

Tilton-Northfield Fire & EMS Commissioners' Meeting

Meeting Called By:	Commissioners	Date, Time:	January 2, 2013 at 17:30
Transcribed By:	Kathy Tobine	Place:	Tilton Town Hall, Upstairs Meeting Room, 257 Main Street, Tilton NH
Commissioners Present: Paul Auger, Patrick Clark, Tom Gallant Staff Present: Administrative Assistant Kathy Tobine			
Call to Order			
Commissioner Clark called the meeting to order at 5:30 PM.			
Public Session			
Commissioner Clark made a motion to enter Nonpublic Session. Commissioner Gallant seconded the motion. Specific Statutory Reason cited as foundation for nonpublic session: RSA 91-A:3, II(a) The dismissal, promotion, or compensation of any public employee or the disciplining of such employee, or the investigation of any charges against him or her, unless the employee affected (1) has a right to a public meeting, and (2) requests that the meeting be open, in which case the request shall be granted. Roll Call Vote to enter nonpublic session: Paul Auger, yes; Patrick Clark, yes; Thomas Gallant, yes. Motion passed.			
Nonpublic Session			
Nonpublic Session entered at 5:32 p.m.			
Public Session Reconvened			
Public Session Reconvened at 5:47 p.m. Motion made to seal these minutes of the nonpublic session? Yes Motion made by Patrick Clark, seconded by Paul Auger, because it is determined that divulgence of this information likely would affect adversely the reputation of any person other than a member of this board. Roll Call Vote to seal these minutes: Paul Auger, yes; Patrick Clark, yes; Thomas Gallant, no. Motion passed.			
Recess			
Commissioner Gallant made a motion to recess the meeting to move to the downstairs meeting room. Commissioner Clark seconded the motion. Meeting recessed at 5:48 p.m.			
Public Meeting reconvened			
Commissioner Clark called the meeting to order at 6:05 p.m. in the downstairs meeting room. Commissioners Present: Paul Auger, Patrick Clark, Tom Gallant Staff Present: Chief Bradley Ober, Captain David Hall and Administrative Assistant Kathy Tobine Tilton Selectmen Present: Patricia Consentino and Katherine Dawson Budget Committee Members Present: Jane Alden Residents Present: Cindy Reinartz			

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Budget

Commissioner Clark asked Kathy if new handouts were brought to the meeting. Kathy replied that she had not had time to make them. She did have the budget worksheet on the thumb drive if needed.

Commissioner Clark stated that Chief Ober had sent him the wage and salary worksheet today. It looked like it was his first proposal not his second. Chief Ober replied that he does not have a second proposal. His proposal is not changing.

Commissioner Clark stated that for clarification of the salary worksheets Chief Ober had given to them. Chief Ober stated that the one dated the 11th is the one they asked for that did not include COLA or a step. Those are the figures we had done in advance so we would know what that was. That is not his proposal. The \$806,946 is the total the Commissioners put in their line and have since changed their mind. That is where that came from is off this worksheet. Commissioner Clark asked if the \$818,423 was what Chief Ober was going for. Chief Ober replied yes.

Commissioner Clark asked Chief Ober if there was any more he wanted to walk them through on his. Chief Ober replied he still doesn't know why they are there tonight. He guesses they are going to re-discuss page 2.

Commissioner Clark stated for the record he got a copy of the tape and listened to it. It was an honest case of miscommunication. There was a lot talked about and at the end of the day people went away picking and choosing the parts that they wanted to put together as their understanding of what happened. You had a number that he made a motion on. Nothing was voted on. There was a lot of discussion on all kinds of different elements. One of the points that he made was that the numbers around the wages, salaries, benefits and health care were not locked in stone. He wanted a chance to come back and revisit those. That was very clear from listening to the tape. He was surprised when you came in, from what he understands from Donnie Stevens, with the Commissioners numbers plugged in. There was clearly no motion, nor was one passed coming up with Commissioners numbers. That is why he made the motion pull the figures back and take another hard look at things.

Commissioner Gallant stated to clarify that, there were many motions made, many approvals of many of the items, including the total amount for salaries.

Chief Ober stated he specifically asked them if that was the number they wanted plugged in to the Commissioners budget, that 806 number.

Commissioner Clark asked if there was anything more Chief Ober wanted to go through on his budget proposal. Chief Ober asked if he had a specific area he was questioning him about. Commissioner Clark stated it was the salary worksheet. He referenced the email he received from Chief Ober today. He stated he is talking about the salary worksheet. He asked Chief Ober if it was the original he wanted to go with for the record. Chief Ober replied yes.

Commissioner Clark stated he would like to look at some other numbers. He passed out a worksheet that he had done. The budget he had presented had instead of a 2½% step had a 1½% step. He went back and looked at. He looked at the step and grade system they had agreed to and they had clearly agreed to 2½%. He knows you can suspend step and grade for a year but he decided to go forward with the 2½% step and do it across the board for all people. Another thing he did was he lined everybody up so they remain on their current salary they have right now from January 1 to June 30th and then from July 1st to December 31st we go with the step and that was the agreed upon step that they have and that is 2½%. He thought the idea of doing it 26 weeks at a time made sense because it made it a whole lot simpler than to go by anniversary date. Chief Ober stated that is not our proposal at all. Commissioner Clark stated he understands but you have it broken down into 26 weeks on either side.

Chief Ober stated that is not his proposal at all. His proposal does not change the step date that somebody gets the new step. The only reason that this is broken out into 26 weeks and 26 weeks is to

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show the difference between a 48 hour work week and a 42 hour work week. That is the only reason. That has nothing to do with when a step may or may not come into play.

Commissioner Clark stated that is not clear from looking at that. Chief Ober stated it should be very clear looking at that. He has told him over and over again that his proposal is to start the new hire July 1st of this year and we wouldn't be doing a step this year in lieu of that because we would be adjusting the work week. There was never any mention of when his proposal would be to change the step date. Commissioner Clark stated from looking at this it is clear that you have 26 weeks at the beginning and 26 weeks at the end. Chief Ober stated it is because their hourly rate changes to reflect the adjustment for the hours worked. Commissioner Clark asked if that changes right at the 26 week cut off. Chief Ober replied July 1. Commissioner Clark asked if that doesn't change on their anniversary date. Chief Ober asked why it would.

Commissioner Clark told Chief Ober to stop for just a second. He doesn't like his tone of voice. He would like him to relax and talk respectfully if he would. Continuing in the same normal tone of voice he had been using, Chief Ober stated that he is a little concerned that Commissioner Clark has interpreted things differently. There has never been any instance from him that that is what was going to happen. July 1 starts a new firefighter so the 48 hour work week gets reduced to a 42 hour work week July 1. That is 26 weeks, 26 weeks. That is why the 26 week reference is on that worksheet because we can't switch to that work hour week until that additional firefighter is hired. Commissioner Clark stated it wasn't clear in his mind that that was what he was doing. It looked as if everybody was going to be making their 48 hour rate for the first 26 weeks. Chief Ober stated he has never ever said anything to that. His proposal has been very clear. Read the memo. Salaries are not changing. Their base rates are not changing. Because of his proposal he is not proposing a step increase.

Commissioner Clark stated that what he was saying there, as confusing as it might be from looking at the sheet, that would indicate to him that the pay raise would go in on July 1st. Chief Ober stated it is explained in the memo. There is no pay raise. Their annual salary remains the same. When you move someone from a 48 hour work week to a 42 hour work week you have to adjust the hourly rate so you can compute your overtime and those other costs. That is the only reason that there is a different hourly rate listed there. Their work week is being proposed to be changed. That is clearly spelled out in the memo.

Commissioner Clark said there are a lot of things that you lay out and try to look at, it can be very confusing. Chief Ober stated he is sorry he was confused by that. Again, it is very clear that that is the proposal. Commissioner Clark stated he is saying it is not. Chief Ober stated that is the proposal. There is no other proposal there. Commissioner Gallant stated that is what the memo said.

Commissioner Clark asked where it would be in the budget narrative. Chief Ober stated it would be under line 110. It is the same proposal that was before them last year. It has not changed.

Commissioner Clark asked Chief Ober if he is proposing that the people go up from here on out on their anniversary date for their pay raises. Chief Ober stated no. That was changed by the Commissioners last year. It took effect January 1. Commissioner Gallant stated we talked about that at our last meeting. Commissioner Clark agreed that they did discuss it but that was another one that was fairly confusing to him as well.

Commissioner Clark stated what he has down is it divided into 26 weeks on either side. He has the current pay raise going into effect July 1st. It is a 2½% step. There are certain elements that are somewhat different. As a preface he wanted to note and clearly get into the minutes that part of where he is coming from in terms of where their concerns should be for tightening our belt. The NH Retirement is funded at only 58% and the State is pulling out of it completely so there is a 3.7 billion dollar shortfall completely starting with us picking up the tab at the local level because the State is getting completely out of it. That is something we are going to have to show as a burden on our financial records. The State is out of it for making their contributions but there is also a 3.7 billion dollar shortfall in the current retirement system in terms of paying for retirement. We are at a 58% level. That 42%, the State is done with it in terms of providing funding for local municipalities; fire departments,

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police departments, teachers, whoever at the local level or county level that is in that system. They are going to be affected by picking up their share of that 3.7 billion. That is not a big thing that is in the news right now but that is definitely something that is going to be affecting the taxpayers. He also wanted to point out, and he is not moving on it this year, but he wanted to point out that the average nationwide employees at the municipal level are contributing 13% toward single health care and 29% toward family plan. Our employees pay 10% right now. There is a good chance with that continuing to go up at a fairly steep rate that they are going to have to look at that next year. Again, he did not touch it this year in his proposal. The past 10 years our fire departments cost for wages, salaries and benefits has gone up 285% while the annual number of incidents has gone up only 12.3%. He knows that there is talk about that being apples and oranges. He is assuming because they had fewer people 10 years ago and now they have a more robust staffing. All he was talking about in terms of apples to apples was the cost over time. That has increased and has affected the tax rates. He is not complaining. He thinks we have a good fire department but at some point in time we need to recognize we are spending a lot of money on it and be frugal. What he is saying is that his proposal has a salary step that goes into effect starting July 1st through December 31st. That could be looked at as something that is given once a person has their anniversary, their annual review done, and then they would get their back pay to July 1st. There are some numbers that he came about that were a little bit different from the Chief's proposal for things like holiday pay. He used 11 staff people for 11 holidays at 12 hour days and multiplied it by the average of those 11 staff people in the two columns averaged together. He got a figure of \$18.02 and he thinks the Chief's at \$19.35. He wasn't sure why the Fire Prevention Captain and Administrative Assistant were included in the Chief's computations. Chief Ober stated they are not. His proposal would include that additional firefighter for half a year.

Commissioner Clark stated he had asked how Chief Ober got the average hourly at \$20.50. He got an email back stating that he had averaged all employees. When you do just the 11 that fall into the policy that we have for holiday pay, you get a lower figure. He doesn't know how he came up with that. He asked for the calculation but never got it. Chief Ober stated the holiday pay this year includes 11 holidays for 11 shift personal at 12 hours a day. An additional six holidays, July through December, are factored in for an additional employee. Discussion ensued.

Discussion ensued about overtime.

Discussion ensued about step increases when the step takes place. Pat Consentino explained that the step increase for the Town is retroactive to January 1st after the budget is approved in March. Their COLA or merit is effective July 1st. Contractual employees, which are police, are July to July. Chief Ober stated we are essentially doing the same thing. We have not yet done a COLA adjustment to the plan. We are retroactivating it back to January 1st after the budget it passed.

Chief Ober stated his original proposal does include a COLA because the plan has to be kept alive. You can't let it slip behind. Otherwise you are going to have to do a huge increase rather than do it a little at a time.

Commissioner Clark stated his feeling on a COLA is that it went into effect and affected their pay for only that year and the step stayed the same. That sheet would always stay the same and the COLA would just go into effect for that year to give them a bump but the next year you would be back at the original step that you had. Chief Ober stated if you are going to do an adjustment you apply it to the whole scale.

Commissioner Clark stated he talked with Barry Cox regarding the 48 hour versus 42 hour work week and keeping the same annual salary. Because they are only working 42 hours their actual effect on their hourly is 14.4% increase from where they are at now to what they would be getting as an hourly rate. Barry told him that is negotiable. That is taking an extreme stand. The employee is getting a major benefit. You could say they have their hourly rate. They are going from 48 hours to 42 hours. They are working about 14.5% fewer hours per year. Therefore, they stay at the same pay scale and they are just working 42 hours. If you do that their annual salary drops down considerable. Jumping up and accepting blindly that we are going to adjust the pay scale that they have now, keeping the same salary and dividing by 42 hours in the work week and giving them a 14.4% increase in their hourly rate

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is not good. Chief Ober stated how about you also talk about the reduced hours per week that some of them will have to work. When you start painting that picture you need to paint whole thing. Some of our staff now works 72 hours and are only getting paid for 48. When we change to that 42 hour work week we reduced the fluctuation in the hours worked in each week. It doesn't jump as high as 72 and is doesn't jump below 36. The high becomes 48 and the low becomes 36 instead of 72 and down to 24. That is the other side of that that you cannot put a dollar amount to. You are talking about reducing the salaries back down to reflect a 42 hour work week. They are already lower than the average salary in the area. Discussion ensued.

Commissioner Clark stated he cannot endorse a budget that has the figures going up as much as they are going up right now. He cannot jump into an extra shift until they do a long term study really looking at the numbers until he feels comfortable. He typically feels comfortable when he talks to some professionals outside of where we work, from different towns and LGC and places like that and he feels a certain comfort level that it is the right direction to take. What Chief Ober is asking them to do with his budget is he maintains, holds them back at the step and grade they are at right now. You freeze that. You bring the guy in for half a year. It artificially represents what the full impact of that guy is going to be because he is only coming in for half a year. The next year it will be a full year. Chief Ober stated Commissioner Clark keeps saying artificially impacts because he doesn't think he understands how this works. He has been dealing with municipal budgets for a long time. Both as a budget committee member in the town he grew up in and as a department head that helped facilitate a budget and now as a budget here to working into three years. That is how it is done. There is no artificial impact on anything. On a new position, that is how it is done. Commissioner Clark stated that what he is saying is that when you are a taxpayer and you are looking at the bottom line numbers. You have held back in a lot of lines and you come in by holding the step and grade back and bringing the guy in in July. The numbers look palatable right now. When you kick in next year you are going to see that. Discussion ensued.

Commissioner Clark stated he was hoping to get the excel version of the budget so he could click on a cell and see how the formula was for that particular thing. That really is an eye opener. He wouldn't have any question as to do you use 11 people here or do you use 13. Chief Ober explained the reason they don't give out a working excel file of this is because they get too many versions out there. Kathy keeps the version of the budget. If we have another version floating around and the numbers aren't the same. Numbers don't match up and it is just too confusing. There is one data base for that.

Commissioner Clark stated he doesn't know where they are going to go from here. He is not into adding another shift right now. Chief Ober stated that is obvious. We need to move on.

Chief Ober stated he hopes they reconsider and stay at January 1st as the effective date for a step. The year that we implemented was an anomaly year. Everybody got it. They understood this was a new program coming in. We have to get onto it. You started it January 1, 2012. To change it now in 2013 to July 1 is just arbitrary. It is a shot in the dark.

Commissioner Clark stated let me throw something out to you. He can consider that. He can do that, a step increase January 1st with no COLA. Discussion ensued.

Commissioner Clark asked Chief Ober to split the difference. Chief Ober stated he objects to that. That would be a poor mistake. They should stick with January 1 and stay consistent with how it has been. Other than that one year when we implemented and adjusted, it has been that way. Commissioner Clark stated that there is historical data. We have done it already. It is not the end of the world. Chief Ober stated there is not historical data. We changed it that one time.

Discussion ensued about the step and grade scale.

Commissioner Clark stated he liked the idea of having the increase go into effect after District Meeting. He said there is merit in that. He is willing to change that if Chief Ober is willing to dangle something in front of him that offsets it somehow. Chief Ober stated he does not believe he needs to dangle anything out there because that is what the Board has done. The Board has decided that is what you were doing. Why do you have to change it? He does not understand the thought process. That is

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going to send such a bad message to the staff. Discussion ensued. Commissioner Auger asked what the increase would be. Chief Ober stated the Holiday Line #110.05 will be \$26,499; Line #110 \$654,663. The total wages would be \$791,162. The increase would be approximately \$6,000. Commissioner Clark asked Chief Ober if that went into effect, what was on the table to help flatten that out a little bit. Chief Ober stated his proposed numbers in the rest of the budget are pretty bare bones. Commissioner Gallant stated the budget is pretty well level funded. Commissioner Clark wanted to increase the amount the employee pays on insurance. Chief Ober stated at this point in the game he is absolutely against that. Commissioner Clark asked if he could throw out some other things that would be worthwhile looking at. Chief Ober stated not in his budget. His budget is either level funded or very close to what last year's numbers were. Commissioner Gallant stated that one area Commissioner Clark increased can be decreased, legal. Commissioner Clark stated when you talk around to the different towns and do a proportional scale on what they have in for legal and what we have, we have nothing. We leave ourselves vulnerable. If something should come up, we don't have any money in there. That is a scary thought. He has talked with Paul Sanderson about that. You really need to budget for the un-eventuality when it comes up. He wants to keep it.

Discussion ensued about the health insurance.

Discussion ensued about the step and grade.

Discussion ensued about District Meeting. Commissioner Clark stated that if the budget is cut he would like to see it handled even handedly and that salaries and wages are on the table for that as well. Chief Ober stated he needs to keep in mind that the staff is their most important asset. If the budget is reduced at District Meeting you need to make other sacrifices in other areas and maintain your salaries and benefits. We don't make widgets. We need to decide we are not painting the shed this year. We are not doing this at Park Street this year. You need to look at other areas of things you are not going to do and maintain your salaries and benefits.

Commissioner Clark made a motion to use his pay scale from July 1st to December 31st and extend it for the entire year and based everything calculated on that. That is a 2½% increase from the current step & grade pay on everybody from the Chief on down. For holiday pay, use our current policy for holiday pay in the computation. The holiday pay is *all shift employees shall be given 12 hours of straight time pay for the holiday in addition to his or her regular pay. The Fire Prevention Captain and Secretary will receive eight hours straight pay and the day off.* That is how that is figured with our current policy and that would stay in effect. Commissioner Auger seconded the motion. There being no discussion vote was taken. Commissioners Clark and Auger for, Commissioner Gallant against. Commissioner Gallant stated he is in favor of adding the fourth shift.

Commissioner Clark made a motion to put pressurized hydrants in the amount of \$125,988 in the proposed budget under Line 590.2 of the Purchased Services section and not have it as a separate warrant article. Commissioner Auger seconded the motion. There being no discussion vote was taken. Commissioners Clark and Auger for, Commissioner Gallant against. Commissioner Gallant stated he was in favor of whatever DRA says. Chief Ober stated he thought that was going to be a question they were going to ask when they put the warrant together. They review all warrants. Commissioner Clark stated they can always change that vote if they get something in writing that says something different.

Commissioner Clark asked Chief Ober if he was comfortable with overtime where it is at. Chief Ober stated he is.

Commissioner Clark stated there was a change he wanted to make to Line 210 in the narrative. Group Health Insurance says this line reflects a policy adopted by the Board of Fire Commissioners pertaining to health coverage. Employees contribute 10% toward the plan they are eligible. It also includes an opt-out option. Currently we have (1) family and (1) 2-person opt-out totaling \$5,750. He would like to delete *This line also includes one additional Firefighter for six months. For a 'worst-case' we used figures for a family plan.* He would like to add in its stead that *This line includes additional monies to cover potential upgrades to a more expensive plan. For instance, a firefighter starts with a single person plan and switches it to a family plan later in the year. We have factored in the cost of half a*

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family plan for such instances. On the next page on the chart is has family for six months and has one person. I would take that one person out and change it to contingency. On the Retirement Line 230, change the narrative to reflect the increase for both employees and employer.

Chief Ober asked the Commissioners if they wanted an increase in their salaries. The Commissioners said no.

Commissioner Clark stated talked about it today and found out he is a resident of Tilton. Reporters have been calling him. Congratulations. Thank you very much. They would like to make a positive statement if reporters call and have comment they can make.

Commissioner Auger made a motion that wherever the numbers fall under the wages as far as Medicare, Social Security and Retirement is where they are going to be. Commissioner Gallant seconded the motion. Discussion: Commissioner Auger said the Budget Committee needs the budget by Monday. Nothing is going to change. The Budget Committee has already approved half the budget. There being no further discussion vote was taken. Motion passed unanimously.

Commissioner Clark read the press release: The Commissioners of Tilton-Northfield Fire & EMS are pleased that the Chief has established residency within the District as required under his employment agreement. He added *Having him close to the community he serves should provide comfort to us all.* We look forward to Chief Ober continuing to serve the people and business of Tilton and Northfield. Commissioner Clark asked Commissioner Gallant if he would be comfortable signing it if they took that line out of there. Commissioner Gallant stated he would.

Adjournment

Commissioner Gallant made a motion to adjourn. Commissioner Auger seconded the motion. There being no discussion, vote was taken. Motion to adjourn passed.

The meeting adjourned at 8:13 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Kathy Tobine
Administrative Assistant

Next Meeting Date, Time, Place: January 16, 2013 at 17:30. Meeting to be held at Tilton Town Hall, Downstairs Meeting Room, 257 Main Street, Tilton.