

Minutes of the Special Meeting of the Town Board of the Town of Durham held September 22, 2020 at the Town Hall commencing at 7:00 p.m.

Present: Shawn Marriott, Supervisor
Joan Breslin, Deputy Supervisor
Linda Sutton, Council Member
Scott Hulbert, Council Member
Walt Bennett, Council Member

Recording Secretary: Janet Partridge-Town Clerk

Others Present: Karen Tirpak, Bookkeeper/Judge
Chrissy Kohrs, Court Clerk
David Cunningham, Building Inspector
Tom Sutton, Police Sgt.
Joe van Holsteyn, Highway Superintendent
5 community members

Others called-in: Maryellen Brooks, Assessor's Clerk
Chris Kohrs, Court Clerk
11 community members + 1 Anonymous

Supervisor Marriott called the meeting to order at 7:02 p.m. with the Pledge to the Flag.

Marriott wanted to address something right off the bat. He said he received a letter from MaryAnn Ledda and it didn't set a very good tone. He was upset with reference to anything done with the employee handbook is done in secrecy or a hand shake deal or that he made promises to people is totally inaccurate. The meetings they had for the handbook were publicized and nobody came to them. He said she could have come to those meetings but she chose not to and she didn't come to all the budget meetings either where there was 1.8 million dollars spent. He expressed he did not appreciate the implication that something was done shady. Ledda explained it was addressed to the whole board and she was concerned with decisions made and just because someone didn't come to a meeting doesn't mean they are not concerned when they read the minutes and realize what is being decided that affects the tax payers. Marriott said the vote was 3-2 that day and the majority of the board passed the decision and they must move on. Even if people did not like the decision, 3 people on the board wanted it to happen so that is how it will be. Ledda said this will be a very expensive deal. He said there are people here, when years ago were told they will get benefits if they stick with it and he needs to respect those employees and give them what they were told.

Ledda said their committee was concerned after the town board passed that resolution, someone hired after January 1997 will be eligible for 100% coverage of their medical insurance after they retire if they have worked any number of hours per week for 20 years. They will be eligible even if they have only worked 2 hours per week for 20 years.

Marriott said he would like to pass another resolution tonight to clarify that.

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Discussion continued about the board setting a policy. Deputy Supervisor Breslin said the handbook can be changed at any time.

Bernard Rivers wanted to simplify the meaning of the resolution. A hypothetical employee turns 55 today, they have worked 40hrs/week for 20 years and according to the reading of the handbook before February, they would receive health 100% health coverage. Also, if he was working 20hrs/week for 40 years he would receive 100% health coverage according to the staff handbook. After the resolution was passed in February, it would apply to him working only 2 hrs/wk for 20 years and he would get full health benefits when he retired. He pointed out that Marriott himself was the one who said it was a hand shake deal. Rivers feels this is not the way things should be done and the town shouldn't be run this way.

Breslin stated she felt the decision was made haphazard and she does not feel comfortable making a decision tonight without a graphic in front of them that makes sense and they can figure out how this financial decision will affect the town. She also explained that the motion from February explicitly stated it was even for people who work 2 hrs per week for 20 consecutive years. They would get 100% health coverage when they retire.

Marriott agreed but he respects the process and he would like to move on. He believes they have been working on this for months and when decisions are made they must move on. At any time someone can make a motion to change it and they will look at it.

Jan Perlin suggested if proposals are being made, they should be drafted and made available to the public. She agreed that working graphics should be shared as well. She expressed her concern with how long it takes for minutes to be uploaded to the website. If the information was available quicker, they wouldn't have to spend so much time going over what has been done already. She also suggested a projection of the impact of these financial decisions before a final decision is made.

Bennett discussed 32-35 hours is considered full time. He also explained he believed less than full time you get less benefits while you are working and when you retire and leave you get no benefits. When asked, Bennett confirmed to Marriott he was talking about employees hired after 1-1-2020.

Matt Hausmann was concerned the part time employees were not being paid very much per hour so the health insurance benefit they would receive would be very important to keep them as employees. Breslin explained being paid \$20/hr. part time and getting 100% health coverage is a good incentive. Some of the part time clerk positions do not require much training, or a civil service test, or a college degree. She understands dedication to the town, but it is not a minimum wage job, it is a decent salary with 100% full health coverage.

Hausmann explained he was concerned with wanting to take away someone's insurance. Breslin told him this proposal was never about taking away someone's insurance. It was about having them pay a percentage when they retire, not when they are working, just when they retire. She doesn't believe that was unfair. These are part time employees that are less than 20 hrs and are

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not employees who are making their living here. She agrees they are important members of our community but the board also needs to be fiscally responsible. Wanting to give part time workers 100% health coverage when they are working and 100% coverage when they retire, that is a lot. There was a proposal on the table to have the part time workers pay a percentage when they retire that they could work off of, but that changed.

Chris Kohrs wanted to clarify that part time employees pay 50% for their family insurance. They get 100% coverage for themselves but the town only covers 50% of their family coverage. She asked the board to not lead people to believe it is 100% for the whole family.

Marriott made the motion employees hired after January 1, 1997 who are eligible for health care coverage while working will receive full benefits after 20 years of continuous service to the town, Hulbert seconded the motion, voting as follows:

Marriott	Aye
Breslin	Nay
Sutton	Nay
Hulbert	Aye
Bennett	Aye

The motion was passed 3-2.

The board discussed future full time employees. They will keep the retirement age at 55 years for health coverage when they retire. It was asked if someone were to work for 20 years and they reach the age of 41 years old, could they leave the town and at 55 years old get health insurance from the town. The board agreed as it is written now they could.

Van Holsteyn advised the board to keep in mind future highway employees are married to the job from October to April. They have to be dedicated more than 40 hours a week sometimes. The board continued to discuss how they will be fiscally responsible with future hires.

Justin Lounsbury suggested the board consider having the new hires pay in 10% of their health insurance cost for maybe 10 years. The employees will be giving a little back but it is only 10%. Breslin and Hulbert thought that was a good suggestion. They discussed what the current cost is for a single plan. 10% of a monthly single plan is \$73 per month and \$878 per year. They asked Lounsbury if he thought that would be reasonable, it would be \$37 per pay check about. He wasn't sure that would be affordable.

Van Holsteyn explained his concern with being able to hire someone at the rate they have now and have them pay a percentage of the health plan. He feels it is the number one incentive. The hourly rate offered now goes with the health insurance coverage. Breslin said that is why she fought so hard to make sure the money was there for full time employees to get good benefits. She said there is no side hustle when you are married to the town from October to April and you want to go out on Friday night but there is a snow storm coming.

Jan Perlin asked why a copy of the employee handbook is not on the website. Partridge had no answer.

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The board discussed setting a retirement age for health insurance coverage. Do they want, 55 years or 60 years or 65 years? Van Holsteyn was asked what would be the better incentive: retiring at 55 years of age and paying into your insurance while working or retiring at 60 years of age and getting 100% coverage.

Breslin made a motion to keep the age of retirement for a full time employee working 40 hrs./week at 55 years of age, seconded by Bennett, all in favor, motion carried. (5 ayes- Marriott, Breslin, Sutton, Hulbert, Bennett)

The board continued to discuss having future hires pay into their health insurance coverage. It was discussed how much this benefit costs. Ledda expressed how lucky the employees of the town are for having this huge benefit. Marriott supplied the amount paid per month for active service employees. The health coverage costs to the town currently are \$731 per month on a single plan, \$1,464 per month on single plus spouse, and \$2,086 per month on a family.

Discussion continued on having employees pay a portion of their health insurance cost per month. It was also discuss what would be better, paying in a little for prime insurance or not paying in for not so good insurance. Employees in the audience gave their opinion.

Lounsbury explained a cashier working at Home Depot is making \$14 an hour and the board wants to hire someone in the highway department at \$17 per hour and have their CDL, welding experience, and shop experience. It isn't reasonable.

Looking to set another meeting and should have a chart using the current numbers the town pays for health insurance. Marriott will meet with Lounsbury and they will come up with numbers and how everything works. Breslin asked if they could include in the chart what a highway employee makes and what would be a base starting point.

Email came out about building use. Is there a way to put out a calendar on the website, a google doc? Sometimes when a subcommittee schedules a meeting, Rivers and Breslin don't know when it is. Marriott explained if there is a meeting scheduled, two to three days ahead, the group needs to call the town clerk's office and get on the schedule. They can't just schedule a meeting and hope the room is open. The board also decided everyone in the office needs to take a turn to open the building. For this time being, conveyers need to contact the town clerk and the staff here will figure out getting the building open for them. It is not up to just one person to open the building. If another solution comes about, that will be helpful.

The next handbook meeting will be Tuesday September 29th at 6:30pm.

Hulbert motioned to adjourn at 9:22 p.m. seconded by Bennett.

Respectfully submitted,

Janet Partridge,