

The Board of Finance and Town Council held a special joint meeting on **August 11, 2015 at 7:00 p.m.** in the **Bellingham Auditorium at Town Hall, 979 Main Street, Willimantic, CT 06226**

Board of Finance Members Attending: Lynne Ide, Paula Haney, Thomas White, Tyler Griffin, Nectlis Martinez, and Ken Folan

Town Council Members Attending: Thomas DeVivo, James Flores, Lorraine McDevitt, Charles Krich, Mark Doyle, Joe Underwood, Tony Fantoli, Mike Lessard, Charlotte Patros, Christel Donahue

Call to Order

Chairman Lynne Ide called the meeting to order at 7:00 p.m.

Upon a motion by Charles Krich, seconded by Mark Doyle to nominate Thomas DeVivo as chair for the Town Council.

The motion passed with James Flores abstaining.

1. Overview of Meeting Purpose

Lynne Ide commented that this meeting is about operations in the Town Finance Department

Upon a motion by James Flores, seconded by Lorraine McDevitt to adjourn the meeting because the Town Council only has policy and personnel issues.

The motion did not pass.

2. Board of Finance comment

There was no comment

3. Town Council Comment

There was no comment

4. Presentation and Discussion of Town Finance Department Operations

Neal Beets thanked the Finance staff for all their hard work and long hours on July 1st and July 15th

Christian Johnson commented he is proud of his staff and combining finance operations is a work in progress. Implementing the payroll system and financial software system has taken many hours of hard work by all Finance Department employees.

Lorraine McDevitt asked if anyone contacted another municipality.

Christian Johnson commented Towns have come to him with implementation difficulties.

Charles Krich commented we have had this system for a year and there are still issues. He considered this unacceptable and that it needs to be looked into. Something needs to be done to correct this problem.

Thomas White questioned after the July 2nd payroll, was there training for the employees. He was told no. Christian Johnson commented training was provided and continues to be provided. Parallel testing had been done multiple times before going live. The Water Department, Public Works, and one person at Town Hall for all departments were given training to start the payroll. The other departments will be given training until everyone is comfortable using the system.

Mark Doyle commented Munis is the best way to go. We voted based on the word of Munis. The Finance Department was to be combined into 1 department. We still have two departments and 2 department heads.

Christian Johnson commented he does accounting work for both the Town and Board of Education. If he needs help when the Board of Education goes live with payroll he can ask the Town. There is now one data base that both the Town and Board of Education use. Town work is Town work and Board of Education work is Board of Education work. We are able to help each other. We have had to spend time training new employees.

Lynne Ide asked Christian Johnson about the decision to go with a Unified Finance Director and getting a report about the needs of the Finance Department. She doesn't like the idea of additional staff without a plan.

Christian Johnson commented he agrees and would like to come before the board with his ideas.

James Flores made a motion to adjourn the meeting. There was no second.

James Flores asked if it is better to have an executive session for this meeting.

Neal Beets commented there have been executive sessions for performance of employees and there are steps that need to be followed.

Lynne Ide commented there was a request to have a joint meeting.

Thomas DeVivo questioned how is the Unified Finance Director split of 60% Board of Education and 40% Town good for the Town.

Neal Beets commented it is an approximation and it was agreed upon.

Mark Doyle questioned how often does the Town Manager, Superintendent, and Finance Director sit down and discuss combining Finance Departments. Employees need to be put together as one.

Thomas White commented that the Board of Finance has a right to know about financial issues. He also commented about vendors not doing business with the Town because of not being paid within a timely manner. Do you know about State checks that have not been cashed.

Christian Johnson commented our new cash management takes more time. If we have tightened up too much, we should look at adjustments. The software program has a process for approvals. We were purchasing and then processing. We have to spend public money carefully. Checks were deposited late and that has been changed to a direct deposit. The State will wire funds directly into our account now.

James Flores would like to have an executive session at a later time with Christian Johnson.

5 Department head and Town Employee comment

There was no comment

6. Public Comment

Kevin Hoxie commented why would you implement a difficult system when you don't have the experience. Most people live pay check to pay check.

Peter Bruscato from the Fire Department commented on the Finance Department. The new software system was delayed for them for a month when it started in July 2014. When payroll started, there were firefighters that were over paid and now they have to keep a calendar. Everything was not ok after the first payroll and paper checks were issued for the next payroll.

Danielle McMullen, union representative for MEUI, commented she will not make any statement publicly.

Barbara McKinney, representative for AFSCME, commented she will not make any statement publicly.

Henry Crane encouraged the Boards to find the problems.

James Flores commented he is not afraid to speak in public. A labor attorney should be hired to do an internal investigation.

7. Discussion and possible action on next steps

Thomas White commented an investigation needs to be done and recommends this to the Town Council. A joint committee can report back to both Boards. We had to hold this meeting first to get to the next step.

Lorraine McDevitt asked to have Christian Johnson come before the Town Council and give a report on the Finance Department.

James Flores questioned what happened with the payroll. We need professionals not politicians to look into this. We the board need to call a meeting immediately.

Thomas DeVivo commented we should call a meeting for all boards to get together.

Charles Krich questioned how many steps do we take.

Adjournment

The meeting was adjourned at 8:35 p.m.

Attest: _____
Thomas Pesce