

Town Administrator's Report on Agenda Items For Selectboard Meeting on 12/7/15

Planning and Zoning Staffing

This agenda item is needed in order to be able to advertise for the Administrative Assistant position, which will be vacant as of January 1, 2016, and also to be able to budget for FY17.

Jeannine and I have discussed reconfiguring the positions in the office for the purpose of addressing: 1) total number of hours for the office; and 2) focus of job activities for each position.

Total hours/week

From approximately 2007 to 2013 the Planning and Zoning Office consisted of a Zoning Administrator @ 30 hours/week, a Town Planner @ 20 hours/week and an Administrative Assistant at 35 hours/week—for a total of 85 hours/week.

When the office was reconfigured in 2013, the Zoning Administrator and Town Planner positions were combined, making what had been two positions totaling 50 hours/week into one position @ 40 hours/week. The Administrative Assistant was kept at 35 hours/week, for an office total of 75 hours/week.

It has been evident that the reduced total number of hours for the office is not sustainable. The proposed configuration brings the office back to the previous total of 85 hours/week.

Job Focus

The current job configuration divides four “focus areas” between two positions.

The Administrative Assistant currently combines administrative assistance to the Planning & Zoning Office (and the Town Administrator) with staffing the Zoning Board of Adjustment (ZBA). This combination can be a mis-match in that the expectations and skill set of someone capable of staffing the ZBA is not likely to be the same as someone who is interested in and well-suited for straight administrative work.

The Town Planner/Zoning Administrator combines data gathering and analysis, conceptual and long-term visioning, (for planning) with deadline-driven, often urgent and procedure-oriented processes (for zoning), along with analysis and problem-solving (for subdivision review).

The proposed configuration separates the four focus areas back into three positions (as it had been previously).

Proposed Jobs/Responsibilities/Hours

The proposed configuration is:

- Zoning Administrator: zoning permits, wastewater permits, 911, staffing of ZBA & Design Review—30 hours/week

- Town Planner: planning, staffing of Planning Commission, Act 250 & Section 248 review & comments—35 hours/week
- Administrative Assistant: first contact for applicants, realtors/paralegals, adjoiners; support to office and town committees—20 hours/week (P&Z) + 5 hours/week (Town Administrator/SB) = 25 hours/week

With the reduced number hours for the Administrative Assistant, the Zoning Administrator (in particular) and Town Planner would be responsible for “staffing the counter” some of the time.

Budget Impact

An assumption is the Town Planner and Zoning Administrator would likely be at the same pay-grades, i.e. the same as the current Town Planner/Zoning Administrator (based on the Palmer Job Evaluation Manual). Jeannine is interested in being the Town Planner; the Zoning Administrator position would be posted. The goal would be to hire someone with experience, so the new hire would be placed at Step 4 or Step 5, i.e. \$21.81 or \$22.35/hour.

The Administrative Assistant position would be re-evaluated based on the Palmer Job Evaluation Manual—it could potentially be a lower pay-grade, but for initial budget analysis the current pay-grade can be used. So, if we were to hire someone with two years of experience, they would start at Step 1 (since one year of experience is required with a Bachelor's Degree), or \$14.39/hour.

So, the office's staffing budget would be (approximately):

Town Planner	@ \$23.77/hr. x 35 hours x 52 weeks = \$43,261
Zoning Administrator	@ \$22.35/hr. x 30 hours x 52 weeks = \$34,866
Administrative Asst.	@ \$14.39/hr. x <u>20 hours</u> x 52 weeks = <u>\$14,965</u>
	85 hours \$93,092

This would represent an increase of \$14,333 from the current staffing budget of \$78,759, but it represents a decrease of \$5,910 from the FY14 approved budget of \$99,002.

It should be recognized that the Administrative Assistant performs some tasks in support of the Town Administrator and Selectboard (and other town committees/boards), including: coordinating the annual Town Report, assisting with planning the Volunteers' Holiday Party, posting committee agendas and minutes to the Town Hall computer server and web-site, assisting with web-site operations, maintaining a list of committee/board members, being the initial contact on occasion, and ordering supplies. So 5 additional hours should be budgeted and paid from the Selectboard budget.

Although the proposed configuration represents a decrease from the FY14 budget it would be an increase of approximately \$9,000 from the FY16 budget to implement the proposal for the remainder of the fiscal year (approximately 26 weeks). This may be reduced by temporarily reducing some hours until the start of the new fiscal year.

2013 Reconfiguration

It's recognized that the office was reconfigured in December, 2013. One of the results of that reconfiguration was to create the position of full-time Town Administrator, which was seen as necessary to help handle the Selectboard's workload. The other result was to combine the positions of Town Planner and Zoning Administrator, partially for the purpose of trying to not increase the overall staffing level. After two years with this configuration, it's apparent that combining the Town Planner and Zoning Administrator into one position does not allow sufficient time for the planning function, since the zoning functions take precedence due their time sensitive nature.

Options

One way to reduce the cost would be to reduce the number of hours that the counter is open. The proposed configuration allocates some responsibility for the Zoning Administrator and Town Planner to cover the counter. They would likely be able to work more efficiently on core tasks, and therefore be able to reduce their hours, if the counter were to be closed one day/week.

In the longer term (i.e. next few years), more land use records will be available electronically, which may allow some "customers" to access records without staff assistance. This has been an ongoing goal, but there hasn't been enough time and/or resources to make sufficient progress to make this a reality in the near term.

Next steps

If approved by the Selectboard, the next steps would be:

1. create new job descriptions for the three positions (current job descriptions are included in the packet, as well as description by Britney of her duties)
2. perform the Palmer Job Evaluation analysis to determine the pay-grades for the positions
3. advertise for the positions of Administrative Assistant and Zoning Administrator

Installation of Cable (Comcast) to Charlotte Library

The library is interested in having cable installed. A state law requires cable companies to cover the cost of the installation. So there is no cost to the Town but it involves some minor excavation. Comcast and Stone Underground have provided certificates of insurance with the Town named as an additional insured.