

Approved September 20, 2023

**Advisory Committee Orientation  
Zoom Video Conference  
Wednesday, September 13, 2023, 6:30 p.m.**

Those present from Advisory Committee included Susan Clapham, Secretary; Wendy Paul, Vice Chair; Gail Sullivan, Vice Chair; Al Ferrer; Pete Pedersen; Christina Dougherty; Rani Elwy; David Prock; Tamara Sielecki; Hanna Bonin; Phil Jameson; Jay Prosnitz; Lucienne Ronco; and Donna Stoddard.

Also in attendance were Craig Mack, Chair, School Committee (SC); David Lussier, Superintendent, Wellesley Public Schools (WPS); Cindy Mahr, Assistant Superintendent of Finance and Operations, WPS; Catherine Mirick, SC; Meghan Jop, Executive Director; Dave Cohen, Director, Department of Public Works (DPW); Jamie Jurgenson, Director, Wellesley Free Library (WFL); Ann Howley, WFL Trustees; Lise Olney, Chair, Select Board (SB); Colette Aufranc, SB; Tom Ulfelder, SB.

Wendy Paul, Vice Chair, called the meeting to order at 6:30 p.m. Vice Chair Gail Sullivan took roll call of members of Advisory in attendance

Meeting was not recorded due to technical issues with Wellesley Media.

**Citizen Speak**

There was no one present for Citizen Speak.

**Special Town Meeting Warrant Article 8 – School Committee  
Five-year contracts for Food Services Management, Yearbook and Class Photos**

School Committee presented information regarding the request to seek authorization to enter into 5-year contracts for food services management, yearbook, and class photos. State law limits contracts to 3 years unless a town votes to make it a longer contract. Therefore, School Committee is seeking authorization to enter into 5-year contracts with Town Meeting approval. A brief presentation was provided that outlined the proposed changes. The financial benefits of longer contracts were presented and included greater leverage in negotiations for advantageous pricing, avoiding frequent vendor changes and possibility disruptions in service during transitions, and longer intervals between preparing and executing the procurement process and resultant savings of staff time

**Questions/Comments**

- A couple Advisory members expressed support for this from an administrative perspective.
- What are the 5-year contracts currently in place? How is quality ensured over the longer contract term?
  - School transportation services has a 5-year contract and there are two (2) transportation contracts. The Schools work closely with Town Counsel to ensure that the bid documents specify expectations and other details. There are benchmarks as part of the contracts. The district works with companies on a regular basis and if there is a concern it can be addressed. All contracts are subject to appropriation. If budget is not passed and funds are not available then the contract would be void.
- What is the pricing within a typical 5-year contract and is there an adjustment each year?
  - It depends on how the bid document is developed. Once a bid comes forward with a price they are held to the contract no matter what happens in the external environment. It is a competitive environment that the bidding creates. The bid documents set out specifics regarding escalation costs.

- How does the food services/free lunch program fit into this?
  - The program is regulated by several external agencies: the National School Lunch program is regulated by the USDA, and further regulated in Massachusetts by the Department of Health and the Department of Elementary and Secondary Education (DESE). The bid is standardized by the state to be fully compliant with the USDA and is consistent from school district to school district within Massachusetts. DESE has a structured bid structure which is meant to ensure that contracts are fully compliant with USDA.
- If the schools need to terminate a contract, is there a financial cost to the schools to buy it out?
  - This would be based on the bid document which was executed. The WPS works closely with town counsel to ensure that they can cancel a contract if the requirements are not met.
- When would the next contracts be bid out? Would the Schools consider putting out a bid during year 3 or 4 to get a better deal?
  - Typically, if we are looking to renew a bid, then we would do so later in the contract period.
- Does this change apply to these contracts in the future?
  - Yes, this article requests a permanent change in the town bylaw. That doesn't mean that the Schools would always work with five-year contracts, but the article provides the option to do so.

**Special Town Meeting Warrant Article 2 – Select Board/Executive Director  
Amend Salary Plan – Pay Schedule (Union Contracts: DPW, WFL, Police Dispatch)**

**WFL Contract**

Contract settlement fundamentals were reviewed (see PowerPoint presentation). Prior to the initiation of bargaining, the townwide financial plan (TWFP) is reviewed because it offers a look at the out years. The SB provides parameters to the negotiating team to be used during bargaining. An analysis of the comparable compensation for the various positions is reviewed. This provides information about where personnel fall within a comparable range. The Town works to come up with an offer that is both a financial settlement that's affordable for the town and comparable to the region. In contract discussions this year we worked to get our unions to the median. The union and the Town bargained in good faith, and all the unions are applauded for their cooperation this year during their participation in the negotiations. The SB has publicly voted the memoranda of agreements (MOAs).

It was noted that Advisory and Town Meeting are asked to review and approve the funding for year one of the contract. The contract components cannot be changed. Under the town bylaws, Town Meeting must approve the new wage table. The settled contracts that were reviewed were the two (2) library contracts, the police dispatch contract and the DPW production contract.

The Library Association is an umbrella type of association that is broken out into staff and into supervisors. There are 53 positions. Some custodians have remained in the staff association, so a portion of their contracts is funded from the FMD budget. There are 29 benefit-eligible positions; five (5) of those are in the supervisory unit. There are 19 part-time nonbenefit-eligible positions; as we've indicated before, these have been a challenge over the years. We have consolidated some of those positions into full-time positions. There are two (2) benefit-eligible custodians and three (3) part-time custodial positions.

This is a three (3) year contract. Wellesley is the seventh (7<sup>th</sup>) busiest library in the Commonwealth. Looking at library assistant wages against the Minuteman Library salaries, Wellesley ranked about fifth

(5<sup>th</sup>). In some wage classifications there was more than \$6.60 difference in terms of hourly wages. Compensation was carefully reviewed this year. COLA increases are 4% in year one, 3% in year two, and 3% in year three.

A longevity plan for our non-benefited employees was established. There are part-time employees who have worked for the town for many years and previously they were not eligible for step increases. This was addressed in the last contract. If an employee works 19 hours per week, they are considered to be part-time; when their hours reach those of a typical full-time employee, then they change steps. Establishing this equity in pay scale is critical to advance salaries. The same philosophy about longevity is being applied for part-time employees. The Juneteenth holiday was added to all the contracts. This will be consistent for all the unions. We are also looking at increasing the longevity benefit for our benefit employees. After looking at retention and maintenance rates due to longevity payments, we increased them to match most of the other unions. The long-standing additional 15 cent differential for library assistants will disappear by the end of the contract. The grievance process was clarified. The overall cost of the settlement of the WFL contract is \$97,457 and is inclusive because it impacts two budgets. The cost is \$89,699 within the library budget and \$7,758 in the FMD budget for the custodial unit. In addition, for the library each personnel dollar equals \$1.15 cost to the town because of the 13% state-mandated materials cost

**Questions:**

- What was COLA in the last contract given that inflation was low at that time and inflation is now much higher and has been over the last couple of years? Where do you get the COLA you used in the contract?
  - In the previous contract COLA was lower. As a result, WFL lost many librarians who left for higher pay in other communities. There is also an education threshold for librarians; the positions require a master's degree in American library science (MLS). The threshold in education level and the personnel requirements are very high. As one of the top 10 libraries in the Commonwealth, hiring staff at below average pay rates is very challenging and this is what we are trying to address. We are hoping that over the next three (3) years we can move our compensation rates to the median.
- Is there a per capita calculation? Do we have higher staffing that supports the seventh (7<sup>th</sup>) busiest library, are people working harder for less money?
  - We are higher in the rankings when looking at per capita. We are not just in the top ten (10) but usually in the top five (5) per capita. For example, we have similar staffing to Lexington but per capita we are circulating more materials, so per capita WFL is serving more people. It is ranked higher if we look at per capita and if we look at FTEs then it is lower. If you look just at circulation, we have fewer people doing more work.
- Are salaries below median across all levels and will the 4% increase put everyone where they should be?
  - It is across the board, but more pronounced among the salary paid to library assistants who do the circulation. We hope over the course of the three (3) years of 4 plus 3 plus 3 COLA increases, that we will be closer to the median. It is difficult because other libraries are negotiating contracts and are also giving increases.
  - We use the data put out by the Massachusetts Board of Library Commissions so we can compare library wages across the state. The latest data available is from 2021.
- We are in the top 5% per capita; is this per capita for the town versus the number of individuals that come into the library?
  - When we look at per capita, it is based on the direct circulation and FTEs. We are doing more with less FTEs.

- Although this is 4%, 3% and 3% across the board, does the change result in higher salaries for the assistants?
  - Yes, it's across the board, but when we compared what people were earning, assistant to assistant, our assistants were making a lower rate than assistants at other libraries in terms of percentage. The \$6 difference occurred with the rates paid to the library assistants. It's a \$3 lower rate for librarians and a \$6 difference for assistants.
- When we lose librarians, how far away are we from the best offers people are receiving?
  - Boston Public library pays the highest rates, and we are \$10 plus per hour away on some positions. We compare our salary rate to that in our traditional comparable communities: Needham, Lexington, Natick, Dedham, Brookline, Weston, Concord. We had some additional ancillary information; we took a broad look to see where we are and 4% is where the board came out. Bringing salary rates to the median is the parity for which the unions are striving.
- What was reason for the discrepancy between Wellesley and other towns?
  - Historically Wellesley has been at or below median due to past negotiated contracts. The trend lower will continue if big jumps in COLA are not made, and the effect of the past COLA of 2% is just compounded year to year.
- Are there other opportunities for pay increases outside of the COLA increases?
  - There are higher rates due to longevity (10-15 years), increases in the hourly rate, and the opportunity to be paid time and a half for work on Sundays.
- The goal is to retain and recruit good people. Do we interview people when they leave the system to find out why they are leaving?
  - For every employee that departs the town, the HR Board tries to conduct exit interviews and collect data. There are a variety of reasons that people leave. People leave for more pay. Part-time library assistants were leaving for full time positions in other libraries. We have begun to address that issue by combining some part-time positions into full-time positions with benefits. Librarians are leaving for higher pay or higher positions.
- Given that the cost of living in Wellesley and the towns within 20 minutes of Wellesley is quite high (and much higher than the median in the state), is it really a goal to adjust salaries to be in the mean or median?
  - We would love to get people higher but it's a huge amount of money and we are limited in how much we can increase taxes each year. We incrementally try to approach this in the union contract settlement. There are some unions that were very far below the median. Across the board for year one, all of our unions have a higher cost of living adjustment. We are trying to continue that in year 2 and 3. Compensation has been an issue, not just for unions but for all departments. Lower pay rates are creating significant hiring challenges. But it's not financially feasible to increase pay rates quickly and sustain operating costs year over year. We are trying to be fair and equitable across the board while remaining fiscally responsible. It's a balance.
- Clarification was provided that the median is for our peer communities and not the median of the Commonwealth.

### **DPW Supervisors and Production Contracts**

The DPW supervisors and DPW production contracts were reviewed. There are six (6) positions in the DPW supervisors unit; these positions are heads of the various DPW divisions. This is also a three-year contract. The wage increases are 5%, 3%, and 1% for all six (6) individuals. A comparative analysis of the various positions was completed. DPW has unique positions and skill sets with each of the divisions. For both the supervisors and production, we are down about 7% compared to median in general for the department. Although some supervisors fared better, we are overall striving for the median. A tenth step in year 3 was added, which would be a 4% increase year over year in their step table for 10 years of

service. This 10<sup>th</sup> step essentially adds a longevity step. Juneteenth was added to the list of holidays. We also worked with the union to allow for double time after 8 hours of overtime until the commencement of the next workday. This does not happen frequently but, for example, when it starts snowing at 3pm (at the end of the work shift), our workers sometimes end up working through the night. The cost of expenses for mandatory uniform requirements for work boots was increased from \$250 to \$300. One personal day for winter service was added. Sick time for all DPW workers is now aligned with the town's sick time policy of 15 days. We also modified and codified compensatory time off in lieu of overtime. A pilot has been initiated to allow for four (4) 10-hour workdays. Gender-specific pronouns were also removed from the contract. The total budget impact is an increase of \$41,003; the tax impact is \$27,548. A portion of the total settlement cost will be covered by the enterprise funds.

DPW production contract is similar with a slight modification to in the wage table. There are 75 positions in this unit, which is the largest unit in town from a staffing standpoint. The contract has 5%, 2%, and 2% COLA over the three (3) years. An 8<sup>th</sup> step for longevity was added at year two. Juneteenth was also added to the holidays; the adjustments for double time after 8 hours, the RDF stipend, the boots allowance, and everything else is consistent with the supervisors' contract. We also committed to work on amending various job descriptions for the production unit. When job descriptions are modified, they are negotiated with the union. Dave Cohen and his team have identified some that might be ready for reclassification. The total cost of the settlement for production is \$323,944, but the tax impact is \$233,541, again due to use of revenue from the various enterprise funds.

### Questions

- How did you decide on the four (4) day ten (10) hour work week pilot?
  - This adjustment came out of COVID when we needed to make changes to provide our people with social distancing, and we created staggered shifts. We received a lot of good feedback about it. The contract provides greater flexibility and people appreciate that. We are looking for anything to be a differentiator for us. This flexibility will be used in posting. We are hoping this sets us apart from the competition.
- 15 days of sick time seems to be a lot of sick time. Is this what all the unions have? And is it “use it or lose it,” or does the sick time accrue?
  - It is “use it or lose it” and there is no payout for sick time. It's not vacation time, and every contract is different. It varies because the unions aren't part of the town's personnel policies, but in this instance, we are aligning them. In the past there was no sick time; it was at the discretion of the department head. There was also a provision that people could earn personal time for not taking sick leave, thereby creating incentive for people to come to work sick.
- Is there a formula for determining the amount that the enterprise fund pays?
  - It is directly based on what division an employee works in. So, if an employee works in the Water and Sewer division, then it's enterprise. If they are not employed in a division with an enterprise fund, then it's paid for by tax-impact dollars.
- A question was asked about events and overtime and the additional day that can be taken after events and how we get safely through an event with staffing.
  - If an employee continues work past their workday, after working an additional 8 hours paid at overtime rates, they will be paid double-time. We are very tuned in to making sure people get rest through their shifts. The genesis of the personal day was for new employees who haven't banked vacation time; having that extra personal day is a relief for people. And it doesn't have to be taken the next day. It's also important to know that most DPW employees are working multiple jobs to make things work. This is not their only job.

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### **Police Dispatch Contract**

Last year the town had a significant loss of dispatchers. There are ten (10) dispatch positions. At one point this year, we were down to four (4) dispatchers. There is tremendous turnover statewide. This contract is three (3) years, and the cost of living increases are 4%, 3%, 2%.

Some dispatchers have emergency medical dispatch certification which allows them to provide direct medical treatment to people over the line in some emergency situations. An additional 1% stipend was created for the emergency medical dispatch stipend in year 1 and 2% in year 2. Juneteenth was added to the list of holidays. A provision was created to give people double time if they are ordered to work on a scheduled day off when the department is fully staffed. When the department was not fully staffed, people were ordered in day and night, and existing staff was working 16-hour days. Patrol officers were sitting in on an overtime basis. We currently have seven (7) dispatchers on staff, soon to be eight (8) after the training is completed. We also modified funeral leave. The military leave provision was modified to match the town's military leave policy. We also modified maternity leave language to become parental leave. We removed the mandatory annual physical requirement to make it optional.

The cost of this settlement is \$20,202.

### **Special Town Meeting Warrant Article 4 – Select Board/Executive Director Rescind Debt**

Meghan Jop presented the debt rescission. The request is currently for \$1,737,120, to be rescinded for funds received from the MSBA reimbursement for Hardy School. This amount will be taken off the amount approved for exempt debt borrowing. MSBA reimbursements are received monthly. This number has the potential to increase by the date of STM. The total Hardy project has \$42 million of exempt debt borrowing; it is anticipated that \$13 to \$14 million of MSBA reimbursement will be applied against that total. There is also a new opportunity to apply for additional reimbursement funds; the team is working hard to obtain some of these additional reimbursement funds.

### **Questions**

- A question was asked if the school could apply for additional funds of \$100,000.
  - There is \$100 million available for a small number of projects that are under construction, and there are a number of communities who qualify. The program has certain criteria and awarding of funds would be broken down by need. Every dollar counts in terms of being to further reduce the cost of the building.
- Do we have to apply by certain date? Will it be before STM?
  - Our OPM started working on this as soon as we received notification. PBC is meeting and there will be an update at that meeting. Application for funds could be before STM but it won't impact this debt rescission. But it will impact the overall project.
- Is this \$1,737,120 part of the \$13 to 14 million expected over time?
  - Yes and we will provide the total of reimbursements to date.

### **Administrative/Liaison Updates/Minutes**

#### **Minutes Approval**

Christina Dougherty made, and Pete Pedersen seconded a motion to approve the August 30, 2023, minutes.

#### **Roll Call Vote**

Al Ferrer - yes

Pete Pedersen - yes

Christina Dougherty - yes

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Rani Elwy - yes  
David Prock – yes  
Gail Sullivan -yes  
Hanna Bonin – yes  
Phil Jameson - yes  
Jay Prosnitz - yes  
Lucienne Ronco – yes  
Tamara Sielecki - yes  
Donna Stoddard - yes  
Susan Clapham – yes

August 30, 2023, minutes were approved, 13 to 0.

### **Liaison Updates**

*Human Resources/Al Ferrer* – meeting with Julie Moore has been set up.

*Planning/Jay Prosnitz* – a preview of next week’s Advisory meeting was provided.

*Audit/Phil Jameson* – audit on MLP and Retirement was presented at the recent Audit meeting.

*CPC/Phil Jameson* – CPC is meeting tonight to discuss funding of several proposed projects.

*Schools/Donna Stoddard* –highlights from the recent School Committee meeting were provided and included a discussion of the installation of solar on the 2 schools under construction (some of the roof is available to lease for solar); the superintendent gave a report on the start of school; there will be focus on emotion and social learning and achievement gaps; enrollment is higher than predicted; a new METCO director has been hired (Stephanie Holland); the METCO bus monitor was also discussed.

*CAC/Gail Sullivan* – at the recent CAC meeting a citizen spoke about 125 Oakland; CAC is finalizing the annual report; input is being requested on some building and planning guidelines. CAC would like to integrate sustainability into site plan reviews. CAC is engaging with the schools and talking about what do for occupant training (students in the new buildings) to take advantage of the new energy savings in the new buildings.

*NRC/Hanna Bonin* – at the recent NRC meeting there was discussion regarding the 125 Oakland property; presentation that outlined different conservation options for this property.

*FMD/Tamara Sielecki* – FMD expressed concern that the Morses Pond project is delayed. Clarification was provided that Morses Pond is under the CPC authorization in Article 5.

*Select Board/Wendy Paul* – budget guidelines were discussed at the recent meeting, funds for additional facilitators for civil discourse initiative were discussed, and photos of the Town Hall interior were shown.

*PBC/Wendy Paul* – PBC meeting is later this week.

*Recreation/Wendy Paul* – Recreation will be meeting this week to discuss Morses Pond.

Rani Elwy made, and Lucienne Ronco seconded a motion to adjourn.

A roll call vote was taken, and the meeting was unanimously adjourned at 8:17 p.m., 13 to 0.

### **Meeting Materials** [September 13 2023 meeting materials](#)

- WPS STM (2023) Article on Contracts
- 4d. STM Warrant Article – Amend Town By-Law Proposal\_2023 (1)
- 2023-2026 Tentative Agreement (Staff Unit) FINAL MJ Signed
- 2023 -2026 Tentative Agreement (Supervisor Unit) FINAL MJ Signed
- Article 2 Unions
- Article 4 – Rescind Debt
- Dispatch MOU updated
- FY24 - FY26 Production MOA MJ Signed

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- FY24- FY26 Supervisor MOA MJ Signed