



MINUTES OF LEGISLATIVE AND ORDINANCE COMMITTEE MEETING
59 COURT ST, WESTFIELD, MA
ROOM 201
October 5, 2022 at 5:30 PM

The meeting was called to order by Councilor Figy at 5:30 PM.

Councilor Figy called the Roll. The following committee members were in attendance: Chair, Ralph Figy, Councilor Michael Burns and Councilor James Adams. Also in attendance were Mayor Michael McCabe, Director of Veteran Services Julie Barnes and Scribe of the Legislative and Ordinance Committee Karisa Zerbato.

Upon Motion of Councilor Burns, it was VOTED: that the L & O Minutes of the September 15, 2022 meeting be accepted. The motion was seconded by Councilor Adams. Approved by Roll Call 3-0.

The vote on the foregoing was as follows:

James Adams	Yes
Michael Burns	Yes
Ralph Figy	Yes

Councilor Figy opened the meeting for public participation. There was no one present to speak.

Upon Motion of Councilor Burns, it was VOTED: to ACCEPT a Resolution MGL59, Section 5N-reduction of property tax obligation for Veterans in exchange for volunteer service with a POSITIVE RECOMMENDATION. Motion seconded by Councilor Adams.

The vote on the foregoing was as follows:

James Adams	Yes
Michael Burns	Yes
Ralph Figy	Yes

Prior to the vote, Councilor Figy stated this is a resolution requiring only one reading.

Director of Veteran Services Julie Barnes informed the committee that Massachusetts General Law allows a Veteran property tax work off program in the amount of \$1500.00 in exchange for volunteer hours. The law reads "125 volunteer hours are given for a maximum amount of \$1500.00". Mrs. Barnes added this can't be combined with any other tax work off program and if the amount of volunteer hours are not met, the abatement amount would be based on the hours served. Currently this would allow for a \$1500.00 tax exemption for 105.26 volunteer hours worked based on minimum wage. Mrs. Barnes added that this type of program is occurring in Northampton, Amherst, Ludlow and Hadley. Northampton, Amherst and Ludlow allow for a \$1500.00 work off whereas Hadley being a smaller town allows for a \$500.00 work off. Mrs. Barnes further added she asked the Department of Veteran Services to do a statewide poll to see how many towns are participating in this and she has yet to receive a response. She added that the reason she is putting this forth is that Superintendent of Westfield Public Schools Stefan Czaprowski and Senator John Velis had a meeting in which they discussed starting a

school safety attendant program utilizing veterans. The unarmed veterans would be frontline in the schools, sitting inside the door and as visitors to the school are buzzed in they would provide an escort to the office. Another option would be that the veteran would have access to a walkie talkie and could alert the office staff that a visitor is entering the school. North Middle School does not need to utilize this program due to a window in the vestibule of the main office. This window allows office staff to see the visitor that is trying to enter the school before they are buzzed in. Mrs. Barnes stated that Mr. Czapowski is working on getting a grant to fund the school safety attendant program. Councilor Figy added that there is money to implement the school safety attendant program at Westfield High School due to Senator John Velis securing a million dollars to benefit the high school. He also added that he thinks this is a great idea however he is concerned that the senior citizens who volunteer are only allowed up to an \$800.00 write off. He further stated that he liked how this resolution was written up to the \$1500.00 amount but to start he would like it to be the same as the senior citizen work off of \$800.00. Councilor Burns suggested that if questions arise about the differences in write off amounts it can be made clear that the amount is based on the statewide veteran's program. Councilor Burns also asked if there was a cutoff. Mrs. Barnes responded that there is no cutoff stated in the law. Councilor Burns added that this is a good payback program to the veteran's as they have a different skill set than most people. Councilor Burns asked what the vetting process would be. Mrs. Barnes stated the veteran's would be vetted through her and through the Westfield Public School's VIPS program. Councilor Adams asked where the money to fund the work off amount would be coming from. Mrs. Barnes responded that this is a tax abatement with no money exchange. Councilor Adams responded that if no money is being exchanged it essentially would be a deduction only.

Upon motion of Councilor Adams, it was
VOTED: to APPROVE an ordinance to amend Chapter 12, Section 12-5, Administrative Heads of Municipal Departments vacancy and qualification to state any job description that is 5 years or younger does not need to be reviewed by the City Council. The motion was seconded by Councilor Burns.

The vote on the foregoing was as follows:

James Adams	Yes
Michael Burns	Yes
Ralph Figy	Yes

Prior to the vote, Councilor Adams offered a motion that was duly seconded to approve an ordinance to amend Chapter 12, Section 12-5, Administrative Heads of Municipal Departments vacancy and qualification to state any job description. Councilor Figy stated this is an ordinance and will be first reading by title only with a motion to move to second reading and final passage if it passes. Mayor Michael McCabe stated that if the City has reviewed a job description in the last five years there is no reason to re-review the job description to fill the position. This slows down the hiring process. The vacant job opening needs to be posted for 30 days and then moves forward to the interview process. Mayor McCabe added depending on the date of the next City Council meeting it could take weeks for the job to be confirmed. He further stated there are some positions including the assistant treasurer, treasurer and personnel director where the job description needs to be reviewed prior to the hiring of the new person. This leads to a further slowdown of the hiring process. Mayor McCabe added that it is hard to ask a person to accept a job with the City when they don't know what their actual hire date will be because it is unclear when the item will come in or out of committee. In addition Mayor McCabe further stated the current process does not allow a person leaving a job to have a definite start date

with the City. Councilor Figy added that he thought the City would want to have the actual job description before the job is posted. He added the applicant shouldn't be being interviewed until the job description is clear. Mayor McCabe added that when a City employee gives their notice, he can see when the job description was last reviewed by Council and if it was within five years he can go ahead and post the job immediately. Councilor Adams asked if there is a process in place to change a job description if needed if the job isn't being re-viewed. Mayor McCabe responded that the change could be brought to personnel and then it would go to committee to get approval.

Upon motion of Councilor Adams it was VOTED: To AMEND the motion to include 'to state any job description that is 5 years or younger does not need to be reviewed by the City Council.

The vote on the foregoing was as follows:

James Adams	Yes
Michael Burns	Yes
Ralph Figy	Yes

At 5:51 PM upon motion of Councilor Burns, it was VOTED TO ADJOURN.

The vote on the foregoing was as follows:

James Adams	Yes
Michael Burns	Yes
Ralph Figy	Yes

Respectfully submitted,
Karisa Zerbato, Scribe for the Legislative and Ordinance Subcommittee


