

**Personnel Committee Minutes
March 19, 2024**

Meeting called to order at 6:02 pm

Member Name / Role	In Attendance
Phyllis Craine, Chair	Yes
John Craine, Clerk	Yes
Alan Singer, Member	Yes

Also Present

Veronique Blanchard, Town Administrator
Jan Warner, Collector/Treasurer
Philip Kantor, Select Board Chair

Motion to approve minutes from February 26, 2024 – Aye 3, Nay 0

Review Highway Superintendent job description and discuss proposed updates

- Statement of Duties to include targets for administrative time vs field time? This was determined to be too restrictive as it is highly dependent upon circumstances; it does not change the duties of outlined in the job description.
- Supervision to add reference to the Select Board? It was determined that the current job description is satisfactory as the Town Administrator is the direct supervisor and reports directly to the Select Board.

Task: update town org chart – perhaps a dotted line to the Select Board?

Clarification for prior minutes - Highway Department target staffing should be updated from 4 Operator/CDL to include 1 Foreman/CDL and 3 Operator/CDL.

- Supervisory Responsibility references specific numbers of employees. It was determined that this reference should be made less specific as employee numbers can vary based on hiring practices, department needs, budgets, etc.
- Supervisory Responsibility - added the phrase “works to maintain department staffing at optimal levels”.
- Essential Functions - Include “periodic reporting to the Select Board”;

Operator/CDL and Laborer Pay Rates

The Committee agrees that understaffing of CDL operators at the Highway Department is a leading driver of overtime for current staff. Department staffing targets call for a total of 5 equipment operators (1 Superintendent, 1 Foreman/CDL, 3 Operator/CDL). Currently there is only one Operator/CDL in addition to the Superintendent.

The Highway Superintendent has requested an increase in the Operator/CDL rate to \$27.00/hour. The current top pay rate in Conway for an Operator/CDL is \$23.80/hour. Analysis of peer towns including Shelburne, Whately, Ashfield and others with levy limits similar to Conway provides a range of \$25.76 - \$27.58 with an average of \$26.83. These rates are also expected to increase for FY25. While such an increase does not guarantee an increase in qualified applicants for open CDL positions, it removes a significant deterrent and brings Conway in line with market rates for the region.

Can the town pay for current employees to complete the CDL and Hoisters License in exchange for a guaranteed period of service? Town currently reimburses EMTs for training and requires a 1 year commitment. Town Treasurer suggested that there is not enough evidence to consider the EMT program “successful” and worthy of emulating for Highway Department staff. Town Administrator believes that such conditions are largely unenforceable beyond 1 year of service which seems inadequate.

Task: Town Administrator to contact Town Counsel to determine the legalities of this practice.

Task: need an exit interview process; Town Administrator has some examples

Task: need to formalize performance evaluation process.

Motion to recommend to the Selectboard to increase the maximum hourly wage for Operator/CDL to at least \$27/hour – Aye 3, Nay 0

Highway Superintendent Compensation

Item 1

Highway Superintendent current compensation is \$73,105 with no paid overtime. The Superintendent has requested a change in annual compensation from \$73,105 to \$79,000 with the addition of overtime paid at 1.5x for hours over 40/week.

Select Board Chair states that Town Counsel strongly opposes paying overtime to salaried employees. Others on the Committee believe that overtime creates a perverse incentive that doesn't align with the goals of the town.

The Committee needs further time to clarify performance evaluation criteria and processes before making recommendations related to Highway Superintendent compensation structures.

Item 2

The Committee further considered the issue of compensating the Highway Superintendent for excessive hours worked in the aftermath of the two July 2023 floods. Through the end of January 2024, the Superintendent has logged 393 hours of unpaid time above their standard 40 hour/week. The Town Administrator has confirmed that Superintendent overtime hours factored into the damage repair estimates provided by the town to the state when seeking disaster relief. The Town has received \$1.245 million in disaster relief funds from the state to partially offset the costs associated with these events.

The Select Board Chair argued that the excessive hours are a normal part of the job and should not be compensated. The job description states, *“The employee is required to work beyond normal business hours to attend evening meetings and in response to man-made or natural emergency situations on a 24/7 basis, 365 days per year.”* No mention is made of how many hours constitute a “normal” work week.

The standard work week for other full-time town employees (including Highway Department) is 40 hours. The Treasurer asked if it is reasonable to expect salaried municipal employees to regularly work 50-100% extra hours beyond the 40/week. The Committee members contend that the issue is rooted in the Highway Department understaffing of critical CDL operators which is largely a consequence of the non-competitive wage rate. Had the department been fully staffed, the hourly employees would have received overtime pay and reduced the need for the Superintendent to log excessive hours. Additionally, the Superintendent was instructed by their supervisor to track their hours as part of the storm related repair costs.

Motion to recommend to the Select Board to award a stipend in the amount of \$20,000, to be paid from disaster relief funds, to the Highway Superintendent pursuant to excessive hours worked in the aftermath of the July 2023 storms – Aye 3, Nay 0.

Future Item: Depending on actions of Select Board the Personnel Committee may consider a warrant article at Town Meeting.

Schedule Next Meeting

Wednesday March 27th @ 6:00pm

Adjourned 7:58 pm