

Dover Warrant Committee

October 14, 2009

Members in attendance: James Dawley; Peter Smith, Secretary; Kate Bush; Kathy Hall; David Melville; Andrew Waugh; Jane Wemyss

Others in attendance: David Heinlein, Selectmen Liaison; from the Personnel Board: Mary Carrigan, Chair; Sue Geremia; Mary Hornsby

Mr. Dawley called the meeting to order at 7:00 pm

1. Review of minutes

Mr. Melville moved that the minutes of September 30 be approved, seconded by Mr. Waugh. The motion was approved by a vote of 6-0-0 (Ms. Bush not yet present).

2. Discussion of Non-Contract Employee General Increase

The Personnel Board presented its recommendation of a 1.9% general increase for non-contract employees at the Selectmen's September 24 meeting, which only some of the Warrant Committee were able to attend. Ms. Carrigan outlined the Board's methods for arriving at that figure. The statistical basis is the quarterly Employment Cost Index and the corresponding Consumer Price Index. To those indices the Board tries to apply a correction based on its estimate of the likely change over the coming 18 months. Every few years, the Town conducts a survey of comparable towns and adjusts the salary scale accordingly.

Several members of the Warrant Committee suggested that trying to predict the future is awfully difficult and that simply correcting for the past 12 months' change would be more accurate in the long run. Ms. Carrigan countered that, based on past experience, this would lead to huge swings; a steadier course is preferable both for the Town and for the employees. Mr. Melville suggested that rather than adjusting the increase each year, that a fixed increase be adopted in between surveys of comparable towns. Ms. Carrigan and Mr. Heinlein demurred, saying that a too-generous increase for one 3-4 year period could lead to a morale-sapping no-increase period.

One difficulty this year was that many on the Warrant Committee were unable to attend the initial discussion on the increase at the Selectmen's meeting. This has prolonged the discussion and lead to duplication of presentations. Mr. Heinlein suggested that next year the initial presentation should occur at a Warrant Committee meeting.

Mr. Melville moved that the Warrant Committee endorse the Personnel Board's recommendation of a 1.9% general increase, seconded by Mr. Smith. The motion was approved by a vote of 6-1-0.

3. Discussion of Warrant Committee's Budget Request to the Departments

Mr. Dawley went over the various types of budget requests to the departments: level-service, additional-service, level-funding, and reduced-funding. He endorsed Mr. Heinlein's suggestion at the previous meeting that except in dire financial straits, Town government shouldn't make drastic cuts without clear citizen assent at Town Meeting. Mr. Smith outlined the previous year's

process, where a level-service and additional-service budget was requested, but only a couple of departments submitted anything beyond level-service. Further, when the level-service budgets were compared to projected revenue, the Warrant Committee went back to the departments for additional cuts.

Mr. Waugh moved that the Warrant Committee request only a level-service budget from the departments, seconded by Ms. Hall. The motion was approved by a vote of 7-0-0.

4. Liaison Updates

Ms. Hall (Library): The new director has applied to the State to re-purpose the grant for a teen activity area – which is now seen to consume too much space – and to use the funds for new video equipment. She does not plan any capital budget requests in the coming year.

Ms. Bush and Ms. Wemyss (Regional Schools): A new Business Manager has been hired and is settling in. The first pass at the budget may not be ready quite as early as last year.

Mr. Heinlein (Selectmen): The Town Accountant will be leaving to take a position elsewhere, but will stay on long enough to get the budget process well underway. Mr. Ramsay will cover her responsibilities until a replacement can be hired.

Mr. Smith (Fire): An abutter has requested that the new radio tower be painted to make it less visible. Mr. Heinlein added that bids are being solicited.

Ms. Bush noted that the Caryl Community Center Committee's meetings are coinciding with the Warrant Committee's. She will request a change, or at least notification when financial matters will be discussed so she can attend.

*Mr. Waugh moved to adjourn, seconded by Mr. Melville;
the motion was agreed by consensus at 8:10 pm
the next meeting will be October 28 at 7:00 pm*

Respectfully submitted,
Peter Smith, Secretary

approved October 28, 2009