

**TOWN COUNCIL MINUTES
ORDINANCE COMMITTEE
Town Hall Council Chambers
December 10, 2018, Thursday**

Present: Kenneth DiFazio, Chairman
Michael Smart, Vice Chairman
Rebecca Haugh, Councilor
Christopher Heffernan, Councilor
Arthur Mathews, Councilor

Also Present: Ted Langill, Chief of Staff
Christine Howe, Program Manager-Grants & Procurement
Richard Swanson, Town Auditor
Joseph Callanan, Town Solicitor

Recording Secretary: Mary Barker

Chairman DiFazio called the meeting to order at 6:30 PM.

18 126-Amending Annual Salary of Various Elected and Appointed Officials

This matter was referred to the Ordinance Committee on November 13, 2018. Chair DiFazio called Mr. Langill to the table who introduced Christine Howe, the new grant writer. Mr. Langill provided background for the measure. He noted the administration has not found any evidence that the salaries have been adjusted since the charter was formed, although the charter has a mechanism by which they can be accomplished. Auditor Swanson responded that there was an adjustment in 2004. The salaries are out of synch with other municipalities in the state, whether as percentage of total budget, or per capita. This increases the raises to approximately 16% (when rounded up), which isn't significant over time or as compared to CBA's or other town employees. Ms. Howe provided some background for a per capita comparison with similar cities and towns with comparable or town manager forms of government. The other chart indicates the annual impact of the adjustments if adopted. The total impact for the first year is \$40,000. Mr. Langill noted that per the charter, the change would not take effect until after the next election.

Chair DiFazio asked why police salaries were included in the comparison data. Mr. Langill responded that it's a ranking of town salaries to see where the Mayor's salary falls. Vice Chair Smart responded that it's not a fair comparison since the police salaries would include details; it's not apples to apples.

Auditor Swanson also provided the committee with backup; a survey that focused on Mayor, Town Council and school committee salaries of similar cities/towns, in population, and budget in the state. He noted that Weymouth is extraordinarily lower than

other communities. School committee ranges were also comparatively more. This information was solicited by phone, email and website information.

Councilor Haugh noted that according to the SRA legislation, board members are adjusted to 80% of the Council's salaries. Essentially, approving this raises their salaries also. Vice Chair Smart noted that the legislation calls for their salary to decrease as the years go by, but it is based on a percentage of the Council's.

Chair DiFazio asked if there is any background to justify the original salaries? Mr. Langill responded that he couldn't find any. The administration didn't think it was prudent to do too much, but it should be looked at periodically. They aren't looking to get to where other towns fall, but feel an adjustment is warranted.

Chair DiFazio asked the Auditor if he looked into how long other towns were operating under Mayor/Town Council form of government? He is looking for a chronological sense on how they arrived at the numbers. Auditor Swanson will research further. Councilor Heffernan suggested he also research the size of other Councils. Chair DiFazio asked for the information for the public hearing that will be scheduled for December 17, 2018.

Chair DiFazio asked if the administration gave any consideration to adjusting the Mayor's salary, but not the others. Mr. Langill responded that they did look at that, but decided to put forward the others too because of the significant lag between Weymouth and other towns.

Chair DiFazio invited Ms. Belmarsh, Chair of the School Committee to speak. She had submitted a letter to the Council requesting equal salaries to those of the Council. She noted that equal work deserves equal pay. The School Committee meets the same number of times, requires the same skillset and expertise. She reiterated her position in an email to the Council outlining the tally of meetings, subcommittees, etc. which is comparable to the Council's. She appreciated the research that was provided and noted there is quite a significant disparity and noted that it should be looked at within the community. The composition of both Council and School Committee is essentially the same in the charter. Only the salaries differ.

Chair DiFazio asked if she believes the School Committee should get more for at least the same amount of work; that higher pay might attract a better quality of candidates. He noted that people who serve in town government don't do it for the money. Ms. Belmarsh responded equalizing the salaries shows that the town equally values the positions.

Councilor Haugh responded that she wished the job was only the number of meetings. She puts in far more time than an hour meeting. It's about 10% of her total time invested and she knows other Councilors do the same. Ms. Belmarsh responded that it's the same for school committee members.

Mr. Langill noted that he isn't present to argue or suggest anything wrong or unwarranted. A lot of people in town deserve more than they're making. The town had to

be careful of the impacts of the measure to the budget. There are thresholds that trigger other impacts. The town needs to take a more frequent look at salaries.

Chair DiFazio asked if the current measure impacts any of the triggers, such as health insurance or pension benefits-items the committee should be aware of before deliberating.

Councilor Haugh asked how many people the town employes. It's 600. The number of positions in question that would exceed the threshold is 6, or 1%; she doesn't want that to be a reason not to bump salaries above the \$5000 limit going forward. She agrees the administration should look at adjustments more frequently, but if a School Committee member needs health insurance, she doesn't see it as an issue. Her opinion is that they deserve this benefit as a town employee. Mr. Langill responded that the impact changes from what was filed. It would be a different precedent. No town pays a School Committee member equally or more than Town Council.

Vice Chair Smart asked if there is a trigger? A salary of \$5,000 per year is the threshold for eligibility in both the town's health and pension benefits.

Councilor Haugh responded that the pension rules changed after 2010. Employees aren't allowed to double dip. She doesn't want it to prevent them from looking at it in the future.

During this discussion, at 7:03PM, Councilor Mathews arrived.

Vice Chair Smart noted that compensation for School Committee members was set at about half of what it was for Council by charter. He asked if administration knew why the charter commission thought that was equitable? Mr. Langill responded that it's a bigger issue than the measure that was filed. The other questions are valid, but this is a separate issue.

Councilor Haugh noted that other cities and towns required salaries to be reviewed every few years, as dictated by charter. She suggested Weymouth should do similar. Mr. Langill responded that there are options and avenues to do it on a regular basis, or connect it to something else.

Vice Chair Smart asked Ms. Belmarsh to explain what she meant in her email about it not being a gender issue. She responded that it's the composition of the two committees. The Council is mostly male, the school committee female. The state is currently going through a practice under the pay equity law to look at positions and what they are compensated to make sure the duties are paid equitably. Vice Chair Smart asked her where in the charter does it indicate only males may run for office? She responded that it doesn't. Salary for Council is the same whether male or female, and so is the school committee's. The duties, responsibilities are equal. Vice Chair Smart responded that the males and females are paid equally for the same positions on the Town Council. It has

nothing to do with gender. She responded that it should not have anything to do with gender.

Councilor Mathews noted that it's been fourteen years since they considered a formal proposal for salary increases. He likes that it doesn't only include elected officials, but includes appointed officials. It plays an important role in attracting and keeping quality people. If the measure was passed, it wouldn't effect salaries until 2020, which makes it a fifteen-year interval between adjustments. He isn't opposed to the 16% for the Mayor's salary, but isn't sure he agrees with 16% across the board. Even with the proposed increase they are still lower than the rest of municipalities He provided a spreadsheet that shows Weymouth as second lowest, and third to lowest with the increase. He will do further research analyzing the School Committees. He noted the amount of time they put into the job warrants an increase for both Council and School Committee. He wants to hear from the public as to their thoughts.

Vice Chair Smart noted that the charter dictates that the Mayor may not hold any other position of employment while in office. That isn't the case with other boards or commissions. He understands the justification for the Mayor in the measure but not the rest. They knew the salary going in; they volunteer time because they know they can do the job. For \$20 a week, he is unsure he would support any but the Mayor's salary increase. He volunteers because he knows he can make a difference.

Councilor Haugh agrees with Councilor Mathews in that the subject deserves more study. She believes that they should be compensated more. She has taken vacation days to accomplish Town Council work. It is a very difficult job. Those who serve deserve to be fairly compensated. Weymouth has been frugal and if they are serious they should take a hard, honest blunt look at it.

Councilor Heffernan noted that it is time to make sure it is reviewed on a more regular basis. It's time for a thorough honest discussion. It's commendable that Weymouth has so many willing to serve the town. He found Councilor Mathews comparisons striking.

Councilor Mathews noted he does not receive a pension or health insurance from the town. The language was put in the charter for a reason; it wasn't meant that the salary was to be there in perpetuity; it was meant to be reviewed regularly. If it passes, it wouldn't take effect during a current term. He is interested in hearing from the public.

The chair noted that the auditor will put additional information together as requested, and a public hearing is scheduled. Councilor Mathews requested a later start time for additional meetings.

ADJOURNMENT

At 7:30 PM, there being no further business, a MOTION was made by Vice Chair Smart to adjourn and was seconded by Councilor Mathews. UNANIMOUSLY VOTED.

Attachments:

1. Spreadsheet comparison from administration
2. Spreadsheet comparison by Auditor Swanson
3. Spreadsheet comparison from Councilor Mathews

Respectfully Submitted by Mary Barker as Recording Secretary.

Approved by Kenneth DiFazio as Ordinance Committee Chairman.
Voted unanimously on 22 January 2018