



OFFICE OF THE
SELECT BOARD
TOWN OF MAYNARD
MUNICIPAL BUILDING
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By James Alexander at 10:00 am, May 23, 2023

Meeting Minutes Tuesday, April 25, 2023

Hybrid meeting (in-person at 195 Main Street, Maynard, and remotely via Zoom)
(*This public meeting was recorded.*)

Present:

Jeffrey Swanberg, Chair
Justine St. John, Clerk
David Gavin, member

Stephanie Duggan, Human Resources Manager
Gregory W. Johnson, Town Administrator
Gregory Wilson, Executive Assistant

1. Meeting Opening

Mr. Swanberg called the meeting to order at 7:00 pm.

A motion was made by Mr. Gavin and seconded by Ms. St. John to enter into Executive Session to discuss strategy with respect to collective bargaining if an open meeting may have a detrimental effect on the bargaining position of the public body and the chair so declares: AFSCME; LIUNA; NEPBA; IAFF; MEA; MESA

Voted by roll call: **Motion carried unanimously, 3-0.**

2. Executive Session

A. Conducted Executive Session

3. Reconvene in Open Session

Mr. Swanberg called the open session to order at 7:35pm.

Mr. Swanberg explained that the Select Board would not make any decisions at this meeting. The Insurance Advisory Committee (IAC) has received the updated proposal, and the Select Board would still need to hear a response from the IAC before making any changes, and if there is not a response, then no changes will be made to the current insurance plans. Mr. Swanberg also explained that Ken Lombardi, the Town's Benefits Consultant from NFP, will present the updated proposal, followed by a public comment period, limited to three minutes each.

4. Employee Benefits

A. Health Insurance

Ken Lombardi, contracted benefits consultant to the town from NFP presented the newest health insurance coverage proposal. The presentation included the timeline of the Town's awareness of benefits rates increases, which is generally a tight turnaround; highlighted the renewal meetings with the IAC; and covered the proposed areas of change in coverage, including the Blue Cross Blue Shield HMO and PPO plans, addition of a deductible, changes to high-cost hospital coverage rates, a flexible

spending account offer, as well as premium rate reduction options. Mr. Lombardi also explained that if this plan change is rejected, benefits costs will increase, and if the plan is approved, costs will remain generally level for the next fiscal year. Additionally, Mr. Lombardi noted concern about future cost increases due to increased plan utilization and clarified that a final decision must be made by May 1, 2023 to meet the insurance provider's deadline.

Public Comments:

Michael Parr, Fire Department, spoke about the short turnaround and notice about the evening's meeting, and was unsure what to expect. Mr. Parr explained that at the last IAC meeting he attended, he received a plan suggestion that was not made in collaboration with the IAC. Additionally, an IAC meeting was held yesterday after receiving the new proposal. Furthermore, he explained that through surveys conducted through IAC, members expressed that they do not want any plan changes, so he is unsure where this new proposal is coming from. The renewal rate is less than the average reported by the insurance provider across all its subscribing municipalities, and the proposed changes do not seem to reflect long-term strategy, but rather short-term thinking.

Mark Tomyl, Fire Department, attempted to yield his time to Michael Parr when his time ended. The request was denied in order to give ample speaking opportunity to other unions. Mr. Parr was offered an additional 15 seconds to finish his thought, and Mr. Parr declined.

Jim Alexander, Town Clerk's Office, acknowledged the hard work of the Town Administration and Select Board. He explained that when making decisions about cutting benefits, it requires a thorough process to find alternative solutions, which doesn't appear to have happened. Mr. Alexander urged the Select Board to keep the current plan and have a real negotiation process next year. He reiterated the serious nature of the matter, which cannot constitute a perceived last-minute decision. Mr. Alexander also highlighted that many people are impacted, especially those dealing with health issues, and the unions want to ensure a thorough process has been conducted. Additionally, he highlighted that the unions are democratic organizations, and three to four weeks is not enough time to go through the process. Mr. Alexander closed by informing the Select Board that the unions want to work together on this and the process hadn't respected that dynamic.

Julia Flanary, Office of Municipal Services, expressed concern about the proposed health insurance changes. She informed the Select Board that there is no long-term plan to supplement the costs associated with the proposed changes, highlighting that the FSA employer match is only promised for one year, while the annual deductible will continue indefinitely. Ms. Flanary further explained that this will not help with employee retention and recruiting, and that this business decision will impact livelihood.

Joseph Worthington, Department of Public Works, spoke about his experience with a deductible plan, where the deductible kept increasing, and the employer offset decreased. He urged to keep the plan as-is and also highlighted an issue with the timing of the employer match on the flexible spending account.

Zoe Piel, Office of Municipal Services, remarked that benefit scenarios under this proposed plan that speak to the savings are only best-case scenarios, where a subscriber cannot become sick or deal with hospitalization; you only experience savings if you do not need the healthcare, which does not

represent a good deal for union members. Ms. Piel reiterated that this is concerning to her and other union members. Additionally, Ms. Piel explained that shifting to a deductible plan means is a long-term risk, which she does not feel comfortable accepting.

Mike Waldron, Maynard Public Schools, explained to the Select Board that the current process does not adhere to bargaining in good faith. He highlighted that there are employees working for the insurance coverage offered, and a major change can have a huge impact on those employees. Mr. Waldron further explained that any time there is such a change, you need to bargain in good faith. Additionally, Mr. Waldron clarified that his union received the proposed changes in a short span of time, and with school vacation the previous week, he cannot meet with the teachers to discuss the changes until this coming Thursday. He did not appreciate the need for the IAC to make a decision yesterday, and he thinks his union members will vote against the changes. Mr. Waldron closed by stating that this needs to be thought out to consider ramifications, and he wished to know how much money the Town would save by switching to this plan.

Melissa Ryan, Maynard Public Schools, informed the Select board that paraprofessional positions are among the lowest paid positions, where most earned money goes directly to health insurance costs. The other members of her union voted unanimously to reject the proposal and want to keep the plan as-is.

Lois Riley, Maynard Public Schools, explained that, as a paraprofessional, she and her coworkers continue to work in Maynard for the insurance, but could make more money in another district. She explained that if the insurance gets worse, he can make more money in Sudbury. Additionally, Mr. Riley explained that, while she understands the theory behind charging more for higher tier hospitals, it is not always a good alternative, especially for children's health.

Jeff Boudreau, Fire Department, highlighted that our current renewal rating is a 5.3% increase, which is under the average of 5.67%. He also brought up the higher tier hospitals, which is great for community hospitals, but most of the doctors that can save lives are in Boston. With the higher tier hospitals, if a medical emergency happens, covered individuals may have access to a high tier hospital, but can they afford the access? This change would make it so people cannot afford it, and it needs to be considered especially for serious health issues.

Ken Lombardi clarified that the proposed structure was to lower the premium so that there is more money people have in their pockets to go to the hospital if they need. He clarified that hospital admission costs would max out at either \$500 or \$700 per admission.

Nanda Landers, Maynard Public Schools, explained that the members in her union are fine with the 5.37% increase, as it was expected. If the plan changes, how do we know costs will not increase more next year either in the premiums or deductibles? Ms. Landers further explained that she feels the Town should keep things as-is and see what happens next year, and she thinks other union members would agree.

Alan Portis, Fire Department, asked how the proposed plan reduces the loss ratio, and Ken Lombardi clarified that the use of community hospitals will help reduce the loss ratio, according to the financial advisors.

Steven Caloggero, Maynard Public Schools, informed the Select Board that, even if this proposed plan might be the best plan option, there has not been enough time provided to fully understand it. Mr. Caloggero asked the Select Board to delay as much as they can, as the May 1, 2023, deadline feels similar to a used car sales deal, providing a bad feeling.

Sarah Finnerty, Police Department, speaking to possible consolidation of local hospitals, asked what would happen if Emerson was bought out by Mass General, becoming a high tier hospital. Ken Lombardi clarified that type of situation would only occur for medical education reasons, or teaching purposes, which is highly unlikely in this case. Ms. Finnerty also expressed concern about how Maynard can still be an attractive place to work without a great health plan or pay increases comparable to towns with higher budgets.

The Select Board expressed appreciation of the Town employees as well as thanked everyone who attended the meeting and provided their concerns.

5. Adjournment

A motion was made by Mr. Gavin and seconded by Ms. St. John adjourn the meeting at 8:24p.m.

Voted: **Motion carried unanimously.**

Approved Date: 5/16/23



Justine St. John Clerk

Initials: gw