

TOWN OF WINCHENDON
BOARD OF SELECTMEN EXECUTIVE SESSION MINUTES
MONDAY, FEBRUARY 11, 2019 6:30 P.M.
Robinson-Broadhurst 4th Floor Conference Room
109 Front Street, Winchendon, Mass.

Present:

Audrey LaBrie, Chairwoman
Michael Barbaro, Vice-Chair
Barbara Anderson

Keith R. Hickey, Town Manager
Linda Daigle, Executive Assistant

List of Documents Presented at Meeting:

- Town Manager Memo dated 2/7/19 regarding Exemption of Police Officers from Civil Service (attached)
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Executive Session was called to order at 8:23 p.m.

Exemption #3 to discuss strategy with respect to collective bargaining or litigation if an open meeting may have a detrimental effect on the bargaining or litigating position of the public body.

The Town Manager asked the Board to consider sponsoring a warrant article at this Spring Town Meeting seeking the removal from the need to follow civil service requirements in hiring police officers. He and the Police Chief have been talking about this the last couple of years and they find it becomes a very cumbersome problematic process to follow. A candidate has to take a civil service test that is graded and the list, typically for Winchendon, is twenty people. The list is weighed on whether or not the person is a veteran of the armed forces and whether or not a resident of the community. We then must choose from the top three candidates that are on the list and reach out to see if they would be willing to accept the position. You can bypass a candidate if you find they are not suitable to be a police officer, but would have to justify that to a civil service group and also the candidate would have the right to appeal.

Hickey feels the town takes a risk in not hiring the best candidate because the best candidate is too far down the list. We've hired good police officers but having to go through civil service is just another step. His goal in hiring a police officer is to hire the best person for the job especially for that position and he believes the civil service requirement limits his ability to do that and that is why he is looking to remove the civil service requirement. Civil service was approved forty to fifty years ago by the Town. The Police Chief position was removed from it ten years ago.

Hickey informed the Board of the process of putting a warrant article before the community at Town Meeting where they would have to support the withdrawal from civil service. Special Legislation is then submitted for state approval. A number of communities in the commonwealth already have left. He said they would grandfather existing employees in as of July 1, 2019. Moving forward, they would just like to advertise the position. For example, we can't put hiring requirements on a list, so academy training and education is not something they can include for minimal requirements for the job. Some colleges offer police academy training so there isn't lag time of hiring someone; it takes six months sometimes with existing hiring through civil service.

LaBrie asked if we are not to follow the civil service requirements if there were another set of guidelines the Town could follow. Hickey replied they would modify the job description to identify and bring to the Board for approval. They would advertise and anyone meeting the qualifications could apply. Now, it is restricted to only those that have taken the civil service exams. LaBrie asked if some research could be done on the requirements. Hickey replied that MGL Chp. 31 deals with civil service and he is sure the Chief can provide him with information.

Barbaro noted the Town of Burlington has pulled out of civil service because they couldn't hire local residents because they were not high enough up on the list.

Anderson asked about promotions wondering if the top scorer is promoted. Her concern is that there might be favoritism in the department stating civil service kind of eliminates that. Hickey replied that civil service is a portion in the determining factor of promotion, not the sole determination.

Anderson and LaBrie would like to see a process in place for promotions, wondering how they safeguard themselves. Hickey responded he would look into it a little further.

Hickey said they would have another Executive Session to address this but he would first like to present to the union to get a sense from them. He will try and get answers for the meeting on February 25th. This would be easier if the union supports this.

Barbaro moved to adjourn from Executive Session; Anderson seconded. With a roll call vote of all aye, Executive Session was adjourned at 8:40 p.m.

Barbaro moved to adjourn open session; seconded by Anderson. With a vote of all aye, the meeting adjourned at 8:41 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,



Linda Daigle
Executive Assistant