**Selectmen’s Public Meeting Minutes**

**August 26, 2022**

**In Attendance: Chairman J. Quinlan, J. Esposito, H. Brown, J. Cleary, R. Schwarz, C. Raspiller, J. King**

**10:00 AM Quinlan** called the meeting to order and had everyone stand for the Pledge of Allegiance. Raspiller said that we need a motion to go into non-public. **Esposito** stated that this is not a non-public topic; we cannot go into non-public. **Brown** said any time you are talking about wages or benefits for somebody you have to go into non-public. **Esposito** argued that is for an individual, not a whole group. He disagrees with that and went on to say he feels **Brown** should recuse himself from this meeting as his wife is a Library Trustee. **Brown** disagrees because the State has already allowed a Selectman to also be a Library Director. He feels that the conversation to be had does not affect him or his wife personally. **Esposito** said this all started as a supposed personnel issue and now it’s a budgetary issue, not personnel. That is a false impression of what Monday’s non-public meeting was about. The Town Administrator/Treasurer was asked to leave the meeting at the request of the Library Trustees. **Esposito** feels this was inappropriate. **Quinlan** stated that is another matter; what we are talking about here is whether or not we are going into non-public session. They’ve read the statute. It clearly states that when you talk about wages you go into non-public. Schwarz stated that she had called the NHMA for guidance at the request of **Esposito.** Attorney Buckley informed her that the RSA states that you can go non-public over salary discussion regarding one singular employee. A change across the board or for multiple employees is not allowable for non-public meetings. Decisions and votes that affect the budget must be made in public. Further, in the State of NH, salary decisions are supposed to made by the Library Trustees and paid out of appropriations from Town Meeting. If there is no money left in the appropriations and if the money is to be found in the Town Budget, this must be decided in a public meeting and the minutes cannot be sealed. **Quinlan** said we are here to talk about two individuals. We can have two separate non-public meetings if necessary. **Esposito** said we cannot go non-public. **Brown** cited RSA 91-A:3 ii (a) Only the following shall be considered or acted upon in non-public session: ‘*The dismissal, promotion, or compensation of any public employee…’* Schwarz went on to say the attorney informed her that decisions and votes that affect the budget must be made public. You can make decisions in non-public but the decisions have to be published. You cannot seal the minutes because the decisions made would be public. **Quinlan** stated that the conversation she had with the lawyer is confusing because he’s saying two different things at once. We are actually talking about two individuals. He has no problem going into non-public to discuss the matter, but we are not going to make any decision until we come back to regular session.

**10:10 AM Brown** motioned to go into non-public session to discuss the Library Director’s hours and wages seconded by **Quinlan. Quinlan** and **Brown** voted yes; **Esposito** voted no.

**10:38 AM Brown** motioned to come out of non-public session seconded by **Esposito.** All in favor. **Brown** motioned to seal the minutes seconded by **Quinlan. Quinlan** and **Brown** voted yes **Esposito** voted no. Schwarz reiterated that Attorney Buckley told her that the minutes cannot be sealed because it is a budget discussion which affects the town. **Quinlan** feels that is a contradiction and we need to get further clarification. The minutes as of now are sealed. **Brown** feels we need to make a motion for the whole benefit package for the Library Director. If that gets defeated, then make a motion for Quinlan’s proposal to give her half and if that gets defeated then he doesn’t know where we go from there. **Esposito** stated that he is not against giving people what they deserve; it is the way it is being done that he objects to. **Brown** motioned to accept the Daland Trustee’s proposal to increase the Director to full-time with adjusted wages from $27.03 to $32.00 per hour and the full retirement package seconded by **Quinlan. Brown** voted yes, **Quinlan** and **Esposito** voted no. **Esposito** asked if the other two Selectmen have discussed this before this meeting. He feels very strongly that the two Selectmen have gotten together and discussed this and then they walk in here and he’s the cold one sitting here. Both **Brown** and **Quinlan** said no. **Brown** motioned to increase the Library Director to full-time (35 hrs.) with no change in hourly wage seconded by **Quinlan.** **Brown** and **Quinlan** voted yes; **Esposito** votedno. Motion passed. **Esposito** went on record stating he voted no only because of the budgetary process. It has nothing to do with the performance of the individual, which he thinks is outstanding. It is not included in the budget for this year. He could support it for next year.

**10:45 AM Brown** motioned to go into non-public session to discuss the Children’s Program Director seconded by **Quinlan. Quinlan** and **Brown** voted yes; **Esposito** voted no.

**11:00 AM Brown** motioned to come out of non-public session seconded by **Quinlan.** All in favor. **Brown** motioned to seal the minutes seconded by **Quinlan. Quinlan** and **Brown** voted yes; **Esposito** voted no. **Brown** motioned to increase the Children’s Library Director to full-time (35 hrs.) with no change in hourly wage seconded by **Quinlan. Brown** and **Quinlan** voted yes; **Esposito** voted no. **Esposito** asked what to do about the other three people on their list; there are three other employees with proposed wage increases. King stated that in the view that we are so cash strapped as a Town, she thinks that they can wait on these until the next budget season. Raspiller agrees and feels it would send the wrong message to give the junior clerk an increase having decided not to on their two top employees. Given the great discussion we’ve had about the functions of the library and value of the employees and given the fact that the Employee Handbook implies that the Town does this for all positions, she feels it would help her when she goes back to the staff to discuss the changes to be able to assure them that we have the Selectmen’s support for bringing their salaries to a more equitable level in next year’s Selectmen’s budget. **Esposito** stated that right now they have taken the two highest paid and increased their hours while the three lowest paid have been thrown by the wayside. They weren’t even brought up. King said they can be replaced. **Esposito** stated that anyone can be replaced. Raspiller said if their team quits, what happens is the higher paid employees will cover their hours until we replace them. **Esposito** stated that this is going to bring up a lot of resentment within town. Schwarz stated that according to Attorney Buckley we may be budgeting the library salaries incorrectly. According to Attorney Buckley, this is money that should be appropriated to the library and then the Trustees can set their salaries as they see fit.

**11:08 AM** The Board reviewed the non-public minutes from August 22, 2022. **Brown** motioned to accept the non-public minutes from August 22, 2022 seconded by **Esposito.** All in favor.

**Esposito** wanted to discuss the whole scenario we’ve had this past week. He feels the Board owes an apology for asking the Town Administrator and Treasurer to depart the non-public meeting on Monday because of the request of the Library Trustees. He feels it was inappropriate and she should have been able to stay here. It’s embarrassing and it just wasn’t right. Raspiller said that the reason they asked that really had nothing to do with her. Maybe it wasn’t well executed; she had a discussion with John before and she thought it was arranged. When John put her on the spot to explain it, she was not expecting it. It was nothing against Joan; they wanted to potentially be able to have frank conversations about some of the past practices in town and they didn’t want her to feel uncomfortable because they relate to her position. Cleary stated in response to Raspiller and King that she was hired to take on the position of Town Administrator and with Laurie retiring, she also has the task of stepping in as Interim Treasurer at least for the rest of the term. Both positions come with a ridiculous amount of fiduciary responsibility; to be asked to leave the meeting was not only insulting to her personally, it undercuts, undermines and disrespects both of those positions in a way that shocked her. Raspiller and King stated they meant no disrespect. **Esposito** stated that he knew nothing about any of this until the meeting itself. The initial impression he got was that there was a problem with personnel. It was not supposed to be budgetary or financial, and he thinks **Quinlan** should have briefed us as to what was going on before it happened. **Esposito** walked in cold to the meeting; they were expecting answers the other night. Raspiller said she thought she was pretty clear when she asked to be on the agenda for a mid-year salary review. Cleary said she was on the agenda for a personnel issue. Raspiller said the request she made was for a mid-year salary review; she didn’t type the agenda. **Quinlan** said he’ll take the hit on that one. Schwarz stated that at this point we have a unique opportunity where we have Joan in a new position as Town Administrator and Treasurer and Schwarz stepping in to take Joan’s prior position. We want to make sure we are doing things the right way and hope to move forward and progress. We need to be working together and not feel dismissed. **Esposito** stated that meeting like this to discuss salaries is not very transparent. **Quinlan** stated that it’s in the statute because it relates to not wanting to be in the position of doing any harm to one’s reputation. **Esposito** stated that we aren’t talking about anyone’s reputation. Raspiller asked when the change was made with the DPW Director, was it done in a public session? **Brown** thinks it was done in non-public session. **Esposito** said that Crosby was offered a position as DPW Director in a town adjacent to him. We did not want to lose Ben. Raspiller said they were trying to avoid the scenario where someone has to come to you and say I applied for a job that I didn’t want; I put another library through the whole thing where they thought they might get me in order for you to realize that this is an emergency and now you need to pay me fairly. **Esposito** stated that it can be taken as a veiled threat; that if I don’t get what I want I’m going to leave. **Brown** spoke to Jack’s point - if he and **Quinlan** spoke together without bringing Jack in. **Brown** said they couldn’t bring him in on all of the discussions, otherwise it’s a meeting. **Esposito** stated that it’s a meeting with the two of them having a discussion. **Brown** stated that if **Quinlan** has knowledge of things, it’s because he’s the Selectmen’s Rep and was at the Trustees meeting. By virtue of **Brown** being married to the Director, he has information that he overhears. He always tells them that he doesn’t want to know particulars because it puts him in a position where he knows so much information and the Board expects him to tell them that information and he doesn’t want to be put in the middle. **Esposito** stated that is exactly the reason why he thought **Brown** should recuse himself. **Brown** and **Quinlan** discussing this constitutes a meeting and should be recorded. **Esposito** went on to say that when he was Chairman, before it was agreed between **Brown** and **Quinlan** to have **Quinlan** as Chairman, everything he did was always copied to the Town and the other two Selectmen and that’s not happening here. **Quinlan** stated that they weren’t in a meeting; Howard obviously speaks to his wife and **Quinlan** goes to the Library Trustees meetings, that’s it. **Esposito** stated that he questions all of it. The Board discussed an email from the Welfare Officer. She updated us on the status of her department. She has not come close to needing her full budget during her time as Welfare Officer, but given inflation and the increase of cost of fuel and particularly the increase in electricity with Eversource, she is concerned with the upcoming winter months.

**11:20 AM** As there was no further business before the Board **Brown** motioned to adjourn seconded by **Esposito.** Al in favor.

Respectfully submitted,

Joan Cleary