

TOWN COUNCIL MINUTES
RULES COMMITTEE
Town Hall Council Chambers
May 2, 2005

Present: Arthur Mathews, Chairperson
Paul J. Leary
Michael Molisse
Thomas Lacey
Gregory Shanahan

Also Present: Jane Hackett, Chief of Staff
Denise Coleman, Director of Human Resources

Recording Secretary: Janet Murray

Chairman Mathews called the Rules Committee Meeting to order at 6:30pm.

05 052 – Recording Secretary Guidelines

It was noted that this measure was referred to the Rules Committee by President Lacey regarding the change in compensation for recording secretaries, as it does have impacts on the Town Council. Who has the authority to approve minutes is one issue to be clarified.

Denise Coleman stated that she had been asked for clarification from the Town Auditor on Recording Secretary Guidelines. She noted that the classification of meetings is as follows:

- Normal meetings
- Technical meetings
- Public/legal meetings

She noted that the recording secretary will be paid a minimum/maximum of three (3) hours for attending a meeting. The exception to this would be if a recording secretary were to work more than one meeting in a night. In that case, the recording secretary would be paid the minimum/maximum of three (3) hours for the first meeting, plus the actual time spent at the second meeting.

Ms. Coleman stated that the previous guidelines were gray and left much room for interpretation. She noted that under these guidelines, a meeting which lasted only one (1) hour could be billed for six (6) hours. Under the new guidelines, a normal meeting is one that requires a summary of the meeting discussions, considerations, and any votes taken. The amount billed for a normal meeting which lasted one (1) hour would be three (3) hours for the meeting, and one (1) hour for every hour in attendance for transcription, which would total four (4) hours. On the other hand, the amount billed for a normal meeting which lasted four (4) hours would be for three (3) hours of the meeting, plus an hour for every hour in attendance, for a total of seven (7) hours. She noted that in essence you are paying for the work that is done by the hour, as opposed to just a lump sum.

Under the technical meeting category, more complex issues are discussed, and priority subjects which would require detailed notes, would fall under this category. In this case, for every hour in attendance you are paid one and one-half (1 ½) for transcription. For an hour meeting, the amount paid is for the three (3) hours plus the one and one-half (1 ½) hours per hour worked for transcription- for a total of four and one-half (4 ½) hours of pay. For a four (4) hour meeting, the amount paid is for the three (3) hours in attendance plus the one and one-half (1 ½) hours per hour worked for transcription for a total of nine (9) hours of pay.

Councilor Leary asked for clarification on the payment for multiple meetings. Ms. Coleman stated that there is an exception to the minimum/maximum amount of three (3) hours in the event that someone is attending multiple meetings. She stated that the three (3) hour minimum will be paid for the first meeting, and then actual hours worked for any additional meetings.

Ms. Coleman stated that all of these guidelines are at the discretion of the administrative authority or department head in terms of reviewing the invoice to ensure that the person has billed correctly and is being paid accurately.

She noted that the Conservation Committee was changed from a normal meeting to a technical meeting.

Councilor Shanahan questioned if anyone would be paid less now. Ms. Coleman stated that the Council on Disabilities is usually a short meeting and is classified as a normal meeting. It was noted that in a case like this, the secretary would be paid less.

Councilor Lacey stated that these guidelines spelled out a more consistent approach.

Councilor Molisse questioned what Licensing Board is classified as. Ms. Coleman stated that it is not classified because it occurs during business hours.

Councilor Mathews questioned the policy in regards to minutes done, but a meeting to approve the minutes may not happen for up to a couple of months. He stated that he had received phone calls with concerns about the timeliness of payment. Ms. Coleman stated that it has always been the policy to have minutes signed off. She agreed that it would not be acceptable for minutes to be delayed.

Councilor Mathews questioned how taped meetings would be paid. Ms. Coleman stated that this does not happen frequently. She stressed that the quality of the minutes is best with a recording secretary in attendance at a meeting. She noted that this can be discussed further.

Councilor Lacey noted that many time minutes become legal documents and public records. He stated that he forwarded a letter to Mary Heinrichs regarding new video equipment for the Chambers. He has asked her to look into new audio equipment also. This is tied to work to be done by WETC in the next two months.

Ms. Susan DeChristoforo appeared before the Rules Committee to speak on this subject. It was noted that Ms. DeChristoforo has been a recording secretary for the Town of Weymouth for 25 years. She commented that it would have been nice to have been invited to discuss this issue.

Ms. DeChristoforo stated that she had been told, after transcribing minutes for a taped meeting, that the policy was that she would not be paid for this. She also stated that she is concerned about the length of time between the submission of minutes and the approval by a Town authority for payment.

Ms. Coleman clarified that the intent is for the invoice to be approved and that the hours invoiced are verified.

Ms. Coleman stated that a legal meeting is transcribed verbatim (every word spoken). It was noted that Massachusetts General Law does not require this.

Mr. Swanson questioned the approval process for the Council. He stated that he has approved the minutes for the past five (5) years. He questioned if this would still be the case or if the Committee Chair would approve the invoices. Councilor Mathews stated that this issue could be discussed at the next meeting.

A MOTION was made by Councilor Leary to TABLE Item #05 052 and was seconded by Councilor Molisse and was UNANIMOUSLY VOTED.

At 7:10 pm, there being no further business, A MOTION was made by Councilor Leary to ADJOURN and was seconded by Councilor Molisse and UNANIMOUSLY VOTED.

Approved by: _____
Arthur Mathews, Chairperson