



TOWN OF NEW LONDON, NEW HAMPSHIRE

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BOARD OF SELECTMEN NONPUBLIC MEETING MINUTES May 13, 2013

PRESENT:

Selectmen
Peter Bianchi, Chair
Tina Helm, Selectman
Janet Kidder, Selectman
Kimberly Hallquist, Town Administrator
Acting Police Chief Ed Andersen

The Board entered nonpublic session at 8:54PM.

Dispatching

Chief Andersen informed the Board that Heather Wood in Dispatch submitted her resignation effective May 21st. The department is now in some need of help and he opined that the department has not been managed well over the last couple of years for multiple reasons. He would like to remedy this situation and felt that Ms. Wood is a critical part of doing so. She is well trained and trains others well. His understanding is that she is leaving because she felt there is a lack of vision for dispatch. Some of the other issues Ms. Wood raised related to scheduling.

Chief Andersen took some blame of the state of dispatch because his attention has been turned to the officers since he has been promoted to serve as Acting Chief. Also, there was a management study done several years ago that eliminated the supervisor position in dispatch (formerly held by Ms. Wood) and those responsibilities were transferred to the Sergeant. Chief Andersen said he has tried to manage dispatch for the last eight years (when he was the Sergeant) and had trouble keeping up with everything. He would like to see a supervisor back in dispatch and felt Heather would be the right person for the job.

Chief Andersen thought perhaps he could get her into day shifts (7-3), schedule the holidays off, and put Ms. Wood back into a supervisory role. He was not sure if that was possible but urged the Board to consider it. He has created a schedule of what post May 21st would look like, which does not include her. He is the last person who is available to help with dispatch and from now until they can get someone trained, he may need to work an additional 15 hours per month.

Chief Andersen said he has made an offer to hire someone in dispatch for a part-time position who was recommended by Chief Lyon. This person has good qualifications, however, six weeks minimum is required before the person is adequately trained.

Ms. Helm wondered what the salary range should be for this supervisory position. Chief Andersen noted that he was unsure, but noted that he felt that the Town currently offers a competitive salary in dispatch as compared to area dispatching services. Ms. Kidder thought they would have to increase her salary in order to keep her. Ms. Helm felt she was worth the investment as she was an incredible resource. She envisioned Ms. Wood as part of the solution going forward.

Chief Andersen thought separating the Dispatch budget from the Police Department budget might be difficult. When a police officer works dispatch, they are paid as an officer and not as a dispatcher. He said he likes to cross-train an officer on dispatch to enable him/her to cover if a dispatcher has a medical emergency in the middle of the night. Chief Andersen said that he knows that area towns would be willing to pay more for the service if it was improved.

Chief Andersen suggested offering Ms. Wood a \$1/hour raise. Chair Bianchi noted that Ms. Wood would also get a 2% raise in FY2014. The Board agreed to make this offer to Ms. Wood.

Temporary police officer

Chief Andersen said Rick Kelley, a current part-time officer who has worked for New London on and off in full and part-time capacities has agreed to work 30 hours/week until the Chief's position is filled. He is looking to get health insurance working this number of hours. They are currently down two officers. Eben Lamson cannot work by himself until the 1st of October. He realizes this is not something that is offered in the employee policy (the policy requires an employee to be classified as permanent full-time, minimum 35 hours per week to qualify for benefits). Chief Andersen noted that Mr. Kelley was not looking for the Town to contribute to his retirement. Mr. Kelley has committed to working every Saturday, Sunday and Monday. Chief Andersen hoped the Board of Selectmen could find a way to make this happen. This person brings certification and a skill set to the department. They are very strapped for coverage since they are down two fulltime officers. He noted that summertime is a popular time for vacations and while he has limited the time people can take off because of staffing, he feels it important that people take some time off. Chief Andersen noted that his staff would be very appreciative of having another person to join the schedule, especially on weekends.

Chief Andersen said that Mr. Kelley has always worked when asked and stopped when they no longer needed him.

Chair Bianchi thought this was a slippery slope to go down. He was not in favor of offering health benefits to Mr. Kelley for working 30 hours/week. Ms. Hallquist said it is an unusual situation but the Police Department has a definite need especially during the summer. She observed that if there are not enough part-time employees to make up the 80 hours of two full-time employees, and the Town does not want to reduce coverage, then this request to allow 30 hours to be covered each week would be reasonable. Chief Andersen noted that he does not have enough part time staff to make up these hours.

Ms. Hallquist pointed out that the Board can, and should, be flexible when faced with extraordinary circumstances such as these, noting that the public safety aspect must be

considered as well. Ms. Hallquist observed that she could not argue for this accommodation for her own office, or other non-public safety departments in the town, but in this case she felt it appropriate given the public safety aspect and the unusual circumstances of being two officers down. Ms. Hallquist noted that while deviating from the personnel policies is not recommended generally, extraordinary circumstances can be addressed by the Selectmen as they deem appropriate.

Ms. Helm felt if this temporary hire would boost the morale in the Police Department and give them a bit of a break during the summer months when they are two officers down. She thought the Selectmen should approve it. She said it should be clear to Mr. Kelley that this would not happen every time he is called on to work.

IT WAS MOVED (Janet Kidder) AND SECONDED (Tina Helm) to hire Rick Kelley for 30 hours/week including health and dental benefits on a temporary basis until no longer needed.

THE MOTION PASSED. Tina Helm: Yes, Janet Kidder: Yes, Peter Bianchi: No.

IT WAS MOVED (Tina Helm) AND SECONDED (Janet Kidder) to come out of nonpublic session.

THE MOTION WAS APPROVED UNANIMOUSLY.

The Board re-entered the public session at 9:35PM.

Respectfully submitted,

Kristy Heath, Recording Secretary
Town of New London