

**SELECT BOARD
Executive Session
Monday, March 13, 2023**

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TOWN OF WILMINGTON, MA

9:30 p.m.

After completing the open meeting portion of the Select Board meeting the Board entered executive session for the purpose of discussing bargaining with the fire union not to return to open session.

Chairman O'Connell – yes
Selectman Bendel – yes
Selectmen Caira – yes
Selectman DePalma – yes
Selectman Maselli - yes

IN ATTENDANCE: Gregory Bendel, Kevin Caira, Gary DePalma, Lil Maselli (via conference line) Jeffrey Hull, Town Manager, Susan Inman, Assistant Town Manager/Human Resources Director and Bill Cavanaugh, Fire Chief.

The Town Manager explained that Susan, Bill and he had met with the fire union three times to discuss bringing advanced life support (ALS) service in house. A proposal that specifies the terms of the plan is being drafted in would be provided to the union prior to their next meeting. He recognizes that it is not likely the two sides will reach an endpoint within the next couple weeks and the Finance Committee understandable has been unwilling to make a recommendation on the fire budget because they have not been able to have a complete discussion about the details. He went on to note that when meeting with Chair O'Connell last week the issue was raised about removing the ALS portions of the budget in order to provide the Finance Committee with a budget to review. Town Manager Hull stated he still believes there is a need to address ALS but recognizes the problem and does not want to go to annual town meeting without a recommendation on the fire budget.

Susan Inman noted that she met with representatives from the fire union to review the comparable communities with respect to salaries in an effort to reach consensus on the wages paid in these comparable communities. She believes there is some agreement on wages in comparable communities.

The Town Manager noted the idea is to provide eight (8) fire fighters with the ability to train to become paramedics (medics) with 2 medics on each shift. In recognition of developing a higher skill set and assuming a greater level of responsibility the expectation is that the individuals will need to be offered a stipend or additional pay. He would prefer to include the amount as a stipend and not include the amount in base pay. There also may be the need to offer a bonus that would be paid when they successfully complete their training and become medics.

Board member Caira expressed concern about a bonus and stated their incentive should be obtaining an education. He noted that the Finance Committee will ask about the impact on overtime and expressed concern about hiring an ALS Coordinator 6 months to a year in advance of the program's start date. Chief Cavanaugh noted that the Town needs to move quickly to get a program up and running. He suggested that the ALS Coordinator be either a consultant or part-time employee non-benefit eligible. Board member Caira asked if the part-time person would work less than 19 hours per week and the Chief responded "yes."

Chair O'Connell stated that it makes sense to have a special town meeting when a plan is ready to bring forward. She feels that it could be a "win-win" with the Town obtaining the service and fire fighters having an opportunity for advancement. Chair O'Connell asked if there is interest amongst fire fighters and was advised by Chief Cavanaugh that there is some interest with others "on the fence" waiting to see the offer. Chair O'Connell asked whether if the Town switches gears and hires paramedics from the outside whether there is enough of a pool to fill the positions. Chief Cavanaugh believes there would be adequate candidates. The Chief also noted there would be an opportunity for some mentoring.

Board member Caira stated that paramedics are distinguished from fire fighters as they are deemed group 1 for retirement purposes. Chief Cavanaugh questioned this but Board member Caira stated that there is a provision of law that the Town would need to adopt to change medics from group 1 to group 4.

The Town Manager noted that this executive session was intended to update that Board and that no action is required at this time.

A motion was made by Board member DePalma and seconded by Board member Bendel to move to adjourn the executive session and adjourn for the evening. By roll call vote it was:

Chairman O'Connell - yes
Selectman Bendel - yes
Selectman Caira - yes
Selectman DePalma - yes
Selectman Maselli - yes

The meeting was adjourned to open session at 10:55 p.m.

Deborah M. Hall
Recording Secretary

9/11/23

As to form & release