

RTM

AUGUST 7, 2023

Karen Wackerman, District 7 said the original petition was positive but the Town Attorney said it had to be the rejection language; they don't want to reject but want the forum to discuss it.

Ed Bateson, District 1 said his initial take was correct having listened to the attorney, there is no discussion on a contract, it is an award. I read the memo that highlighted the items contained in the award.

Karen McCormack, District 2 asked if this has been done in good faith having put words on paper and you don't know if you want to reject it.

Town Attorney Jim Baldwin said this is different from a CBA as it is an award. It is difficult to achieve the 2/3 vote.

Ms. McCormack noted that representatives have admitted they do not have a reason to reject but have put forth a motion to reject.

Hannah Gale, District 6 said an adjudication has been made and we are evaluating whether or not the arbitration award meets a standard for us; if it is rejected it would go to another arbitration panel.

Town Attorney Baldwin said the change to the language was because the original petition gave the impression it was like any other CBA. It is not an agreement. It is an award made by a third party panel of arbiters.

Marcy Spolyar, District 4 asked what the overall effect the award has on the budget. Budget Director Frank Magneri said for FY24 the BOF included funding based on the Town's last best offer. Additional budget information per FY was included in the backup.

Mr. Gerber asked how much legal fees were. CFO Jared Schmitt said total costs were \$251,000. Mr. Bateson said the memo and cost information were sent out. If this is rejected there will be more legal fees.

Ms. Zezima asked for the differences between the last contract and this one. Attorney Jiran said it is a different duration. In FY2017 there was a 0% salary increase and 2% increases in FY18, FY19 & FY20. The arbitration award wage increase is FY21 2%, and 2.75% increases in FY22, FY23 & FY24.

Lisa Havey, District 6 asked if it fair to say that voting no is a vote in favor of this as a contract. Atty. Jiran said it will become the contract. By statute, if nothing is done it becomes the contract. If you reject it then it goes to another panel of arbiters.

Sharon Pistilli, District 3 asked if this will leave us with adequate staffing. Chief Denis McCarthy said the award references possibly opening a new station as well as staffing in stations.

Dru Georgiadis, District 9 asked if we meet the NFPA standard. Chief McCarthy said it increases staffing by four new firefighters and the fire station study. Ms. Georgiadis asked what the timeframe of the study is. Chief McCarthy said they are going through the RFP and expect to be completed in 6 months. The panel awarded the town's last best offer of 4 firefighters at Greenfield Hill with the provision that if a 6th station is opened they would be moved there.

Mr. Gerber asked if the arbiters said what towns were comparable. Atty. Jiran said likeness to Fairfield regardless of the region. Salaries are in line with the rest of the state. They did not say specific municipalities.

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Steve Berez, District 6 said he read the backup for the item and explained his experience as a lifeguard dealing with emergency services in town and how much of what they do is not observed by the majority of the town. Voting to approve the resolution is an absolute no.

Public Comment:

Justin Crawford, Bill Tuttle, Mark Smuda, Tom Pond, and Caitlin Clarkson-Pereira spoke in support of rejecting the award citing understaffing concerns.

First Selectwoman Brenda Kupchick said as she explained in an update to the BOS in March, she met with the Chief and Union and wanted a mediator but was not acceptable. An inspector and additional person at the fire training center were added through the budget process as has been the case with additional police officers through the budget. She urged the Body to not reject this award.

VOTE: The Award issued as a result of arbitration between the Town of Fairfield & Local 1426, concerning conditions of employment for the period commencing July 1, 2021, and ending June 30, 2025 was not rejected by a 0-32 vote. (Due to technical difficulties the “no” votes of Reps. Siebert and Sparacino were not recorded and did not affect the outcome of the vote.)

IN FAVOR: None

OPPOSED: Bateson, Longo, Ruggiero, Gerber, McCormack, Perham, Durrell, Galdenzi, Pistilli, Karson, Spolyar, Zezima, Siebert, Wolk, Berez, Gale, Graceffa, Havey, Kuhn, McDermott, Vergara, Wackerman, Choniski, Ference, Meyers, Mirabile, Brown, Georgiadis, Horton, Scinto, Astarita, Britton, Sparacino, Tallman

ADJOURNMENT:

The Meeting adjourned at 8:30 PM

Respectfully submitted,

Elizabeth P. Browne, MMC, MCTC
Town Clerk