

Executive Minutes – Board of Selectmen

October 1, 2018

Approved and Released 10/29/2018

Chairman Steven Sullivan opened the meeting at 8:10pm. In attendance were Jonathan Ruda, John Marsi, Kerry Cyganiewicz and Paul Joseph. Also in attendance were Greg Balukonis, Town Administrator, Michelle Jervis, Administrative Secretary and Stephen Rogerson, Veteran Service Officer.

**Veteran Service Officer – Stephen Rogerson – Discussion regarding 9/24/2018 meeting.**

Paul Joseph stated that he met with Stephen Rogerson along with Peter Fox, Personnel Chairman, at his home last week. They discussed many issues and misunderstandings were cleared up. He stated that Mr. Rogerson asked the veterans to attend the 9/24/18 meeting. He put the Board of Selectmen in a very defensive position. He stated that the Veteran's Agent has done a fantastic job based on the numbers and productivity but the Board hired him they can fire him. Mr. Joseph stated that Mr. Rogerson was not aware of the situation he put the Board in and thought he was protecting himself. He understands the situation and will work with both the Town Administrator and the Board of Selectmen. Mr. Joseph believes that the Veteran's Service Officer should be a salaried position.

Steven Sullivan stated that personally he was not intimidated and has a lot of respect for veterans. Regarding all the veterans attending the meeting he feels a message went out in one form or another and someone told someone else about the meeting. John Marsi stated he did feel intimidated at the 9/24/18 meeting having all the veterans in attendance. He feels we should always assume positive intent and found it unnecessary but this is not how to make a point. He feels we should all be part of a team and this is not team behavior. Kerry Cyganiewicz wished he was at the meeting but was informed from other members that they felt they were being attacked. Mr. Rogerson stated that he contacted the Commanders of the veteran's posts letting them know he will be going in front of the Selectmen to make a presentation and thank them for his hour and salary increase as well as his clerk. Regarding Dick Majercik's presentation, Mr. Rogerson stated that he did not ask him to attend but many veterans wanted to speak and they were not allowed, they wanted to tell their story on how the Town has helped them through the VSO. Paul Joseph mentioned the item on the agenda "Citizens Comments" and that any veteran can come to a meeting and speak during that agenda item. Jonathan Ruda motioned to have the Town Administrator advise Mr. Rogerson on our Communications Policy which clearly explains line by line who the public information officer is for the Town of Dudley. Kerry Cyganiewicz seconded.

Roll Call Vote:

John Marsi, Aye

Paul Joseph, Aye

Kerry Cyganiewicz, Aye

Jonathan Ruda, Aye

Steven Sullivan, Aye

**Payroll Issues – Veteran's Service Officer**

Mr. Balukonis stated that he understands where the discrepancy regarding his payroll was calculated and it has been rectified. He recalculated and now shows him working 19 hours/week for \$21.64/hour. There was an \$8,881.00 shortfall as of 7/1/18 but now it is larger. Jonathan Ruda provided historical payroll records for the Veteran Service Officer beginning in October 2016 and summarized the progression of the hours and payroll for the Mr. Rogerson beginning at \$337.08 monthly for three hours per week and ending at \$37.20 per hour at 19 hours per week as of July 2018. Mr. Ruda stated that he has been "deeply troubled" about the increase in pay that the Veteran Service Officer had been submitting at \$37.20 per hour and stated that he did not recall ever authorizing or voting on such a high rate of pay for him. Mr.

Balukonis stated that with benefits, the actual cost would be over \$86,000.00 annually. Mr. Ruda stated that if the ultimate goal is to provide for full-time VSO service to veterans, that the annual cost of \$86,000 will be twice the rate paid in Webster and will pull directly from the veterans services line item, and therefore local veterans. He said that the VSO budget is funded at approximately \$15,000 annual and that he strongly opposed more than 60% going toward payroll and administration.

Mr. Ruda stated that he favors the voted-upon hourly rate of \$21.70 an hour not to exceed 19 hours weekly. He told Mr. Rogerson that he appreciates the work and service that he provides for the veterans but that Mr. Rogerson has an absolute responsibility to tell the veterans why they are being asked to attend meetings to support him. He stated that the payroll records provided to the Board be included in the minutes of the Executive Session meeting.

Paul Joseph requested that at our next meeting we should discuss having Mr. Rogerson as a salaried employee. Both Jonathan Ruda and Kerry Cyganiewicz were against this request. Mr. Balukonis believes that being a salaried employee there are legalities that need to be addressed. After discussion Steven Sullivan requested the Town Administrator to contact Town Counsel to see if the VSO should be a salaried position based on Mr. Joseph's recommendation.

John Marsi motioned to adjourn at 9:32pm from Executive Session and not to reconvene into Public Session. Jonathan Ruda seconded.

Roll Call Vote

John Marsi, Aye

Paul Joseph, Aye

Jonathan Ruda, Aye

Steven Sullivan, Aye

Kerry Cyganiewicz