

Bakersfield Select Board Budgetary Meeting
Monday January 16, 2023
5:00pm

Meeting was called to order at 5:05 by Josh Goss.

Members present: Joss Goss (chair), Lance Lawyer, John West, Terri Gates, Brenda Churchill

Members absent: none

Residents/Guests present: Dan Forand, Mac Newitt, Tami Brennan, Maria DeRosia

Josh said that this meeting is to discuss budgetary items, foremost employee salaries. Josh asked if there were any questions regarding salaries. He said that for Mac and the Town crew, the board had talked about Cost-of-Living-Adjustment Raise. He said that he played with some numbers and the average of the cost of living for the past 10 years was 1.8% but now the cost of living is significantly higher. He said this year's COLA determined by the SS administration for 2022 was 5.9% and 2023 is 8.7%. Lance said that he received pertinent info from the town of Bristol regarding COLA employee raises throughout the towns of Vermont and the average COLA employee increase was 6.55%. John asked what the median salaries for the crews were and Lance said that Tami had gathered information on that a few years ago and we were less than average. The board confirmed that we have a Road Commissioner and two Road laborers. Terri asked what Mac's current hourly wage is. Mac now receives \$26.00/hour, Marc receives \$25.00/hour and Dan receives \$23.00/hour. Tami said that when she researched wages, the lower wages had the most turnover. Terri said that explains why our guys should make more and they aren't. Lance said no they aren't. Josh said that he knows that many times new hires start at more than the current long-term employees. He said he knows that can be frustrating. He said a lot of the salaries reported were for guys with less than 10 years of employment and Mac has been working for the town 42 years. Mac said that Dan is possibly retiring sometime this year. Josh asked if they should create a 3-year schedule with COLA raises or do we think the COL will come down. Terri said that this year's COL from 7.5% to 8.7% is going to state put. Terri said that power rates are going up 7.24% in September. The health insurance rates went up slightly this year, but Mac is not the town's insurance this year and Dan turns 65 in April so will have to come off and go on Medicare since the town has less than 20 full time employees. Terri said that since insurance line item is lower, we can afford more of a raise and 6.5% is good. The guys get a stipend paid of \$600.00 in January and \$600.00 in June, for not taking the town's insurance. Terri said that is the same as offered at her work.

Lance made the motion to raise the Road Commissioner and Road Crew salaries 6.5% due to the rise in cost of living, with the Cost-of-Living-Adjustment to be reviewed each year as the board determines an appropriate

raise in pay. Brenda seconded the motion and the motion carried with a vote of 5-0.

The board discussed Kathy's request for a raise in salary for the Town Clerk position from \$1000.00/month to \$1250.00/month. Josh said that there has been no raise in the salary of the Town Clerk since he has been on the board since 2017. Josh said the position of the town clerk also earns fees for different services that she provides; recording legal documents like deeds, mortgages, etc., and while the Real Estate market has been good the last couple of years and had many transactions to record, all that is definitely slowing down so that will reduce the amount of fees collected. Tami said some of the fees go toward the Book Restoration and Preservation fund, the town clerk gets a portion. Terri asked how the fees are determined. Tami said that the state determines those. Terri said the Fairfield Town Clerk gets a salary instead of the fees. Terri said that Kathy is also Delinquent Tax Collector but that is a separate elected position, not part of the town clerk.

John said that the COLA since 2017 is 15.5% and that doesn't include the 8.7% for this year. John said that we need to make sure that we stop these big gaps because of waiting too long to give raises so that the % increase looks so big.

John made the motion to give Kathy the increase from \$1000.00/month to \$1250.00/month, bringing her salary from \$12,000.00 to \$15,000.00/year. He said that is still a raise of less than \$4.00/day. Lance seconded the motion and the motion carried with a vote of 5-0.

Maria-Treasurer's salary-

Maria asked the board if the salary for the treasurer could be returned to 1% of the taxes collected from the Grand List, instead of the current way the town pays the treasurer's salary. John said that would be about a 26% increase from last year and asked Maria about how many hours that she put in to get the job done. Maria said that it depends on the time of year. She said that right now she puts in about 10-15 hours a week, but during this last tax time, when she was out having her baby, Vera put in 4-8 hours a day, every day. John asked if she could estimate how many hours she would put in in a year. Josh did some numbers and estimated if three quarters of the year, Maria put in 10-15 hours/week, and then 32 hours for 13 weeks, it would bring it up to roughly around 1000 hours/year, and broken down, at 1% of the collected tax amount, that would make Maria's earnings \$23.83/hour. Maria said that Kathy and Vera said that is how the treasurer used to get paid. Maria said that this last year, we have had to pay the assistant treasurer for quite a few hours to train Maria and also to do the job during Maria's maternity leave, but that this coming year, she didn't think that they would need to allot more than \$500.00, to cover an assistant's hours because Maria shouldn't need one. She said that would reduce the money in that line item as the assistant treasurer earned \$25.00/hour. Tami explained that the reason that the town changed it from pay based on a percentage to a set salary was because when Vera was

treasurer, she said that the state was thinking about collecting the property taxes themselves, which would leave the treasurer with no salary if it was based on taxes that she collected. John suggested a cost of living raise for this year and have Maria keep track of her hours through the year and then revisit the changeover next year. Lance said that he didn't see any reason that we don't go back to the original way of paying for this year, with the condition of the time study and we can revisit results next year. After more discussion, Josh suggested that they make it a \$23.38/hour position for this year, and have Maria keep track of her hours to revisit next year. Maria asked what would happen if she went over 1000 hours. Terri said that she would make more money. Maria said, but it would mess up the budgeted amount. Josh said to keep track of her hours and if she is over 950 in November, to let them know. Maria said that she would keep track and she could report on that quarterly as she gives the financial reports.

Josh made the motion to move the treasurer from a salary position to an hourly wage position of \$23.83/hour to align closer with a 1% grand list tax collection, and have the treasurer keep track and report her hours. The board will revisit the request to return the yearly salary to 1% of the Grand list taxes collected, based on those hours, next year. John seconded the motion and the motion passed with a vote of 5-0.

Maria asked, since she was thinking of the audit coming up, if she worked more than 40 hours in a week, she wouldn't want to be paid overtime, or taxed on overtime, could she take it as comp time. Josh said he will look into the legality of that. Lance mentioned a time clock and asked if they wanted a clock to punch in, although they wouldn't work if someone did work at home. Josh said Maria gave us this request in early December, so we've had time to think about this.

Josh said that the Select Board meeting next Monday, the 23rd, would be the last night to finalize the budgetary stuff. Terri said we may have to revisit some stuff. Maria said that she gave the board a report of the updated proposed budget so far, and if they see anything off, just let her know. Josh said it could be a long meeting.

Terri asked about the barn by Waterville Mtn Rd, and East Waterville Rd., that is leaning over road. She said at one time Rosalie was given a time frame to get it down. Lance said the property changed hands and they were going to send the new lady a notice and that never got sent. Brenda said that would be your zoning administrator and it will be addressed in 2023. Terri said that somebody said they almost hit it the other day when they met a truck. Brenda said if you look at it, it's stable and asked why people were so concerned about it before. Lance said that Rosalie said she had permission to burn it. Brenda said that she would have a follow up report on Monday.

John said the Fire Dept should be given the opportunity to have a controlled burn there for training.

Josh said that Monday, the board would go through the stack of organizations with requests for funds.

Terri asked if we could ask the town if we want to get out of the Supervisory Union district. Tami said she likes that idea.

Josh said at this point we have a partial picture of the budget and next week; we should complete it.

John made the motion to adjourn. Brenda seconded the motion and motion carried with a vote of 5-0. The meeting adjourned at 6:15pm.

Meeting minutes were recorded by Tami Brennan.