval for the increase in hours for the Dispatcher position at the Senior Center, and refer the matter to the full Town Council for approval.

VOTE The motion passed unanimously by those present.

4. APPROVAL OF PERSONNEL CHANGES FOR THE LIBRARY

Library Director Burkey reviewed the proposed Library personnel adjustments and justification for an increase in weekly hours for the position of Senior Librarian. She explained there is one position open due to retirement of the person after 36 years of employment. The person was department head of Technical Services for about 20 years, had other positions in the Library earlier in her career, and she will be greatly missed. The employee, by choice, worked 30 hours per week, while other department heads work 35 hours per week. Ms. Burkey's recommendation is to increase the position hours to 35 hours from 30 hours per week, with no change in benefits.

The reasons for her recommendation were stated by Ms. Burkey.

They include the following:

- Standardization for consistency of staff schedules and hours for all department heads at 35 hours per week. The retired person was at top step in the salary

range; the new person would be hired at step #1; and savings will be about \$6,700 per year. Ms. Burkey distributed the adjustment information on the position - former employee, 30 hours, \$69,031; new person, 35 hours, \$62,351; savings of \$6,680.

- Recruitment and Retention - a managerial position at 35 hours will result in a larger and more qualified pool of applicants from which to choose. It will result in one additional day per week of managerial/staff coverage at the Library.
- Redistribution of Managerial Duties - On an operational basis, Ms. Burkey will merge Circulation and Technical Services functions; this is materials management, from selecting and ordering materials, processing and cataloging when received in the Library, checked onto the shelves and out to the patrons, and the department head has supervision of 18 Library staff.

The person in the position of handling Circulation staff will be in charge of collection management, collection development, inventory reports, culling items not being checked out, statistical reports, circulation reports that go to the Town Manager, Library Board and Town Council, maintaining a clean patron data base insuring it is up to date, supervisory duties, outreach visits, homebound visits to seniors, Elim Park and other facilities. The current head of Circulation does some of the outreach work on her own time, and it is not okay to volunteer on your job. The outreach program will be increased on employee paid time. All Senior Librarians function as supervisors in absence of an administrator. The proposed 35 hours per week position will be in line with other Supervisor positions; there will be savings to the Town; the work place will be restructured with combination of Circulation and Cataloging staff into one group cohesively managed by one person.

Mr. Ruocco asked if the two functions can be managed at 30 hours per week.

In response, Ms. Burkey said it would be very difficult. One half of the staff will be managed by this one person, and the volume of overseeing the cataloging and acquisition functions, supervision of pages and this position turnover, hiring and training new pages, etc. is a job in itself. There is also supervision of the 400,000 items checked in and out each year, inter-library loans to other libraries, patrons charged for returned items, etc. are all issues to be dealt with by the new position. It is definitely a 35 hour position.

For clarification, Ms. Nichols said two jobs are being combined within that one position, but only taking part of the Circulation person duties away to perform different responsibilities...leaving it at the same work hours.

Ms. Burkey explained the Circulation person still reports to her, will have different responsibilities such as statistical reporting duties, collection maintenance, etc. With regard to employment of the new staff person, Ms. Burkey said it would probably be

from outside the library, at step #1 of the position...unless there is an in-house candidate applying for the job.

Mr. Talbot asked about any current qualified people who could step into this position.

The position will be posted internally, and Mr. Zullo said it is a union position for which potentially eligible union members can apply. The process will determine whether the internal candidate is qualified for the department head position.

Ms. Burkey cited the requirements for the position - Masters in Library Science, Managerial Experience, Cataloging Skills and Experience.

Even under the scenario stated, Mr. Talbot said even getting the full impact of the savings here, it would be gotten on the flip side if a current candidate was given the job. They would have the pension, slight increase in other areas, and decrease back on the other side again.

Since closing out the pension plan, Mr. Zullo said there are fewer people in the pension plan eligible to move. There would not be zero savings due to no one at the higher position step taking the job. He said Ms. Burkey is taking the 35 and 30 hour positions, combining their functions to two 35/35 hour jobs at a lesser cost.

With regard to the retirement incentive taken by the recent retiree, Mr. Milone explained that under the union contract some have a small incentive regarding a certain age and years of service. When Ms. Burkey took over as Library Director, Mr. Milone said no two people on staff worked the same hours under the former Director. Ms. Burkey has brought consistency to the former fragmented staff hours schedule.

In the last few years, 7 Library staff have retired, and Mr. Zullo said they had the length of service, and were close to Social Security and Medicare eligibility.

Mr. Ruocco commented on the subject position at 30 hours per week now, and the Director wants to increase it to 35 hours per week. He asked if an increase in hours was ever suggested for the person in the position.

The former person worked 30 hours a week because it is what she wanted, and Ms. Burkey stated a combined department cannot operate with a 30 hour per week department head. The Library is open on Sunday 1 to 5 p.m. through March 20th.

If the person was willing to increase to 35 hours per week, Mr. Milone said it would have been done. Ms. Burkey had to work around this situation.

Mr. Talbot questioned why a union position has management of one-half the Library staff.

When the union was formed, Mr. Zullo explained there was a petition to include every position over 20 hours per week, excluding the Director and Deputy Director.

This was challenged, but Mr. Milone said the Town was not successful, as people wanted to be in the union.

(Mr. Ecke left the meeting)

Council Chairman Oris asked about increasing the position hours from 30 to 35 per week, stating the lower salaries always catch up, with more hours being a cost. He said people would apply if the salary is right at the 30 hours per week.

Ms. Burkey pointed out that the Library staff hours were cut by 15 hours last year; the Circulation department head does homebound visits on her own time, and someone should not volunteer at their job. The hours cited will be part of the proposed position.

Mr. Oris said we are always balancing services and costs, and this situation may be an opportunity to reduce costs.

There is a \$6,680 savings with the 35 hour per week position and Ms. Burkey noted it is a management position, requiring a Masters Degree in Library Science, experience with the current software system, cataloging experience, and managerial experience. She does not expect anyone currently employed at the Library is interested or qualified for the position.

Mr. Talbot commented on the position dropping down step levels, and even with guaranteed 3% union raises, the savings increase slightly...3% at the lower level is different than 3% to the incumbent at the higher level.

Last year at this time, Ms. Burkey stated there was elimination of a 30 hour position when asking for three other positions to be increased. The net effect was a reduction in 15 hours in Library staff time.

If this is approved, Ms. Nichols noted the Library staff is still down 10 hours from last year.

Mr. Milone commented on Ms. Burkey being very frugal and efficient with the department budget. Each year she turns back money at the end of the fiscal year. Sunday hours are being undertaken without cost with pages working, and a little overtime.

Each year Ms. Burkey hears from the union about turning money back, and their asking for more overtime opportunities, hiking up the overtime budget, etc.

In looking at the total picture, Ms. Nichols agrees with Mr. Oris and Mr. Ruocco on being careful with adding new things which cost more over time. She is also looking at a

professional manager and department that is running efficiently, with a Director doing a good job containing cost and returning money at year end. Balancing these two things, she said Ms. Burkey is the expert in running the Library, and she knows what is needed to operate the Library, which is run efficiently. Ms. Nichols' inclination is to be comfortable with the Director's recommendation. However, she agrees we must be careful about increasing the hours, as little increases across the board catch up and get to be difficult. Each department has to be weighted individually, and Ms. Nichols said this is part of her decision making. If concessions are to be made, the Library may be the department to consider.

MOTION by Mr. Talbot; seconded by Ms. Nichols.

MOVED that the Personnel Committee forwards the Library Director's request to the Town Council for consideration.

VOTE The motion passed 2-1; Ruocco opposed.

5. ADJOURNMENT

MOTION by Ms. Nichols; seconded by Mr. Talbot.

MOVED to adjourn the meeting at 8:22 p.m.

VOTE The motion passed unanimously by those present.

Attest:

Marilyn W. Milton, Clerk