

Personnel Wage Board
January 28, 2015
Town Hall
5:30 PM

Committee Members in attendance:

Gary Whitehouse, Nancy Bacher, Thom Freeman, Vivian Pitts

Staff in attendance:

William Keegan, Mary Beth Bernard, Marsha Armando

The meeting was called to order at 5:37 p.m.

Discussion:

Mary Beth Bernard opened the meeting stating that she is starting to look at current policies within the "FY 2015 Consolidated Personnel By-Law"; the first to be addressed is the tuition policy (*Education Reimbursement, page 12 in document*). The By-Law document was emailed to all committee members prior to the meeting. Mary Beth handed out an article from *Society for Human Resource Management* journal regarding best practices on employee tuition assistance. Included in the handout was the Town of Westwood Tuition Assistance Policy. Mary Beth asked the committee for direction on the next steps for the Town of Foxborough's policy.

Thom Freeman brought the HR policy book from a former employer to share/compare information. Discussion regarding what course grade would be acceptable to be reimbursed.

Although most employees have not used this benefit, the Town also does have a certification stipend benefit.

Discussion regarding the amount of total reimbursement available (annual total budget and availability to individual), and the need to establish guidelines. Gary Whitehouse asked if animosity would be created if the Town were able to assist some employees and not others. Mary Beth responded that they will continue to look for more money to assist more people, as there is nothing set aside in the budget right now for this benefit, and they would be able to gauge what the parameters would be if seed money is received. She also noted that the course taken would need to directly affect the employee's position, an example being provided in the last page of the Westwood policy.

Mr. Freeman asked about the Quinn Bill policy, where police are able to attend classes to earn degrees and receive educational incentives through salary increases. Mary Beth said that they are seeing this more in other services, such as fire and public works. Bill Keegan stated that Foxborough has, to a degree, diminished the use of the Quinn Bill, but it is hard to eliminate completely, as it could provide a competitive advantage during the hiring process.

The Board discussed a commitment and re-payment requirement for those who receive this benefit. Mary Beth Bernard would like to have an employee handbook which would refer to certain policies, allowing flexibility to change a policy instead of the Bylaws. She also stated that Bill Keegan is also in support of a tuition policy which is more defined than what is currently in place.

Mr. Whitehouse asked if there is no money presently set aside for this benefit, are we able to come up with funds if necessary. Ms. Bernard responded that based on committee feedback, a policy will be drafted and presented to the Board with questions regarding funding. She added that the Town would not be able to afford to provide \$5000 per person/per year, and that they employee must be benefits-eligible and have worked for the Town at least 6 (six) months.

Nancy Bacher asked for clarification on what type of institutions would be recognized as acceptable. Mr. Freeman asked if local schools with applicable programs have reached out to the Town in hopes of recruiting employees to attend. Mr. Keegan responded that has not occurred but an example of an appropriate program would be the Master of Public Administration at Suffolk University, and UMass Boston is developing a Master of Public Policy. It was noted that as long as the institution is accredited, it should be acknowledged.

After discussion of reimbursement amount per grade received, Mary Beth Bernard asked if anyone present was opposed to the tuition policy format utilized by the Town of Westwood, combined with they buy-back portion described by Thom Freeman. All were in agreement.

Mary Beth also clarified that she is the Assistant Town Manager with the Human Resources function, and in the updated By-Laws, "Personnel Administrator" will be replaced with "Town Manager or Designee".

Nancy Bacher asked if this policy is based on fiscal year or calendar year. It was clarified as fiscal year, contingent upon funding.

Mr. Whitehouse noted that the existing policy

Action Items:

- Suggest alternative pay plans. The structure of the current pay plan is not ideal, too many grades and levels. Perhaps we should look at the concept of job families or revisit our original six step pay plan.
- Review By-Law for suggested changes in preparation for Annual Town Meeting. Look at changes previously suggested but not adopted. Solicit input from employees, and Town Boards.

The Meeting ended at 6:48 p.m.