

**CITY OF NORWALK PERSONNEL COMMITTEE MINUTES**

DECEMBER 22, 2004

ATTENDANCE: Douglas Sutton, Chairman; Matthew Miklave; Leona Williams; Betsy Bain

STAFF: Sara LeTourneau, Director of Personnel & Labor Relations; John Schlosser, Personnel Administrator

OTHERS: Mayor Alex Knopp; Jeffrey Spahr, Corporation Counsel

CALL TO ORDER

Mr. Sutton called the meeting to order at 8:05 pm.

MINUTES FROM DECEMBER 9 2004

\*\* MS. BAIN MOVED APPROVAL OF THE MINUTES OF DECEMBER 9, 2004 AS PRESENTED.

\*\* MOTION PASSED TWO VOTES IN FAVOR, TWO ABSTENTIONS (MR. MIKLAVE, MS. WILLIAMS).

PROPOSAL FOR ORDINANCE LIST INCREASES

\*\* MR. MIKLAVE MOVED TO REMOVE THE ITEM FROM THE TABLE.

\*\* MOTION PASSED UNANIMOUSLY.

\*\* MR. MIKLAVE MOVED APPROVAL OF THE ORDINANCE LIST INCREASES AS PRESENTED.

Ms. Bain clarified three of the positions within Corporation Counsel, two full time and one part time position. She went on to say that she agreed with the Mayor's position of tying the salary increases to performance in that the goals are of the highest level of leadership and for the most part they supervise others in unions. The salaries of those people they supervise are the result of contract negotiations and it is appropriate that supervisors and managers earn more than those they supervise. Ms. Bain continued to say that the evaluation component of this is important not to be tied to the increase but in order to ensure that they are getting the performance that is desired for the position. This Committee spent a long time (two years ago) trying to develop an evaluation process that was beneficial both for the supervisors and the supervisees and to allow a process whereby the expectations were understood from the very beginning. She said she would be supporting this motion for the increase and referred to Mr. Spahr's provision about the status of salary of people within the law department as to whether they were comparable to people serving in that capacity in other municipalities. At this stage without an audit of

those positions and what is a fair salary range, Ms. Bain stated that she was not prepared to differentiate as to whether they should receive more or less than is being recommended. She added that this issue should be reviewed to ensure that they are at the appropriate level and whether any adjustments should be made.

Mr. Miklave stated that he always separated the performance evaluation itself and the process by which one goes through a performance evaluation. He said when they worked on the appraisal process the goal was to foster communications between the senior staff and the ultimate decision makers of the city to make sure that there was an open line of communication between the two. He said that the evaluations that have recently been performed reflect much more of a communication piece than had occurred in the past commenting that this is a step in the right direction. Mr. Miklave stated that it would never be his intention to withhold the modest increase of living cost that the City of Norwalk is able to give to its senior staff because either the wrong form was used or it wasn't submitted correctly. He said he could not see why civil servants should be asked to make any further sacrifices. To conclude, Mr. Miklave stated that he separated out the cost of living increases from the performance evaluation itself.

Mayor Knopp said since the issue of compensation for employees is now more complicated because it is no longer a case of percentage increase going to employees it now involves giving back to cost sharing of the health care plan. He referred to headlines in the newspaper and corrected the misconception saying the net cost to the city for the proposed changes is 1.08%. Employees on the ordinance list for the first time are required to contribute to their medical costs in addition they factored in costs savings from the coalition prescription drugs initiative and other changes as well. Even though the raise is 3.25% the cost to the city is 1.08%. Secondly, the Mayor commented on the performance evaluations saying he found them to be more interesting and beneficial than he had expected. He said he had been a new experience for him and he had to tie the performance goal setting process to bigger city policy issues. Also in the coming budget the Mayor suggested the process would change because for the first time they are setting performance measurement standards for every department so it's not going to be a process of evaluating certain department heads or individuals it would be in part assessing the departments against the performance measures set out in the budget document. He said what he would expect next year's evaluations to do is to assess the performance of department heads compared to the performance expectations expressed in the budget. The Mayor said he planned to meet with each department head and each person he supervised to get clarity about the performance measurements in the budget and generally they would expect to see a closer connection between the performance measurements in the budget and the performance evaluation.

The Mayor also suggested that in some ways with personnel compensation issues as mentioned by Jeff Spahr as with the city's infrastructure and as a result of tight budget constraints over many years it is meant a disconnection between objective evaluations concerning compensation and the city's ability to afford them. As they have a back log of deferred and neglected infrastructure and therefore there are many potholes in the roads, old buildings, old vehicles and old computers than the city would like to have the city

can't afford all at once to make up for years of neglect and lack of investment nor could they afford to make up for years and years of comparable pay rates of other municipalities. He said that it should not go unnoticed that there are some benefits for public employment that don't exist in the private sector and therefore a one to one comparison is not always accurate.

Mayor Knopp noted his bigger concern not so much with the compensation with individual attorneys in the law department but that the law department is understaffed and there are not enough attorneys do deal with the huge increase in contracts for constructions of schools and services that they are now seeking given the investment they are making in the city's capital infrastructure; the same is for the Purchasing Department.

Mayor Knopp thanked members for his allowing him to comment.

Ms. Bain remarked that she was glad to hear that the Mayor had found the evaluation process is an informative management tool as they had spent so much time on developing it. She appreciated that they Mayor was finding it useful, as that was the intent of the committee. Regarding her comments made earlier, Ms. Bain noted that she was not intending there to be a comparison between the public and private sector in terms of what is appropriate compensation. She said they all recognize that any municipality cannot compete with private sector compensation, however one always has to be cognizant of what would it cost to replace an employee if they did so choose to leave. She applauded the Mayor's remarks to find additional staffing for the Law Department and Purchasing Department as she was aware of the added workload.

Mayor Knopp suggested that since the Director of Parks and Receptions had declined a raise that that raise be deleted from the list. He added that he too would be declining the increase that had been voted upon this year.

**\*\* MS. BAIN MOVED TO AMEND THE MOTION TO CHANGE THE RECOMMENDED SALARY INCREASE FOR THE DIRECTOR OF PARKS, RECREATION AND BUILDING MANAGEMENT TO REMAIN AT THE CURRENT SALARY LEVEL.**

**\*\* MOTION PASSED UNANIMOUSLY.**

**\*\* MAIN MOTION AS AMENDED PASSED UNANIMOUSLY.**

**\*\* MS. BAIN MOVED TO TABLE AGENDA ITEMS: 4. OLD BUSINESS; 5. NEW BUSINESS; 6. ANY NEGOTIATION UPDATE; UNTIL THE NEXT MEETING.**

**\*\* MOTION PASSED UNANIMOUSLY.**

**\*\* MR. MIKLAVE MOVED TO ADJOURN.**

**\*\* MOTION PASSED UNANIMOUSLY.**

The meeting was adjourned at 8:45 pm.

Respectfully submitted,

Kate Kye  
Telesco Secretarial Services

