

**BOARD OF SELECTMEN**  
**MARCH 18, 2003**  
**SENIOR CENTER, 163 WEST MAIN STREET**  
**“APPROVED”**

**TOWN CLERK**

The BOS met with Town Clerk Bonnie Biocchi and Ms. Donna Manley. Ms. Biocchi was presenting Ms. Manley for the BOS consideration of part-time assistance in the Town Clerk's office. Ms. Manley has experience in the administrative field and Ms. Biocchi stated that with Ms. Manley's "sparkly personality," she is a good fit for the Town Clerk's office filling customer requests. *Mr. Cunningham moved to approve the hire of Donna L. Manley as the part-time Town Clerk Clerical Assistant at Grade 4, Step 1 with an effective start date of March 24, 2003. Seconded by Mr. Hartnett. Unanimous vote.*

**PERSONNEL BOARD - Wage & Classification Study**

In attendance for this portion were the Personnel Board members: Joan Hutchinson, Pam Keith, Debi Nicholson and Berta Erickson. Also in attendance was Town Accountant Valerie Jenkins.

Mr. Cunningham stated that he attended the Finance Committee meeting last week and had been impressed with the work done by the Personnel Board; however, he questions the implementation of the recommendations. He stated that the Finance Committee is anxious for feedback.

Ms. Hutchinson stated that the "price tag is hefty," however salary compression without the Cost of Living Adjustment (COLA) would not "fill the bill." She stated that the appropriate approach is to place existing employees at step for FY04 to address market issues and that the extensive comparisons they conducted were not by the highest but by the average and compared to median survey using the Bennett philosophy. Ms. Hutchinson continued that the Personnel Board hopes the BOS will advocate this and somehow find the money for it. She further cautioned that there may be radical departure of Town Hall employees. She then continued that many employees are divided by little groups to form many entities that the BOS may want to restructure for the future to service our constituency.

Mr. Cunningham felt that in some ways the Town has already fulfilled this by combining some positions and that the Town bylaw considers the employees as an entity.

Mr. Hartnett suggested that there could be the possibility of a "town collector" as opposed to the various billing departments that could save some money. Ms. Kitchen noted that the Enterprise funds are charged back the cost of these services.

Mr. Hartnett further added that there are discrepancies between the employees covered under the Personnel Bylaw and the unions with respect to vacations and time of service.

Ms. Hutchinson also stated that there were some discrepancies between full time and 40-hour employees and that it was difficult to map the data. She stated that it should be consistent that a full-time equivalent (FTE) works a minimum of 40 hours.

Mr. Hartnett stated that there was presentation was worthwhile and asked if the Town Accountant had all of the information for the full impact.

Ms. Jenkins stated that these were "ballpark numbers – her best guess."

Mr. Cunningham stated that the re-grading needed to be done; however he was unsure if the Town could implement it all at once. He prefers it phased in increments, which would let the employees know that the inconsistencies have been addressed and embraced by the Board, but also allowing the Town to ease into it financially. He recommends phasing it.

Mr. Hartnett agreed with Mr. Cunningham.

Ms. Nicholson stated that when she evaluated this tool she was "appalled and embarrassed by the amount employees are under paid. She felt the employees had been penalized long enough. She felt it was time for the Town to step up to the plate. She feels that the townspeople do value town employees.

Ms. Erickson stated, "tough times call for tough measures." Overall she agreed with Ms. Nicholson but added that she hopes that town employees will take all of the finances into account and felt that compromises generally work better by introducing them gradually.

Mr. Hartnett added that Town Hall is the only group of employees not covered by a bargaining unit and they rely on the Personnel Board and Board of Selectmen to approve and defend. He also noted that historically town employees tend to fall behind the other

groups covered by bargaining units

Mr. Chamberlin stated that he agreed with Ms. Nicholson who spoke “so eloquently” and that of 351 cities and towns in the Commonwealth, Groton being the 85<sup>th</sup> wealthiest, we can afford to pay Town employees. He was committed wholeheartedly to what the Personnel Board presented.

*Mr. Cunningham moved to vote to embrace the new wage and classification schedule as recommended by the Personnel Board and seek to endorse it as soon as practicable. Seconded by Mr. Hartnett. Unanimous vote.*

#### **Transfer Station Bid**

*Mr. Cunningham moved to award the bid for the Removal of Construction Debris and Household Furniture from the Town of Groton Transfer Station at a rate of \$99.00 per ton for hauling and tonnage to Rick Lamarre & Son, Inc. Seconded by Mr. Hartnett. Unanimous vote.*

#### **ATM Article - Liens on Unpaid Ambulance Bills**

Mr. Chamberlin stated that Mass. General Law, Chapter 40, Section 58, Municipal Charges Lien, would allow the Town to impose a lien on real property for an ambulance bill which has not been paid, after all efforts have been made to collect the amount due. This would not limit the Selectmen’s ability, upon the advice of the Ambulance Department to abate bills for those who are truly unable to pay their bill or their insurance deductible.

Mr. Hartnett stated that he is not in favor of this article.

Mr. Cunningham stated that he was in favor of this article.

Ms. Kitchen stated that this would only apply to town residents.

Mr. Hartnett stated that a lot of ambulance calls are out of town. Groton picks up for other towns as well and there’s no recourse of collection for them. He was against penalizing the Groton residents for this? Mr. Hartnett felt that this article was a “knee-jerk reaction” to the many write offs which occurred over a year ago. He subsequently learned that many people never got their bills and that since that time; we’ve hired another collection agency. He felt there was “no big rush to do this.” He would be interested in seeing a new study to see what this new company’s collection rates are for a one-year period.

Mr. Chamberlin stated that he did not agree with Mr. Hartnett’s opinion of a knee-jerk reaction. He feels it gives the Town another option if needed and that it doesn’t change the abatement option.

Mr. Cunningham stated that with the financial crisis, all communities are looking under every stone for additional revenue sources, and this is just one more tool that we have the opportunity to take advantage of. He further added that the Ambulance Department will still be making abatements and that this municipal lien is a last resort option for the BOS.

Mr. Hartnett stated that “sometimes tools in the shed get used for the wrong purpose” and he was still not in favor of this article.

*Mr. Cunningham moved to approve the article “To see if the Town will vote to adopt Mass. General Law Chapter 40, Section 58, Municipal Charges Lien, for ambulance fees, or take any action relating thereto to be placed on the Annual Town Meeting Warrant. Seconded by Mr. Chamberlin. Vote with Two in favor (Chamberlin, Cunningham), one opposed (Hartnett).*

#### **ATM Article - Remove CPA Article**

*Mr. Cunningham moved to remove the Community Preservation Act article from Annual Town Meeting Warrant. Seconded by Mr. Hartnett. Unanimous vote.*

#### **Website Committee**

*Mr. Cunningham moved to increase the membership of the Website Committee from 5 to 7 members and moved to appoint Valerie P. Spencer to the Website Committee for the one-year term to expire June 30, 2003. Seconded by Mr. Hartnett. Unanimous vote.*

Mr. Cunningham noted to the public that the MMA recognized the Town of Groton’s website as an award-winning website.

#### **Surplus**

*Mr. Cunningham moved to declare the 1990 Ford Crown Victoria, VIN 2FACP72G6LX168507 surplus. Seconded by Mr. Hartnett. Unanimous vote.*

#### **LEPC Appointment**

*Mr. Cunningham moved to appoint Susan H. Horowitz to the Local Emergency Planning Committee for the one-year term to expire on June 30, 2003. Seconded by Mr. Hartnett. Unanimous vote.*

**ADMINISTRATIVE OFFICER (AO) REPORT**

Ms. Kitchen gave her Administrative Officer Report.

**Executive Session**

*Mr. Cunningham moved to enter into executive session in accordance with MGL Chapter 39, Section 23B for the purpose of considering discipline or dismissal of, or to hear complaints or charges brought against a public officer, employee, staff member or individual and for the purpose of discussing strategy with respect to contract negotiations at 8:10 p.m. and will not reconvene in open session. Seconded by Mr. Hartnett. Roll call vote: Cunningham - yes; Hartnett - yes; Chamberlin; yes.*

*Mr. Cunningham moved to adjourn the meeting at 10:30 p.m. Seconded by Mr. Hartnett. Unanimous vote.*

Approved: \_\_\_\_\_  
Thomas D. Hartnett, Clerk

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Respectfully submitted,  
Maria Casey  
Administrative Secretary

Date Approved: May 5, 2003