

**SHERMAN BOARD OF SELECTMEN
SPECIAL MEETING MINUTES
March 2, 2012**

Present: Clay Cope - First Selectman Chris Jellen - Selectman Andrea O'Connor - Selectman

Call to Order: First Selectman Cope calls the meeting to order at 2:09 PM.

Agenda: Personnel Changes and Requests:

Senior Center – Social Services: Beth Trott (Director of Social Services) proposes a change to include her whole salary. Her salary was previously split between the Senior Center and Health & Welfare, with most of it under Health and Welfare. She proposes increasing her salary, to a range more comparable to what other Directors of Social Services earn. She also proposes a slight salary increase for the Social Services Clerk, to bring her up to 5 hours a week. She has presented the Selectmen with a sheet, which includes her rationale and shows where the income comes in from her program. She also thinks the school should pay the town a per diem rate when they use her services as a Social Worker.

First Selectman Cope asks how this change impacts the Senior Center. Beth explains that the population of age 60+ in Sherman is growing rapidly, and they are overwhelmed with senior needs. They need transportation at least 5 days a week to get people to and from the Senior Center. They have put in for 24 hours a week for a driver, instead of the current 8 hours a week. They would like to change Suzette Berger's position – it is a union position – she is basically doing what a Senior Center Director would do. Suzette's job as Senior Center Coordinator of activities has changed tremendously, because Beth is pulled in other directions. Beth explains that Suzette is really running the Senior Center, and Beth is running Social Services. Suzette says the town has not been compliant with A.D.A provisions, and they do deal with many people who are disabled. She mentions that anyone age 60+ in Sherman is eligible to join the senior nutrition program for \$3.50 a meal. This program is important for both nutritional and social reasons. Suzette explains that program participants need assistance during meals. For example, today she had to take eleven seniors to American Pie. She had to pick them up, dress them to go out, take them to the restaurant, sit with them, cut their food, monitor their table manners and their own safety, and clean up after them. First Selectman Cope notes there is a request to reevaluate the Senior Center Coordinator's Position, to increase the pay rate to reflect fair and reasonable wages for job duties from \$16.93 per hour to \$21.00 per hour. Beth proposes raising Suzette's salary to \$21.00 per hour, at 25 hours per week and to update her job description. Suzette would also like to have the clerk at the center for 5 more hours per week as well (total of 10 hours per week for the clerk). Suzette thinks the Senior Center needs to be manned at the desk in the morning.

First Selectman Cope asks Beth and Suzette to speak about Debbie's (Thorpe) hours – increasing her to 24 hours at \$14.00 per hour (van driving). Suzette and Beth say they need a second reliable car, and they have a line item for mileage. They reduced that item, when they had the donated car. What they would really like to do is to lease a new vehicle that will not break down, an all wheel or 4-wheel drive vehicle, something safer and more efficient. Suzette explains that picking up seniors is a time intensive process. She envisions Debbie driving around to pick the people up. Selectman O'Connor suggests speaking with Dave Hannon at HEPCO to see if there is a cycle of van grants, to see if there is a van we can get. First Selectman Cope mentions he is exploring the possibility of obtaining vehicles and other property through government surplus.

2. Land Use: Trish Viola says back in 2009 there was talk about merging the Land Use Office, one person who knows what to tell people what they need. This fell through the cracks, and she wants to bring this up for discussion again. The clerks involved for this are union employees. She did not put this in the budget, but she thinks this is something that the board should consider. Selectman O'Connor explains that the concept was for a Land Use Administrator, with other person being a cross-trained person, so there would always be someone in the office who could guide people. She knows that Trish has been working on a unified property record, so that everything is in one place regarding a property. Trish says everything is a different color for different departments, and everything is where it should be, all color coordinated. First Selectman Cope says Trish would like a heads up from them, and then she would build this into her budget. Trish would be Land Use Coordinator, and she would have Michelle (Battaglia) as her assistant. She says salaries would increase. She is not looking for action from the Selectmen on this right now. Knowing how the office operates, First Selectman Cope feels all of this makes sense. First Selectman Cope also has non-land use related questions about union employees. Trish says there are 5 union clerks, including Suzette. First Selectman Cope asks if Debbie's hours increase, would that be union. Trish says the rate of pay at the Senior Center is negotiated salary. Trish brings all of this up now, because they will be renegotiating contracts in 2013.

3. Overall Pay Increase of 3%: union (required) and non-union (suggested per historical data): First Selectman Cope explains that this will be seen across the board in the budget – everyone will receive a 3% increase, and this has been the case in previous years. Trish explains that when salaries are negotiated, it is for a period of four years. Trish points out that the Town has many knowledgeable employees who would be hard to replace, and these positions are low paid in comparison to other towns. Michelle Battaglia has been the P&Z Clerk for around 2 years. Trish has been here for 18 years, Kathy Retter for over 15 years, Suzette for 6 or 7 years. Trish says she can't change the amount that people are paid, but she thinks a 3% increase is fair. First Selectman Cope will see Trish on Thursday, March 8th.

4. Selectman's Office:

A. New Position of Selectman's Assistant, Grants & Contracts: First Selectman Cope explains that he is creating this position (10 hours per week/52 weeks per year/\$14 hr), in light of his determination of the support that he needs in his office. The proposal is for Laura's (Pettinato) assistance with grants and contracts. While he could have put this figure into Ruth's budget, it would have made the Selectman's Assistant Salary line look inflated. He comments that Laura is very helpful with the STEAP grant applications and follow up on grants that Andrea had already received. First Selectman Cope explains that this is beneficial to his job and he gets immense value for the \$7,280. He notes that STEAP is so highly competitive, and we need to work extra hard to try to secure these STEAP funds.

Trish mentions that Laura also acts in different capacities - filling in for Ruth and the Assessor's Office for sick days and vacations, and that she is also the B.O.S. Clerk. First Selectman Cope will check with Liz on the calculation of sick days and vacations. First Selectman Cope notes he has Laura down for 18 B.O.S. meetings at \$14.00 per hour, 3 hours per meeting.

B. Reevaluation of Business Administrator's position: First Selectman Cope reads a statement from Liz Lavia requesting a pay increase. Her position is currently 12 hours per week at \$15.89 per week. When Liz first started, she had to fix many errors in the books and previous tax problems. Now the books are balanced, all figures are accurate, and she managed to do all of this using sub-standard programming. Tax clerks, payroll accounts and like positions receive much higher salaries in other towns. She says her job warrants \$25.00 - \$35.00 per hour, and she mentions her counterparts in Bridgewater and Roxbury receive \$35.00 and \$24.00 per hour. Her predecessor in Sherman received a higher salary. She consistently puts in more than the 12 hours required by her position to get the job done. She also is flexible in the morning, and is at Town Hall early for people to access. She requests that her position be reevaluated, and her salary increased to \$25.00 per hour. That is an additional \$5,684.64 per year. This is less than half the amount paid last year in tax penalties. First Selectman Cope mentions that this statement is supported with documentation of a previous salary increase request that Liz made which was denied. First Selectman Cope says with a new administration, he supports this request for an increase, and he notes that Liz works beyond her required hours and is a tremendous asset with respect to the budget work. Selectman O'Connor suggests that First Selectman Cope make a specific proposal for this, and bring it to the regular B.O.S. meeting in March, detailing where the money would come from in the existing budget and an adjustment to the job description. Selectman Jellen also thinks it would be appropriate to take some time to digest this information, and First Selectman Cope says this issue will be moved to the regular B.O.S. meeting on March 22nd.

Selectmen Comments:

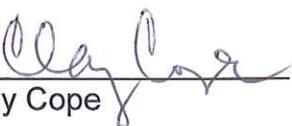
First Selectman Cope tells Selectman Jellen and Selectman O'Connor that Ruth has documents for them for tomorrow's budget meeting.

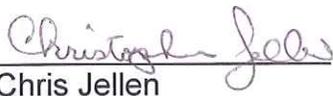
Selectman O'Connor asks if John Wren and Park and Rec had a proposal about an Administrative Assistant for Park and Rec, because she saw them at the today's meeting earlier. First Selectman Cope says no, there was a misunderstanding.

Selectman O'Connor says she drafted a revised position description for the Facilities Manager. First Selectman Cope says it is in the budget, so they can talk about this during the budget discussion. Trish asks if this position will be advertised. Selectman O'Connor says yes, any newly created position requires searching.

Adjournment: First Selectman Cope moves to adjourn the March 2, 2012 Special Board of Selectmen's Meeting at 3:00 p.m., and the motion is carried unanimously.

Respectfully Submitted,
Laura J. Pettinato, BOS Clerk


Clay Cope


Chris Jellen


Andrea O'Connor

Minutes are not considered official until they have been approved and signed by a minimum of two Selectmen