

**Town of Paxton**  
**Board of Selectmen**  
**Regular Meeting Minutes**  
**Monday, February 28, 2011**

Members Present: Fred Goodrich, Chair  
William A. Trotta, Vice Chair  
Peter Bogren, Jr., Clerk

Carol L. Riches, Town Administrator

Attendees: Emerson Wheeler  
Michael Benoit  
Greg DiStasi  
see Attendee List

The Chairman called the meeting to order at 7:28pm.

**Meeting with Light Department Commission**

- (FG) opened the meeting by stating that the purpose of the meeting was to meet with the Light Commission and not to discuss Diane Dillman. Diane has been a valued employee, and the employees of the light department are employees of the town. The Board of Selectmen can approve or disapprove all warrants prepared by the Light Department including payroll.
- Emerson Wheeler of the Light Commission expressed his concerns about comments that were made by the Select Board at a previous meeting, and expressed that the employees of the Light Department are on the low end of the pay scale when you compare them to National Grid and other surrounding towns.
- (FG) Over the past four years the town employees have had a pay increase of 2%, where the light department employees have seen an increase anywhere from 5% to 15% not including the linemen.
- (EW) explained that the increase is due to the apprentice program that bumps up an employees pay when they go from one level to next.
- (FG) questioned how they validate the hiring of a new Light Department Manager for \$90,000.

- Michael Benoit expressed that because it is a manager's position verses an Administrators position they have additional responsibilities, such as hiring and firing and they work under the direction of the Light Commission. Since our manager was hired last November there have been other Light Department Managers hired in area towns with salaries that range from \$112,00 to \$125,000
- (EW) We work for the ratepayers. We should have gone up in the rates for electricity over the past few years but we are holding them down.
- (MB) We are also down one lineman and we have not replaced that position yet.
- (WT) Questioned the amount in which Diane has received for a raise in recent years, and that she also has use of a take home vehicle.
- (MB) Diane uses that vehicle to travel to many meeting and to meet with MWEC.
- (FG) Stated his concern about hiring a temporary employee (Diane Dillman) for an eight week period at a rate of \$75.00/per hour. This rate was reduced to \$50.00/per hour, but is still working past the eight-week agreement. The department should have been more prepared for Diane's departure in closing out the books, so that there would have not been the need for her to still be working.
- (EW) Diane is still working in order to help get the department through the audit. Also the department was short staffed for a three-month period, with a full time employee being out. Diane also spent a lot of time acclimating the new manager to the position.
- (MB) Diane created a lot of the programs that the department uses, and this took time to show Greg how they work.
- (FG)The warrants come to the town hall very intermittently. Would expect to see them done on a more regular basis.
- (EW) Yes, we are a little behind, and we will work to get the warrants in on a timelier basis.
- (FG) All financial dealings should be passing through the treasurer's office. We do appreciate all that Greg has been done so far, but did question the entire hiring process of the new Light Manager.
- (EW) We went over all the candidates and felt that Greg was the best choice. We were looking for someone who was hopefully going to stay and not just use this as a short-term position and then jump to a new position that is higher paying.
- (FG) Spoke of the recovery from the ice storm and hopes that the work is done at this time.
- (GD) The work is done and the total submission is about \$190,000 to which we get a maximum of 75% back.

- (FG) We will oversee everything on a more consistent basis than in the past, and hope to communicate more openly.
- (FG) No raise decision has been made yet for the employees for FY2012.
- (MB) As of January 1, 2011 a cola of 2% has been done for the Light Department employees, but no steps have been given yet.
- (FG) want to see the wage scale is set appropriately for all the jobs in town. We need to be fair to all employees in town and jobs are evaluated every year and the scales are revised to maintain an appropriate pay scale.
- (GD) Hopes to have a more open dialogue with the board and work together as a town
- Ralph Kimball (RK) of 55 Maple Street spoke from his former experience as a Light Board member. He encourages the town and the Light Commission to work together and take care of any issues that arise.
- Gordon Snyder (GS) of 176 Suomi Street was present to speak to the Light Commission in regards to the pole yard that is across the street from his property. Mr. Snyder had many discussions with Diane Dillman in regards to a new location for the pole yard. Mr. Snyder was told that with the construction of the new Public Safety Building that there was land set aside for a new pole yard. Mr. Snyder wants to know when this will happen.
- (GD) A meeting has been set up for March 22, 2011 to meet with Mr. Snyder. He just wants a chance to review the file, so that he can get back to Mr. Snyder with an answer.
- Mr. Snyder expressed his concern over the smell and CPC fumes that come from the pole yard that he and his family have had to deal with over the years.
- (EW) stated that the poles have been tested and there is nothing harmful in the poles.
- Mr. Snyder is concerned over the length of time that it has taken the Light Commission to resolve this situation.
- (FG) expressed that this is an issue that should be handled at a Light Board meeting.
- Richard Hafey of the Telegram and Gazette questioned the Light Commission on a statement that was made in a letter, as to whether or not the Commission was going to pursue a suite against anyone with the town at this time.
- (EW) replied not at this time.
- (PB) The one question that he wanted to present was how did the Commission come to the agreement of paying the rate of \$75.00/per hour to Diane Dillman.
- (EW) They negotiate the rate with Diane based upon her current rate of \$94,000. Diane put in more hours than she actually charged the town for.

- (FG) The town is now billed for streetlights. Could this be donated to the town as a regular PILOT donation?
- (EW) With little business in town if we make a donation to the town we would then be faced with having to raise the rates on the residents.
- (MB) Wanted to point out that the town use to pay for the retirement for the Light Department employee's years ago, and now the Light Department pays for it.
- (FG) Made the Light Commission aware of the GIC program that could affect the town. The town will fight to maintain the current health care program that we have.

**Next meeting scheduled for Monday, March 7, 2011 at 7:00pm**

**Adjourned Meeting at 8:40pm, Unanimous all in favor**

Respectfully submitted,

Donna Graf-Parsons, Administrative Assistant