

Selectmen's Meeting Minutes February 8, 2019

4:12 pm Meeting called to order by Board Chair, John Quinlan. Also in attendance were Selectmen Jack Esposito and Kim Roberge.

Quinlan: I called this meeting because there have been some issues going on inside the Selectmen's Office, and I wanted to basically address them here before we went into Monday nights regular meeting and public hearing. Since the January 21st meeting when we decided to promote Joan to full-time, I know, Kim you have been asking for lots of information on almost a daily basis from the office.

Roberge: Well, just clarifications on budget items.

Quinlan: and asking for a lot of information, a lot of details a lot of questions of both Joan and Laurie and frankly they are feeling beleaguered. Like they are under investigation. Now, I spent over an hour with the Municipal Center talking about this issue and, first of all, no investigation of the Selectmen's Office has been authorized. And as individual Selectmen, we don't have the power to ask endless questions of that nature. Those questions have to be referred to the Board as a whole and the Board has to decide whether or not they will be pursued. So, that stops right now: There will be no more direct questions regarding hours, days, responsibilities, who answers to who, budgets from different committees, budgets from inside the Selectmen's Office unless we discuss it as a Board first and whether or not they are worthy of pursuit. Just because the Board made a decision that you didn't agree with, doesn't mean it just keeps going, this Board is an executive for the Town, we make decisions, we make decisions all the time. And I know that over the course of my time as Selectman and Jack as well, and Kim probably you too on School Board there are times that you don't like decisions that are made, it really gnaws at you; I perfectly understand that, it's happened to me more than once. When a decision is made by the Board, we move forward, we are not going to revisit it. Also, you have a responsibility to everybody as well as a responsibility to your fellow Board members that we try to speak as one voice as often as we can. Otherwise, it leads to confusion in the Town and no one in the Town, when we go before a public gathering, is going to be comforted or impressed by derision. I'm not trying to change your mind, I don't think we are going to change anybody's mind here tonight, what I'm saying is for the efficiency of the Selectmen's Office and the Town we need to move forward on this and I don't want this to dragged out openly, into an open argument between Selectmen ok? If you feel so strongly about it and you feel you need to do that, that is your decision and I can't stop you, but at the same time, realize that if you do go down that road, there are consequences, consequences for this board, consequences for the Town, and consequences for you on the Board for your interrelationship with the other Board members. Now, Laurie and Joan have done nothing wrong, absolutely nothing, the only problem is between us three on a certain matter, they shouldn't be treated as if they are under investigation, they shouldn't have to feel beleaguered, they have done nothing wrong. They don't deserve the scrutiny this Board has not ordered an investigation, so as of right now I'm putting a cease to that, if you have questions about what goes on in the Selectman's Office, you bring them to the Board first and we will discuss whether or not they are worthy of pursuit. Personal records are not to be gone into, that is actually a violation of the right-to-know law; that's indictable. Like I said, we have plenty of business to do, we have budgets that we have to get through. For the sake of the unity of the Selectmen I hope we can move forward without too much problem between the three of us. Jack, do you want to add anything?

Esposito: John, we speak as a Board, we speak as one. You can be against it which is fine, I don't have any problem with that at all but we have to be a voice of one when we go in – if it's 2 to 1, that's fine 3 to nothing that fine, 0 to three that's fine.

Quinlan: I don't want Joan and Laurie ...

Esposito: Joan and Laurie have been under – they've been upset, they don't feel comfortable about it, and I think it should cease and it stays right here.

Roberge: Well, um, first of all, I don't know what the insinuation is accessing public records, I asked Joan for the W2's to look at for the ... we were getting the hours for the Tax Collector [Town Clerk] which she provided me – she got the files out and did something like that so I'm not sure what else we are discussing here.

Quinlan: Someone went into the personnel files.

Roberge: And that...

Quinlan: There are only 4 people with access.

Roberge: That was not, in fact, me.

Quinlan: That's all I'm saying, I don't know if it was you or not, but somebody went into the personnel files.

Roberge: If, Mr. Quinlan, you are in any way insinuating that I take exception to that because it certainly was not me. So, in any manner as to Joan and Laurie's feelings, I was up at the office today with Joan here I didn't notice was any animosity we discussed her driving to Plymouth to pick up her daughter so I'm not sure about that. The beleaguering, the terms we were using for requesting stuff is how the budget is built. I think we all should be asking that question. I'm not sure I asked any other question except for the make-up of the budget. So, if there is something else that you don't think that should be provided to us as the Selectmen, whose actual budget it is then I'd like you to explain that to me because I don't know what else was requested except for stuff on the make-up of the budget. That was it. I haven't said anything about anybody's work. Laurie and Joan provided me that – I did not ask for that nor did I ask for their tracking.

Quinlan: Laurie said you did ask for that.

Roberge: I did not.

Quinlan: Well,

Roberge: I did not.

Quinlan: She is right here.

Roberge: And I did not ask for that.

Brown: I didn't do it out of the... clear blue sky.

Roberge: I didn't ask for it. We, as the Board asked Belinda to do it if she wanted to, but I did not do that nor would I do that as a directive from me personally and I believe Laurie would take that from me directly. When I asked for the numbers to be broken... taken out of the budget that she possibly thought she directed me to you to ask that, and I did that. I followed proper protocol. So, in no manner, do I believe that I am looking to make them uncomfortable, and I am because I'm questioning the build-up of the actual budget then, I'm sorry, but I think that is within the right of the Selectmen and individual or as a Board on the make-up of a budget that we are presenting not only on a public hearing on Monday but then at Town Meeting.

Quinlan: If that is the way you feel, fine. It doesn't change the way other people see it.

Roberge: It is the exact way I feel.

Quinlan: Well, from now on, there will be no more questions directed to the Select Office, to Joan or for Laurie unless they go through this Board first.

Roberge: I'll send them to all...

Quinlan: No, no, no, you don't understand – those questions will be brought into a meeting and we will decide whether or not they are worthy of passing on to Laurie or Joan.

Roberge: I think we need to be able to, whether it's from an individual standpoint be able to know what the make-up of our budget is, John. There hasn't been anything asked that hasn't had to do with the make-up of the budget – nothing. So, I'm not sure whether it goes to you and you ask for it, or it comes to me but I think we need that information as Board members.

Quinlan: As I said, from going forward, that is the procedure we are going to follow.

Roberge: And I also believe that if we are concerned about somebody getting into the Town files or something like that, that we should put cameras in there. Or cameras in the entrance. Those doors... all the access which I'm very surprised by the comment of you believing there is only 4 people, because the doors were open to the back that day

Quinlan: There are only two keys.

Roberge: So, the keys to here?

Quinlan: There are two keys, there is another key, a key that goes to the files, someone found the key to the files and went directly in there.

Roberge: But there's more access to those.

Quinlan: I'm not accusing you. All I'm saying is...

Roberge: But, John, I did take it that way.

Quinlan: Well, you are the one that has been showing an extraordinary interest in the personnel records of Laurie and Joan over the course of the last two weeks, and also, it was during the course of the last two weeks that someone got into the payroll records. So...

Roberge: John I would come in and ask them like I did with Joan. I mean...

Quinlan: I've said all there is to say, all I'm saying is that right now is, from now on, they are not to be given any more questions by email, if you have questions, you will bring them in Monday night and we will decide whether or not they will be pursued. It is as simple as that. No more questions about hours, no more questions about how much a budget

Roberge: You're saying that none of us are to take any actions.

Quinlan: I'm telling you, I'm telling you about what is legal.

Roberge: You're telling me that none of us can ask any questions on the make-up of anything, or anything to do with the running of the Town unless we do it at a meeting together.

Quinlan: No, what I'm saying is...

Esposito: The directive should come through the meeting.

Quinlan: The directive has to come from the meeting.

Esposito: You can't do it as an individual. I can't do it as an individual.

Roberge: So, so, so, none of us so we shouldn't...

Esposito: No.

Roberge: That's great. I just want to make sure we are clear, we are talking about all 3 of us – that there can be nothing requested or nothing done unless we do it here in a meeting. I just want to make sure that's clear.

Quinlan: What I'm saying is... I'm going to repeat to you exactly what the Municipal Association told me. If you want to pursue information from a particular department - if you suspect something, or if you just want more information – that is supposed to be a decision made by the Board.

Roberge: So, if we are looking for how a budget is built

Quinlan: No, forget about the budget, I'm telling you any general information you would normally not be privy to – any extraordinary information you have to go through the Board. The Board has to make that request.

Roberge: So, there hasn't been any requests on that except for on the budget, so, what are you... I'm missing something here.

Quinlan: Alright,

Esposito: The budget is an important thing.

Roberge: Right. And, Jack, the questions I sent

Quinlan: I'll give you an example; when we look into, mostly you looked into what has been going on with the Town Clerk's budget because it is out of whack, we all know it has been out of whack for two years. There was a consensus among us there was something worthy of pursuit.

Roberge: Right

Esposito: And you did it.

Quinlan: The last two weeks with all the questions you have been making of the Selectmen's Office – that is something you did on your own. There was no consensus inside this panel whether or not that should be pursued.

Roberge: They were all budgetary items.

Quinlan: You are not hearing me.

Roberge: But you just said

Quinlan: I'm telling you what ... what I'm trying to say

Roberge: I'm missing something. You just said something different from what the Municipal Association told you and then I said...

Quinlan: No, I'm telling you what they are telling me is we are supposed to ... If you are looking into anything in detail, information that is normally privy...

Roberge: The budget make-up isn't privy.

Esposito: I understand. You were against making Joan full-time. We know that – it's not an issue. Since we came out of that meeting on the 21st when we voted to do it 2 to 1 (you were against it)

Roberge: yes

Esposito: There has been a constant intersession on your part to find out how many hours you work, what do you do, when do you do this, when do you do that, keeping a log... and everything. That's 100% it.

Roberge: That's inaccurate Jack. I didn't ask for the log, and all I've been asking for... and my request for the email

Esposito: Let me finish my sentence.

Roberge: Ok, sorry.

Esposito: I'm trying to get a little history of this.

Roberge: That's fine

Esposito: And because of your objection to Joan being full time since that day, starting that next day it's been; what do you do, what do you do, keep a log of what you do, that's what we were told, and the hours that you do – how many hours do you do this, how many hours do you do that. I know you sent Laurie a thing about the question about Megan's time. We have it in the budget in case we ever need it. That didn't come from the Board, it came from you, and the Board should be looking into this thing.

Roberge: That's the make -up of the budget, Jack, that's what I was requesting. How is that number... why... I'm the budget c...

Esposito: The thing is that it didn't come from the Board to do it. If the Board said to go look into it like the Town Clerk it would be fine. But it wasn't. It was perceived that it was your vendetta to go after Joan to dispel her from being appointed full time.

Roberge: In no matter was that the case, and if that's how it was perceived, and I will, again, state I did not, in any manner ask for tracking of time for Laurie or Joan. If I did that I would definitely have had to come before the Board.

Quinlan: Well, Laurie didn't make that up on her own.

Roberge: And, and I am clearly stating that I did not ask for that. Clearly stating that. I would have done that at a Board meeting. I don't believe it is not within my purview to ask as to how the budget is built. And that was the only thing – we could print out our emails right now and see the ones that were sent to Laurie were all budget oriented. And nothing else.

Esposito: I won't deny they were...

Roberge: Please let me finish.

Esposito: Alright.

Roberge: I didn't say; what do you do during this time, it didn't say how is that, it didn't ask any of those questions. Cause you are right – I don't want to ever micromanage. That's not... I don't believe... in our jobs it is a little closer of a management than it is from a School Board standpoint because the Schoolboard has administration between the Board and the Teachers. So, there is not that gap here, I don't believe that this Board has ever micromanaged nor do I believe, in any manner, that I look to do that, but I do believe that as an individual Selectman, not necessarily as a Board, that I have the right to request how the budget or line item is made up. I do not believe that the Municipality would say that is not within the purview of an individual Selectman, but if you are telling me that all those questions have to come from a Board, I want to make sure that we all are respecting that. That there can be nothing then that is requested by an individual that would be available to the public upon request, but you want us to do it as a Board. If that is something that you are setting, I guess I will have to think about it. I don't like making decisions whether that is right or wrong because that sounds very strange to me, but I in no manner, meant to make anybody feel uncomfortable by questioning it.

Quinlan: Well, you did.

Roberge: And again,

Quinlan: It has been stated to me by both this is now a hostile workplace.

Roberge: I'm sorry that they feel that way, and certainly I hope that can be changed, but I think the make-up of the budget, Jack, is not questioning the work.

Esposito: The fact that it was known that you are against the change for Joan to become full-time, again it's fine you can object but, then it comes in asking for this and that and everything else it made for a very uncomfortable work area for these women here, and we've never had that problem in the past so I think it's best to have it out on the table right now and if you are against it that's fine – not a problem.

Roberge: Maybe I should have asked for the make-up of it, Jack, beforehand.

Esposito: Maybe you should have but if we all learn from it, because we all have to work together, and the one thing, since I've been on this Board, for years, and John's been here too is that we have had a completely open Board. Of all the personnel in Town we have had zero turnover in personnel - people want to work here. The only one that has basically left was Mike because he wanted to go out on his own and start his own business. The DPW, the Police Department, the library group, everybody that works for the Town is fine, so lets just get this cleared up and get it over with and go with that.

Roberge: And Jack, had I questioned the break-down of it three weeks ago I'm not sure we would be having this conversation.

Esposito: It wasn't so much the break-down it's the fact that it got a little bit out of hand after the 21st, ok?

Roberge: And I, just would say, I don't actually believe that that is the case. The questions came about as to the make-up was after that. And Jack, had I known that that was going to be on an agenda on the 21st and that it was going to come to that, I would have asked for that make-up, I would have asked for that make-up for those line items beforehand to be able to look at them. That's all.

Esposito: And also, backing up on the 21st, the meeting was initially intended to have Bill McKinney in here to talk about the buildings, but he couldn't make it, the fact that we were here we started talking about other things.

Roberge: Yup

Esposito: You understand where the office people are coming from with how they feel about it.

Roberge: And and

Esposito: We don't want to lose anybody.

Roberge: And certainly Jack, I do understand, the only thing is had John... if it had been on an agenda I would have asked, whether it would you be requesting it or it be me requesting it that had I known you were going to make a proposal in order to increase it, I would have like to have seen how each one of those line items were made up in order to be assessed where it goes. And I think that's a standard... but if you are, I guess I need to be clear as to your thoughts on it. Are you telling me that we are making the decision here tonight that... I don't ... I'm not sure what you are...

Quinlan: I'm saying that the daily sending of emails for tons and tons of details about where they are, what they are, what they are doing, what they did this way, where on what budget, what on the planning board budget; it ends.

Roberge: We, I, I asked...

Quinlan: We are not doing an investigation of our own office.

Roberge: I'm looking for how the budget is made up.

Quinlan: Well, it looks to me more like an investigation on what two people are up to and whether or not what we already voted for is justified.

Roberge: And we are going to be presenting it, so I need to know what the make-up is of it. We should be knowing that.

Quinlan: The number one thing you need to know, and I think we have explained it, is that we have an employee that we need to hold on to. Two of the three of us decided that we needed to hold on to this employee which meant a promotion – it is as simple as that. That is all you need to know.

Roberge: I believe that before the public hearing and before the Town Meeting, I need to know how those numbers are made up in the budget.

Quinlan: It's not about numbers, it is about value of an honored employee.

Roberge: No, no, it is about numbers. That what the budget is, John.

Quinlan: It might be what the budget is, but it is also about...

Roberge: But that's what it is, John.

Quinlan: It's about why we are doing this, it's simple; I have a nine-year employee who does a great job, and I don't want to lose her. It is as simple as that.

Roberge: No, I understand that, I, like I said, I'm looking at it from a budget standpoint.

Quinlan: That is a budget standpoint; value of an employee.

Roberge: John, I need to know how the numbers are put on a sheet of paper and presented into the Selectmen's budget.

Esposito: Put a pen in your right hand and you write the number in and the reason why that number is there is because we need this employee to stay with us. She has been with us for nine years; the work is there; we have a 2 ½ million-dollar budget with two people running this office we cannot afford to lose anybody.

Roberge: Jack, when the library budget came to us Jack, and there were numbers that say 28 in an hourly thing I had Laurie reach out to them in order to get to the breakdown as to what it is, and that is what I'm asking for in the make-up of the other ones. I think that's exactly what we did when we prepared the budget for the Town Clerk so I don't think I'm looking for anything different than that. Again, if in any manner the questions as to the budget make-up made somebody uncomfortable in any manner, then, my apologies for that, but that's what the questions are.

Quinlan: From now on those questions will be directed through the Board because frankly...

Brown: I can tell you what made me uncomfortable; when you told me you had the last 4 years of my payroll and how many hours I worked and what the average was. And that did not come from the office, that came from you at night, or whenever you did it, going into the payroll files. All by yourself, behind our back. That is the only way you could have got them.

Roberge: I did not go into the payroll things all by myself behind anybody's back.

Brown: Joan did not give you those numbers.

Roberge: Joan told me that Joan worked 24 to 26 hours per week the entire time, I took her numbers out and that's what got me there.

Brown: How did you know that I worked 33.75 hours?

Roberge: I didn't know you worked that.

Brown: You had the number with you.

Roberge: I estimated.

Brown: You had a list of people and the numbers there.

Roberge: Based on what Joan had given me for the hours that she worked based on the increase, Laurie.

Brown: Ok.

Roberge: That's the... and I estimated. All I did was to take 26 hours for her and take that out, I believe it comes to 33 hours.

Brown: So, for an estimate you came up with 33.75 for me. For an estimate?

Roberge: 33 is what I came up with.

Brown: You said 33.75.

Roberge: One year there was more money in it so it was between 33 and 34 cause if I put 34 in it, it was too high.

Brown: uh-huh.

Roberge: Let me just clearly state here and I want to make this really clear. I, in no manner, came into this office when nobody was here and went into any files in any manner what-so-ever. I certainly would not know that there were keys left at the office, nor would I know where they would be if they... in no manner – no manner what-so-ever. And I would be perfectly happy if we were to have a discussion about putting cameras in there if you feel that somebody on the Selectboard would do something such as that. And secondly, not in any time did I ask Laurie or Joan to track their hours, I would have done that through the Board as we did for Belinda. So, if I'm sitting here because I've called everybody out based on not having agendas on possibly having discussions and them not being recorded in the minutes so in my mind thinking that decisions were being made that are not on there, then so be it. I believe those were accurate

statements that I made, but I'm not going to sit here and be called out on questioning what I believe from a budget make-up that is something in the purview that each of the Selectmen should be able to access and have. We sat here and went over the budget and talked about reducing the Planning Board budget by \$500. Laurie's comment and your comment were that you didn't want to adjust anybody's budget or lower it based on their make-up of it. So, I thought the direct thing was to send that person as to how they made up their budget. That's what I did; I didn't send it to Laurie to put any more work on her, I sent it to Bill because Laurie said that it was Bill's budget. So, I'm not sure why I'm up here feeling like you're scolding me, if I made them feel uncomfortable, I will attempt to address that in any manner, but I'm not going to be made to feel being in the wrong because we have a difference of opinion on this. That doesn't mean I don't value the work that they do, or either one of them as employees.

Quinlan: Well, I'm glad you said that, but let's see some follow-through with some actual performance.

Roberge: And let's not think that somebody questioning the make-up of a budget is dissing the work that somebody is doing. Because, that's not what it is, John.

Quinlan: Sending emails on a daily basis for nonsense – I've seen some of them.

Roberge: John, if we look back at what has gone on, on emails on the budget, I did that last year, I have done it every single time that the make-up of the budget. I have been the Selectmen's rep. for the budget, and because we look at, the 3 of us, maybe a little differently, I look at the detail of the budget that needs to be there so that when we go and present at Town Meeting, that we can answer any of those questions. I don't feel that that has to be all Laurie's responsibility. It's our budget that goes forward, so we should be aware of that.

Quinlan: All I'm saying right now is that the methodology changes right now. You will not be sending direct emails to them giving them direct instructions on particular information that you want.

Roberge: Requesting the make-up of the budget?

Quinlan: They feel that their jobs are being challenged.

Roberge: I don't think I've sent anything to Joan.

Esposito: We have used Laurie's expertise in this because of the way she does the budget, and she represents the Selectmen for the Selectmen's budget and she is our representative. She can answer all the questions because everything comes through her.

Roberge: But we are our own representatives too, Jack.

Esposito: Yes, but the thing is, the thing is, that is true.

Roberge: So, we have a right to be fully knowledgeable.

Esposito: Ok, let's call it off.

Quinlan: Channel the questions through the Board.

Roberge: So, I did question Bill McKinney, and he directed to Laurie. On the make-up of the Planning Board's budget. He didn't make it up – he didn't present it, he said. So that is the only one I am looking for before Monday night when we present so I have some ideas on it. If it is not Monday night, then as long as it is within the next couple days. I don't think, John, questioning anything I question Ben on the tools and equipment.

Esposito: We never talked about that, questioning the Planning Board budget

Roberge: We did, we talked about reducing it on Monday night.

Quinlan: This is a singular incident with the course of what's been going on the last two weeks. That is the end of it and I'm not having a discussion beyond anything that has gone on in the last two weeks. What has been going on for the last two weeks ends today.

Roberge: John, if I have questions, on the budget...

Quinlan: You will

Roberge: It's our budget.

Quinlan: I'm telling you, you are not going to be giving direct lists, questions to Laurie or Joan about their jobs.

Roberge: I never did that.

4:40 pm Quinlan: End of discussion. Call for an adjournment.

Esposito: Make a motion to adjourn

Quinlan: Seconded. All those in favor? Quinlan; aye, Esposito; aye, Roberge; I'm opposed.

Respectfully Submitted,

Laurie Brown