



TOWN OF KINGSTON
WAGE AND PERSONNEL BOARD
OPEN SESSION
TOWN HOUSE-26 EVERGREEN ST. ROOM 203 & VIA ZOOM
DECEMBER 23, 2024

3:00 PM – CALL TO ORDER

Chairman James Soule called the meeting of the Wage and Personnel Board to order at 3:00 p.m. at a joint meeting with the Board of Selectmen on Monday, December 23, 2024. Present was member Lorraine Burgio.

ANNOUNCEMENTS:

This meeting is being recorded by Zoom. Anyone intending to make an audio or video recording of this meeting should notify the Chair at this time.

Items may be taken out of order at the discretion of the Chair.

The Wage and Personnel Board needs a third member to be appointed by the Finance Committee. If you are interested in joining the Board, please contact the Finance Committee or the Board of Selectmen's office.

APPOINTMENTS:

TINA BETTI, HUMAN RESOURCES MANAGER, AND KEITH HICKEY, TOWN ADMINISTRATOR, TO ASK THE BOARD TO RECONSIDER ITS VOTE ON THE SALARY OF A NEW VETERANS' AGENT HIRE ABOVE STEP 3 OF GRADE 5 AT A JOINT MEETING WITH THE BOARD OF SELECTMEN

The purpose of the meeting was to ask the Board to reconsider its vote on the salary of a new Veterans' Agent hire above Step 3 of Grade 5 at a joint meeting with the Board of Selectmen. The Board of Selectmen and Keith Hickey, Town Administrator, were present. Tina Betti, Human Resources Manager, was absent. A copy of a memo dated December 17, 2024 from Mr. Hickey to the Board of Selectmen regarding the candidate, Sara Lansing, had been received along with current salary information for Veterans' Agents in communities that were used in the Compensation Study. Ms. Lansing had also written a letter to Mr. Hickey in support of her application dated December 23, 2024.

Mr. Hickey spoke about the position and the candidate. After speaking with Ms. Lansing, she had agreed to reduce her salary request from Step 9 to Step 7 of Grade 5 at an annual salary of \$67,309. He said that the salary was very comparable to what other communities were paying a full-time Veterans' Agent. Ms. Lansing had worked as a Veterans' Agent and also had the required VA training necessary for a Veterans' Agent to submit VA claims on behalf of the Town, which was a new requirement. He felt that she was a great candidate and the only training that she would need would be on Kingston-specific procedures. Money could be found in the department budget to support the higher salary.

Questions were asked and answered. Ms. Lansing's salary would not move to Step 8 until July 1, 2026. The number of veterans in Kingston was approximately 850. Lorraine Burgio asked about the candidate's education as she had not received her employment application. Ms. Burgio felt that the applicant was qualified but mentioned the problem with starting new employees at high steps. James Soule explained why he had voted against hiring the candidate above Step 3 at the Board's last meeting as she had only the minimum requirement of four years of experience, and fairness needed to be maintained in the compensation plan. He asked Mr. Hickey if the candidate could be hired at Step 5 and paid a stipend for being a SHINE officer as she was SHINE certified. There was some discussion about the average salaries of Veterans' Agents in the area and the difficulties in hiring a Veterans' Agent. Mr. Soule said that the hire was ultimately the Board of Selectmen's decision as it was the hiring authority. Eric Crone, Chairman of the Board of Selectmen, said that the Selectmen would like a final decision from Wage and Personnel before making its own

APPROVED JANUARY 27, 2025

decision. A brief recess was called at 3:32 p.m. so that Mr. Hickey could check with the Council on Aging Director about a SHINE stipend.

The joint meeting resumed at 3:37 p.m. Mr. Hickey had spoken with Holly Nighelli, Acting Council on Aging Director, who said that the state provided a SHINE agent at the Council on Aging at no cost to the Town, so no funds would be available for a stipend. Mr. Hickey assured both boards that he and Ms. Betti took into consideration the concerns of longer-term employees when new hires were made at higher steps. He felt that the candidate was worth Step 7. Mr. Hickey suggested that Ms. Lansing could spend time at the Council on Aging to help veterans there and to supplement the state SHINE agent, and he would be willing to investigate any potential SHINE reimbursement from the state.

Motioned by James Soule and seconded by Lorraine Burgio, the Board unanimously voted to hire the Veterans' Agent above Step 3 of Grade 5 to a rate of Step 7 of Grade 5 as proposed by Keith Hickey, Town Administrator, at an annual salary of \$67,309.

ADJOURN:

Motioned by Lorraine Burgio and seconded by James Soule, the Board unanimously voted to adjourn the meeting at 3:54 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Jennifer B. Scavone
Executive Secretary

Meeting Documents: (1) email from Tina Betti dated December 11, 2024 regarding a new hire for the position of Veterans' Agent with the candidate's confidential resume, (2) Veterans' Agent job posting information from the Town website, (3) memo dated December 17, 2024 from Keith Hickey to the Board of Selectmen regarding the candidate along with salary information for Veterans' Agents, and (4) letter dated December 23, 2024 from Sara Lansing to Keith Hickey in support of her application