

## **PERSONNEL COMMITTEE REPORT 2008 (FOR FISCAL YEAR 2010)**

The Committee members for 2008 are Roy Baum, Mike Serio, Joan Chamberland, Jeff Bonja and Donald Fairbrother.

During the Fall of 2008, the Committee met several time to discuss the following issues:

- Review requests for additional staff
- Conduct/review the salary survey
- Review two position descriptions
- Review and revise the Town's Personnel Policies on the five-year schedule

### Requests for Additional Staff

At the first meeting of the Committee held on October 23, 2008 the Committee began reviewing requests for additional staff. Roy Baum indicated concern about considering additional staff given the economic times. After much discussion, the Committee voted the following motion unanimously:

***That the Personnel Committee is reviewing positions for need, but that the Selectmen should keep an eye on the bottom line when considering new positions and that the Personnel Committee believes the Selectmen may need to institute a hiring freeze.***

The general consensus of the Committee was that all positions have been reviewed and appropriate descriptions developed and approved. That the Selectmen were responsible for determining whether to add additional staff into the budget for FY10 and that with the current economic times, that the Committee's general consensus was that no new staffing or additional hours should be considered for FY10.

### Salary Survey

The Personnel Committee reviewed the salary survey developed in the same format as used in previous years using the same 10 towns that have been used in the past. These towns are Ashland, Charlton, Grafton, Millbury, Northbridge, Orleans, Oxford (did not respond), Plainville, Southborough and Wrentham. The Town Administrator provided the survey data which included an average of the Low, Median and High wage rates as well as the actual rates paid by the 10 towns.

During discussions, Jeff Bonja asked how the list of 10 towns was developed. The Committee discussed the last time this issue was raised by the Finance Committee, the review that was done and various lists developed and how the Committee opted to recommend staying with the same 10 towns as reasonable comparisons. The Committee then asked the Town Administrator to conduct a similar review of the 10 towns as was undertaken in the past. Three sets of data were developed and presented to the Committee that are explained in detail in the attached November 3, 2008 memorandum. In summary the data sets were:

The first was the “10 most similar” communities to Sturbridge by pure demographics as measured by Per Capita Income and Equalized Valuation Per Capita. These communities were: Raynham, Great Barrington, Freetown, Boston, Framingham, Plainville, Easton, North Attleborough, Millis and Billerica.

The second was the “10 appropriate towns” this used the demographic information and added into consideration the following factors:

- Communities with populations between 10,000 and 15,000
- Budgets between \$25,000,000 and \$40,000,000
- Similar form of government

This second list generated the following towns: Charlton, Groton, Holbrook, Kingston, Lunenburg, Lynnfield, Northbridge, Norwell, Wilbraham and Wrentham.

The third list was the 10 towns that have been used in the past as listed above. Salary data was obtained using the Massachusetts Municipal Personnel Association Annual Salary Survey at the Department Head level. As with the review that was found several years ago, the Committee determined that the list of the “appropriate” 10 towns did not generate substantively different information than that generated by the 10 towns currently used. There was discussion regarding the outdated “per capita income” figure which is based on the last US Census in 2000. The Committee voted to continue using the same 10 towns that have been used in the past as they continue to be reasonable, have been accepted by all of the Town’s Collective Bargaining Units and have been found to be reasonable comparisons for explanations to Town Meeting. The Committee decided to conduct a similar review after the next Census data has been collected and become available to ensure an ongoing review.

### Two Position Descriptions

During the 2007 work undertaken by the Committee to review the position descriptions, one position had been overlooked as it was previously considered as

an Equipment Operator. This position was the Recycling Center Manager which has been added as a position under the collective bargaining agreement with the DPW Union. The other position is a new position that was recommended by the Economic Development Committee.

Both positions were reviewed and new positions descriptions approved at the December 11, 2008 meeting and are attached to this report.

### Review of the Town's Personnel Policies

The Committee reviewed the Personnel Policies and comments that were solicited from staff. Other interim changes that have already been approved by the Board of Selectmen were incorporated in the Policy Document (these are listed below in italics). In summary, the following changes have been recommended to the Board of Selectmen:

- The Personnel Committee is not listed in the Charter, but was created to advise the Town Administrator. The name of the Committee in the existing Personnel Policies is "Personnel Policy and Classification Committee". This is recommended to be shortened to what it has been referred to for years, simply the "Personnel Committee".
- *Provided part-time employees who work over 20 hours per week pro-rated vacation, holiday and sick time.*
- Recommended clarifying the probationary performance review (for new employees) verbiage to make it clear there was a three month review that would be followed by monthly reviews only if problems were apparent, leading up to the six month review.
- Updated some of the COBRA language so that it was consistent with current law and practice at the Town.
- Recommended moving the "Retirement Plan" section of the "Insurance Chapter" and into "Employee Benefits" Chapter.
- Recommended removing verbiage that was specific to Firefighters since they are now covered by a collective bargaining agreement.
- Recommended removing the "full-time" requirement for employees to be eligible for sick leave buy-back. The thought behind this is that the Town has employees that work for the Town for 20-30 years as part-time employees and eventually retire from the Town and are not currently eligible for this benefit. The Committee believed that since their sick leave time was pro-rated, they would have less of it accumulated and that it was a small additional liability for the Town.
- Formalized the "informal" policy the Town has had that when an employee has a major illness or surgery that the Board of Selectmen have voted to

allow other employees to “donate” some of their sick leave time to the employee that is out of work. The policy recommendation makes it clear that there is no sick leave bank created and that any unused donated time reverts back to the donor.

- Recommended changing the policy that vacation time has to be used in full day increments to allowing vacation time to be used in 4-hour increments subject to the approval of the Department Head.
- Recommended removing the following verbiage from the Holiday Pay section, “If a paid holiday falls within a scheduled vacation period, pay for the holiday will be added to the vacation pay. The holiday pay will be at the current straight time rate times the normally scheduled number of hours worked.” The wording was confusing and doesn’t follow current practices and was removed.
- Recommended changing the Tuition Reimbursement benefit from “75% of tuition (not including fees) and \$30 for books” to “75% of tuition, fees and books, not to exceed \$2,500 per fiscal year” and left the requirement that it be pre-approved by the Town Administrator and an appropriation in place prior to being eligible. The Committee looked at the changes made in the past decade to public higher education tuition and how cost shifting has been done to increase fees and keep tuition low. This benefit, which at one time had been considered a good benefit became a very minor benefit. The Committee reviewed the UMASS tuition/fees for part-time students and found that tuition and fees for a 3 credit course were:

Tuition	\$ 219.50
Fees	\$1,438.00

In reviewing this benefit and to encourage staff to improve their skills, the Committee is recommending this change with a maximum cap equal to approximately two pre-approved courses per year for an employee.

### Wages for FY10

The recommended pay scale based on the salary survey is attached and recommends a 3% wage increase, although the Committee recognizes the need to balance the budget and this decision is ultimately the Selectmen’s recommendation to Town Meeting. The Committee notes the third quarter Consumer Price Index for our area which is the index used in the past was 4.7%.

### Attachments

- Minutes

- Recycling Center and Economic Development Coordinator Position Descriptions
- November 3, 2008 Memorandum discussing the process used to validate the 10 towns used for comparisons
- Salary Survey Data and recommended FY10 Wage Ranges