

Tilton-Northfield Fire & EMS Commissioners' Meeting

Meeting Called By:	Commissioners	Date, Time:	April 27, 2010 at 18:09
Transcribed By:	Kathy Tobine	Place:	Tilton School, new Academic Building, School Street, 2 nd Floor, Room 213, Tilton

Commissioner Gallant called the meeting to order at 6:09 PM.

Present: Commissioners Paul Auger, Pat Clark and Tom Gallant; Chief Stephen Carrier, Administrative Assistant Kathy Tobine, Firefighters Jon Powell and Damien Sevin.

Commissioner Gallant stated the purpose of this meeting is to review LGC's Wage & Benefit Study. This is a work session. The nuts and bolts of the report are covered on pages 27 to 42. It basically starts with position analysis. One of the items to address is job descriptions for everyone on the full time staff. The report references job descriptions approved by district and that has not happened yet.

Chief Carrier explained how the job descriptions were arrived at. LGC requested current job descriptions from us. Each position filled out position description questionnaires indicating the duties they completed. Everything went to LGC, they compiled it all and sent it back to us in the form we have now.

Commissioner Clark asked how LGC was able to do a comparative analysis with other departments without having them complete same information. Chief Carrier and Commissioner Gallant explained how the information was compared, i.e. a captain is a captain across the board. LGC made these suggestions on the information we provided them.

Discussion ensued about step and grade.

Discussion ensued about hours and wages. Commissioner Gallant asked how the hourly wages arrived at. It is assumed that when Barry asked for the numbers that he asked for hourly rates and the number of hours worked per week were not taken into consideration.

Commissioner Gallant read from the conclusions that there are 4 positions that are below the average minimum pay of comparable communities. These are Captain, Lieutenant, Firefighter/EMT-I and Firefighter/EMT-B. There are 4 positions that are equal to or exceed the average minimum pay of comparable departments. These are Fire Chief, Captain/Fire Prevention, Captain/Paramedic and Administrative Assistant. The Tilton-Northfield Fire District provides modestly competitive wages to about half of the positions included in the Study. None of the positions are highly competitive because they are not equal to or do not exceed the average maximum pay of comparable departments. Depending on performance and years of service of the individual employees, it might be expected that the current pay for these position would be equal to or exceed the mid-point of the comparable pay data. This could be an issue in retaining these employees and it could be a significant obstacle in recruiting employees for these positions. It may be necessary to offer something higher than the minimum step in order to attract the most qualified applicants. Commissioner Clark commented that the Chief is doing relatively well in the comparison. The midpoint is \$70,726 and he is at \$70,304. Chief Carrier commented that is because he has a contract.

Commissioner Clark commented that one of the things that is mentioned on Page 2 and comes up quite a bit is performance. He asked what that meant. Jon Powell stated evaluations are done every year by their officer. Chief Carrier stated you have to decide where to place them. Merit raises are set by budget committee. Chief Carrier- where to place in pay scale. Commissioner Gallant stated you must take paragraph in context. Commissioner Gallant read whole paragraph. "This Study uses a new Classification Plan with 11 Labor Grades and a corresponding Wage Placement Schedule with 20

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Steps. There is a \$1.00 difference between Labor Grades at Step 1, gradually increasing to \$1.76 at Step 20. There is a 3% difference between the Steps. The positions studied here have been placed in the appropriate Labor Grade, but the Town must determine the appropriate pay for each employee in those positions, taking into consideration such factors a performance, longevity and experience. This is only a guideline. Discussion ensued.

Commissioner Clark stated you can look at performance in several different ways. Chief Carrier stated performance is based on the job description and job performance evaluation system. The officer does the evaluation on the firefighters. He does the evaluation on the officers. Commissioner Clark stated he would like to think about combining the two and offering a performance incentive. Commissioner Gallant stated you have to establish your core and need to have that grow. It needs to continue to grow. You need to have that as part of the overall budget. Commissioner Clark stated it's a wage incentive, not bonus. Commission Gallant stated that government vs. private is entirely different.

Commissioner Clark asked when the review takes place. Chief Carrier stated they are done at the end of the year. He tries to do evaluations in December so they can budget for the following year. What happened this year was to have merit raises. This year it was based on 3% max. The Commissioners said 0%. The Budget Committee said 1% max. He took the performance evaluations and gave 2 people 1%. Everyone else got .5%.

Commissioner Clark brought up Compression on Page 4. Discussion ensued. Commissioner Clark then asked Chief Carrier if he ever had an employee that does something really foolish. Rather than fire this person you drop them down a little bit and work them back up. Chief Carrier replied that it has never happened but it could. Commissioner Gallant stated before you can fire someone you must write them up three times. Chief Carrier stated there is the possibility somebody can be demoted. He then gave an example. It would have to be based on performance would probably be most cases. Commissioner Auger stated it did happen once.

Commissioner Clark commented he has the impression that Kathy's job is belittled a little bit. He felt that it was looked at it through the eyes of a firefighter and the life they live. When you look at how he scored her page 29 and you run along there and look at the factor levels and the scores she was given. Personal contacts, for instance, were rated at the lowest level. He would imagine purpose of contacts would be a lot higher than that. Commissioner Gallant stated the fact of the matter is in all of the boiler plate that runs from page 5 through 24 it's something that has been well researched. Barry's applying it across the board. Based on that data Barry came up with the graph on page 25. He's applied factors where square peg pushed into round hole. Using some discretion came up with Level 3. He doesn't disagree with it. This is the premise on which he based his report. The Administrative Assistant and paramedics need adjustments made. The Administrative Assistant position is an oddity. We don't have a Town Manager; we have nothing comparable in other departments. Chief Carrier asked where Commissioner Clark came up with the averages. Commissioner Gallant stated it is an oddity. We don't have a District Manager position. Kathy does function in that regard in many ways, Chief Carrier also serves in that same position frequently. Barry is probably comparing to numbers to people who have less. The difference between Administrative Assistant and Firefighter/EMT-B is comparable. We don't need to create a grade just for her. Commissioner Clark says 840 is lower than what it should be. Even though she's not doing EMT and firefighter stuff which might have been looked at he doesn't have much to go on when he did the Administrative Assistant. Commissioner Gallant stated The Fire Prevention Assistant has no comparative data to go on. Chief Carrier stated they are getting into too much detail. It's a tool to use. Commissioner Clark wants to flush it all out so when they get to the end they have it covered and have a better feel for it.

Commissioner Gallant stated the Chart on Page 38 is a wage schedule with steps. We want to use it as a guide. We do not want to go on a step and grade system. Chief Carrier stated there is another option using a step and grade plan to mid-point then switching to a merit plan. Different types of pay

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systems are on Page 35. We are currently using the 1st bullet. Mid-point is between Step 1 and Step 20. Mid-point is 31.00. 9.00 added to base rate. At step 10 you have reached mid-point. Discussion ensued.

Commissioner Clark brought up the new state law to counter situations that most frequently happen – where employees exceed a certain amount in last the last three years. If that happens you can be fined up to \$600,000. Chief Carrier explained the law. We will never have this problem.

Page 31 was discussed. This is the current pay and comparative pay data. Most everyone is below the average minimum. Commissioner Clark likes the second bullet on Page 35. Commissioner Gallant asked if they want to stay with labor grade and open range or go with step and grade. It was decided they would go away, study that and decide at the next meeting. All agreed.

Commissioner Clark said the need to be cognizant of the total package. If you look at the last sentence on Page 35 which says “Some also have special pay programs such as uniform allowances, temporary assignment differentials, shift differentials, employee recognitions, spot awards, longevity pay and tool or equipment allowances.” Commissioner Gallant recommended that they read all of Page 35 and 36 when they make their decision. Commissioner Clark says they need to flush out everything they do and lay it on the table as well.

Commissioner Gallant brought everyone's attention to Benefits on Page 32, the Analysis of Current and Comparative Benefit Data. It deals with such things as holidays, vacation time, sick leave, personal leave, health and dental insurance. Chief Carrier stated the description of our insurance is misleading. Commissioner Clark stated he would like to know what it paid for these policies because there are some huge differences. He wants to know what the plan it they are buying. Commissioner Gallant asked what difference it makes. Commissioner Clark stated they have to come up with a package. They will need to know how much it costs. Commissioner Gallant stated they are going to budget what they can afford. Discussion ensued about insurance benefits. It was decided that the communities in the study would be called to find out what their deductible is as well as the monthly charge for their medical and dental insurance. Kathy is to make the calls.

It was decided the next meeting will be Monday, May 24th, at 6 PM. They will make their final recommendation on the step and grade system. They will look at the benefits package.

Commissioner Clark made a motion to adjourn. Commissioner Auger seconded the motion. There being no discussion, vote was taken. The meeting adjourned at 8:06 PM.

Respectfully submitted,

Kathy Tobine
Administrative Assistant

Next Meeting Date, Time, Place: May 24, 2010 at 18:00. Meeting to be held at Tilton School, new Academic Building, School Street, 2nd Floor, Room 213, Tilton.