

42 that he will be leaving in about one year, and a Chief Lineman is currently out on medical leave
43 and has begun to explore components necessary to retire. Additionally, those employees are also
44 drawing from pensions from earlier employment at other utilities.

45
46 Another item to mention is that all but one of the Apprentice Linemen are actively looking for
47 other positions. They have tested with United Illuminating and most of them (if not all) are
48 looking at start dates there.

49
50 Mr. Beaumont reiterated that Mr. Arborio was talking about all of them?

51
52 Mr. Arborio stated that he is confident that one will remain. We will also be losing another First
53 Class Lineman, who is waiting on a start date with another utility. This individual is young, spry
54 and hardworking and it will be a great loss. The issue that the Electric Divisions is facing is our
55 inability to attract First Class Linemen, so the next logical path is to hire and train Apprentice
56 Linemen. We typically post in parallel for these positions. Historically, all we've seen are
57 Apprentices, which helps in the long term (as long as we are able to entice them to stay beyond
58 qualification) which is over four years. (Which calculates to over six figures per year of
59 training). However, this does not help the Electric Division in the short term, or during a storm.

60
61 Mr. Hendershot added that he wanted to put an exclamation point on that statement. Although
62 Mr. Arborio was being diplomatic, that statement is terrifying. The way we built the current line
63 crew was through apprentices. All but two individuals on the chart were apprentices that we
64 trained, who then became First Class Linemen. As Mr. Arborio stated, we don't entice qualified
65 Linemen to come here. Qualified individuals are going to other investor owned utilities due to
66 richer compensation. He also wanted to emphasize that it takes over four years to train an
67 Apprentice Lineman.

68
69 Mr. Rinebold asked where the Apprentice Linemen come from? Mr. Arborio replied that a few
70 have come from Public Works, one was a Meter Technician at WED, one from the Sewer
71 Division and one is the son of a Captain with the Fire Department.

72
73 As it stands today, in regards to storm response, there are three individuals who are trained at
74 management level to be able to run and facilitate a restoration effort, two of which are drawing
75 pensions from other utilities: the Chief Engineer, General Line Foreman and Mr. Arborio who
76 have experience in weathering a storm.

77
78 The next largest item Mr. Arborio mentioned was the Distribution Engineering team. It is down
79 to 30% of budgeted staff. Frankly, there is no regulatory compliance engineer, and WED has
80 missed several compliance deadlines.

81
82 Mr. Beaumont asked if it was NERC to which Mr. Arborio responded that it has been a twice
83 annual ISO NE voltage reduction test and some of the operating instruction updates.
84 Fortunately, he and the Chief Engineer have resources that they have worked with in the past
85 who have helped. A deadline was missed due to the overburden of the two remaining engineers.
86 That work was customarily done by a Distribution Engineer who is no longer with the WED.

87

88 Mr. Rinebold questioned if the voltage reduction is part of an OP scenario? Mr. Arborio stated
89 that was correct, and that they just updated OP four and seven.

90
91 Mr. Arborio then went on to explain to Mr. Zabrowski what OP four and seven are.

92
93 Mr. Hendershot informed Mr. Hutt that Mr. Arborio will be coming to him soon with two draft
94 job descriptions. He is looking to take a position (which was in essence a "unicorn") and turn it
95 into two positions. It was a position unique to the WED.

96
97 Mr. Hutt stated that this is not the forum that he expected. A lot of the material being discussed
98 is in negotiations with the Teamsters and will possibly be upcoming with the Management Unit.
99 He added that the best forum would have been to meet with him on some of these ideas, as they
100 could have been strategized; however, this is a different forum, so he would caution anything
101 that would currently be in negotiations and subsequent leads to future upcoming solutions with
102 the Managers.

103
104 Mr. Hutt again noted that as this was not the forum he expected, he needed to get back to the
105 office and offered that he and Mr. Hendershot can meet and discuss some of these issues.

106
107 Mr. Hendershot stated that Mr. Hutt and Mr. Livingston now have copies of the talking points
108 that the General Managers distributed at the beginning of the meeting which contain a lot of
109 pertinent information which is basically a lot of benefit for a limited effort which can make their
110 lives a lot easier and make three organizations function more efficiently.

111
112 Mr. Zabrowski questioned Mr. Hutt as to what he sees as far as closing the gap regarding
113 personnel as it is an emergency situation.

114
115 Mr. Hutt responded that Human Resources conducts exit interviews with individuals. He stated
116 that it is not just compensation for the reason people are leaving. He added that we can discuss
117 that. The other thing is that there is an international shortage of engineers, especially electrical
118 engineers. Not only are you looking at staffing issues, but global issues where they are just not
119 producing the engineers that are necessary to fill the demand which whether we can address that
120 through compensation or something else is another discussion, but some of these issues are
121 mainly structural, that we may not be able to solve.

122
123 Mr. Zabrowski added that this is not a new problem as it has been going on for quite some time.
124 He asked if there was a program or plan of attack on how it was going to be done.

125
126 Mr. Hutt responded that when it comes for negotiations upcoming, Human Resources can look at
127 salary ranges as they are in the process of rolling out an online applicant tracking system that has
128 been in the works for several months. Human Resources is looking at ways to expedite the
129 recruitment process.

130
131 Mr. Zabrowski appreciated the feedback, but asked again for some resolution on the problem that
132 we face now here in Wallingford.

134 Mr. Hutt stated that Mr. Zabrowski is only hearing one side of the story. There are other things
135 that Human Resources will continue to work on with the General Managers' and the Director of
136 Public Utilities to address this. That is their commitment. And they share that information with
137 everyone.
138

139 Mr. Livingston wanted to add that he spends a lot of time engrossed in these conversations, as
140 they are productive. To state that we have an issue of recruiting specifically because of
141 compensation, salary and benefits, would be a bit disingenuous, that would not be 90% or 80%
142 of the problem. Regardless of the overall perception, we've probably replaced about 30 – 35%
143 of the entire town in the last three years – post COVID. Numbers are now coming in and The
144 General Manager for the Water and Sewer Divisions has five people coming in, in the next week.
145 The problem is also that we're having trouble retaining people as the Acting Electric Division
146 General Manager stated. We have to look into why are people leaving? What can we do to
147 bring more people in? What can we do to retain the people we have? This takes some extensive
148 conversations. And some people are disqualified if they don't meet certain criteria for a position.
149 There are processes in place that have to be followed and if someone does not meet the criteria
150 for a requirement for a specific job description, they cannot qualify to be tested, or interviewed.
151

152 Mr. Hutt added that Human Resources involves the Public Utilities in the revisions of these job
153 descriptions, so that requirement is not necessarily controlled by Human Resources. He
154 suggested that Human Resources and Public Utilities meet on a semi regular basis to encourage
155 regular communication.
156

157 Mr. Zabrowski added that just over the last two months, from what he understands, this has been
158 pointed out to personnel a number of times already.
159

160 Mr. Hutt responded that he met with the General Manager of Water and Sewer a couple of weeks
161 ago and came up with a solution regarding Attendant staffing for the Sewer Division. It was
162 expedited and you have five new people coming in. There is a ramp up period taking place to
163 retool. He is confident in the last few days, Mr. Amwake, himself, the Management Union and
164 the Mayor have discussed a solution, one that he hopes will be long term. He also added that
165 you can have a vacancy and list of people to hire. That does not necessarily mean someone is
166 actually hired. At the same time, there are delays, some of which are in the department. So you
167 may bring someone in March 1, another June 1 so they are staggered. That needs to be looked at
168 as well. Also, another issue was that medicals were not being completed fast enough.
169 Communication is key and Human Resources needs to know of issues when they arise. A phone
170 call will do, and they will do what is necessary to solve the problem.
171

172 Mr. Livingston added that with the physicals, they contracted a secondary vendor which has
173 greatly helped. This is a result of open communication and conversation. It really boils down to
174 what to do to ultimately yield more applicants? Mr. Hutt's point about the online application
175 system may help tremendously. However, Human Resources does not control the final decision
176 there.

177 After a considerable amount of time, they have gotten the okay to move forward with it. This
178 will take some time to get in place. The average applicant coming into the public sector is

179 between 28 – 48 years of age. Those people, if they cannot apply online, they will not apply. He
180 believes that we will see an impact with the online application system.

181
182 Mr. Hutt added that there are restrictions that they are working through as well as there is a
183 process to follow. It has been budgeted for next year, but it has been in the workings for quite
184 some time. We are now at the point of reviewing contracts with the firm that has been
185 designated, which happens to be one of the top notch applicant tracking systems that are out
186 there.

187
188 Mr. Zabrowski mentioned again that there seems to be a problem with the compensation as it
189 doesn't seem to be competitive in our area. He believes that at one time, Wallingford Electric
190 was paying higher with more benefits, which was how we were attracting skilled workers and
191 wanted to know how to address that?

192
193 Mr. Hutt gave an example of an issue that had just recently come up where a new hire contacted
194 Human Resources regarding the pension. His coworkers were informing him that he did not
195 have a pension, which is a false statement. He explained to Mr. Zabrowski how it was years ago
196 versus how it is now. The Town now has a cash balance plan, which is still a defined benefit
197 plan per the IRS code. The reason being, at the time of retirement, the individual can elect a
198 lump sum payment, or they can elect to annuitize for them and their spouse. The cash balance
199 account at the end (retirement), becomes the basis for the defined benefit that they'll receive for
200 their surviving spouse through perpetuity, which means the Town will continue to pay that
201 benefit even after the cash balance account has been depleted. There has been a lot of incorrect
202 and false statements being made about that plan, which, unfortunately, happens within these
203 walls.

204
205 Mr. Livingston explained that it takes him 15-20 minutes to explain to each candidate what the
206 benefits are and how they work, as he explains them in great detail.

207
208 Mr. Hutt explained that the cash balance plan, which was explained to Human Resources by the
209 actuaries, was a much better plan because of the defined benefit that they would receive at the
210 end of their career. He added that there is also a death and disability benefit. He also went on to
211 explain that there was a lot of detail and thought that went into ensuring that if something
212 happened to an employee on the job, that their family would not be without some revenue.

213
214 Mr. Zabrowski asked if there was a book on that?

215
216 Mr. Livingston replied that it is actually eight pages of the contract which they receive a copy of.

217
218 Mr. Zabrowski asked about the discrepancy as far as competitive wages?

219
220 Mr. Hutt explained that Human Resources has the ability to do salary surveys and that he will be
221 sending out a notice to all Department Heads regarding that. As they will be soon entering
222 negotiations with Managers, he will be asking them for new proposals to be put on the table.
223 Salary information could be one of the issues being discussed.

24

225 Mr. Zabrowski asked how long does this process take and when do they foresee a resolution?
226

227 Mr. Beaumont stated that WED Production negotiations have been ongoing for a while.
228

229 Mr. Hutt added that there is a reason for that. There was a contract that expired on August 31,
230 2020. Negotiations started in January and then COVID hit. The union at that time, left IBEW
231 and then became affiliated with a different union, unrelated to the electrical field. They did not
232 want to bargain during COVID. The Town did not have the resources to do anything via Zoom
233 and were forbidden to use it. The Union did not want to meet in person. They actually refused.
234 Time went on and then they merged electric, clerical and electric production to which the Town
235 said "no" and it had to go before the State Labor Board. So, negotiations resumed a few months
236 ago.

237

238 Mr. Zabrowski reiterated that the Department of Public Utilities is in an emergency situation,
239 particularly the Sewer Department to which we may be potentially looking at fines from the State.
240

241 Mr. Livingston stated that he has been working along with General Manager Amwake,
242 personally handing off applicants after he has had initial contact, which has been working very
243 well.
244

245 Mr. Amwake noted that he walks all candidates through the granular aspects of the job, benefits,
246 salary vacation and sick time, etc. (spending 20-30 minutes on the telephone with each of them).
247 He went on to inform that he receives full cooperation from the Human Resources Department
248 because he has a personal relationship with them as well as open communication. And with that,
249 he understands that Mr. Hutt and Mr. Livingston have to leave the meeting as they have to
250 prepare memorandums of agreement that must be executed today in order to have Sewer
251 Division coverage over the upcoming weekend. He has worked with Personnel over the last
252 three weeks up there as they are bringing five sewer laborers on board... (1) May 30, (1) June 1,
253 (2) June 5, and (1) June 19th.

254

255 Mr. Hendershot stated that it is clear that we now have the attention of Human Resources.
256

257 Mr. Livingston responded that we are all on the same team and that he takes offense to that
258 remark. If there is a problem, we all need to solve it and be on the same page. We are here to
259 support you and work with you. We all have important jobs to do and we need to do them
260 together with open communication. He will do whatever it takes to get something done.
261

262 Mr. Zabrowski stated that we cannot ask for more than that and thanked Mr. Hutt and Mr.
263 Livingston for their time.
264

265 ***Mr. Hutt and Mr. Livingston left the meeting at 9:51 a.m.***
266

267

268 Mr. Zabrowski questioned Mr. Amwake if he was satisfied with the response he has received
269 from Human Resources?

270 Mr. Amwake responded that yes, he is; however, we need to take a bigger step. There are
271 industry wide issues. Across the board, people are just not coming into this industry. It is a
272 global issue. Then there are matters local to Wallingford that may need to be massaged in that
273 job descriptions have been slowly tweaked to cast a bigger net. We also have very strict
274 processes for hiring which we need to work within that process. When one of our employees
275 loses a co-worker, the process of replacing takes about five to six months versus many
276 companies that take 30-45 days. Looking within those parameters and what constraints lie
277 within is what needs to be looked at. But it is all about communication and coordination that is
278 making things move so slowly. We are also dealing with unions and he has diplomacy with the
279 management union which is why the staffing issues are being resolved.

280

281 Mr. Beaumont stated that there is a global problem. The issue is that the upcoming workforce
282 feels they need a piece of paper (a college degree). They are not looking to be linemen,
283 electricians, or carpenters and that is the problem. The problem lies in the education system and
284 that is where a lot of these issues are coming from.

285

286 Mr. Hendershot stated that he did not want to argue with Human Resources, but he has a
287 different opinion of why WED staff is leaving. Three out of four line apprentices are leaving.
288 He firmly believes they are leaving due to compensation. He also added that, for the first time
289 ever, he mostly understands the cash balance pension retirement plan as he has never heard it
290 explained so well before.

291

292 Ms. Dill added that, as a new hire, it was never explained to her in that manner as well.

293

294 Mr. Hendershot went on to point out that a wage rate and salary benefits study needs to be done
295 for all positions in the Department of Public Utilities with the exception of his position. He
296 added that he has done some research and believes there are firms around that can perform this
297 task.

298

299 Mr. Arborio stated that even if Eversource and United Illuminating are not our direct competition
300 from a utility perspective, they are our direct competition as far as manpower is concerned. And
301 the compensation differences are staggering.

302

303 Mr. Hendershot offered that he would like to initiate getting the wage and benefits study done in
304 a structured way by compensation professionals, but after some discussion with the
305 Commissioners, it was decided that it would be best to have Human Resources undertake that
306 task as Mr. Hutt stated they do that earlier.

307

308 Mr. Rinebold went back to Mr. Hendershot's point regarding the compensation study. He stated
309 that if we are going to get a study done, it has to have credibility. Mr. Hutt did state that Human
310 Resources does studies, so we should let them do that.

311

312 Mr. Hendershot stated that he had asked Human Resources some time ago for a very focused
313 study on just a couple of jobs that he never heard anything back on. He stated that there were
314 communications by both email and in person and no action was taken on it.

15

316 Mr. Rinebold pointed out that Human Resources has stated that salary is not the problem, though
317 Mr. Hendershot believes that it is the problem. Human Resources conducts exit interviews and
318 is saying that is not the problem, so what exactly is it?
319

320 Ms. Dill mentioned that earlier in the meeting, Mr. Hutt noted that Human Resources conducts
321 exit interviews. She questioned if anyone had seen any of these exit interviews as that would
322 give some insight into why our people are leaving?
323

324 Mr. Langenauer stated that he has been in the industry for a long time and that usually when HR
325 does exit interviews, they provide anonymous feedback to the department.
326

327 Mr. Rinebold stated that he is concerned if we put information out there, it may be a possibility
328 that it does not have credibility or solve the problem. He does believe that the problem very well
329 may be compensation; however, Human Resources is stating that is not the case and they
330 conduct exit interviews, so everyone here needs to be on the same page.
331

332 Mr. Hendershot summarized that a top to bottom wage and benefits survey needs to be
333 conducted.
334

335 Mr. Rinebold added that we need to put it on the table and ask Human Resources to do it and if
336 they cannot or will not, then we will do it and pay for it, but it needs to get done. Human
337 Resources needs to have their fingerprints on it so it is credible.
338

339 Mr. Arborio added that it needs to include benefits, to which Mr. Rinebold responded that it will
340 be a completed compensation package survey.
341

342 Mr. Rinebold suggested that Mr. Hendershot work out the details as he needs to work in
343 conjunction with Human Resources on this.
344

345 Mr. Beaumont stated his concerns on this getting done without resistance.
346

347 Mr. Rinebold offered that the ask should come with an action item. Either you do it or we do it.
348

349 Mr. Zabrowski asked if there is something that can be done in a roundabout way to get the
350 problem resolved.
351

352 Mr. Arborio stated that they have been working on possibly creating an Engineering Trainee
353 position where the requirements of the position are not so strict. The other is the Meter and
354 Substation Supervisor position to go from one position to two.
355

356 Mr. Zabrowski applauded those efforts stating it is very beneficial to come up with creative ways
357 to alleviate problems.
358

359 Mr. Beaumont turned the meeting over to Mr. Amwake to go over the Water and Sewer
360 Divisions.
61

362 Mr. Amwake began by stating that in the Water Division, there are 8 Water Treatment and
363 Pumping Operators with 2 current vacancies with a 3rd vacancy possible in the near future.

364

365 Mr. Hendershot questioned Mr. Amwake on why he has those vacancies?

366

367 Mr. Amwake responded that one was just never filled, one was a transfer and one is a future
368 promotion. He added that the Water Division is more solid at this point; however, even though
369 there are five positions being filled in the Sewer Division within the next few weeks, the
370 challenge is that it takes six to twelve months to get someone up to speed as to how to run a
371 complex wastewater treatment plant with tertiary phosphorus treatment. He noted that Sean Baia
372 is doing an amazing job but is trying to keep up as we have one attendant who has been with the
373 Sewer Division for approximately 10 months and even though we have one MRT vacancy, we
374 have two people out sick so the Sewer Division is down to only two people working on the
375 mechanic side.

376

377 Mr. Amwake added that he tracks every single position from the day he starts the hiring process
378 and the normal is five to seven months if we get an external candidate. The other challenge is
379 that as the Electric Division has two people on call each day: a Manager and a Lineman. The
380 Water and Sewer Divisions have seven staff members on call each and every day and night. The
381 Water Division has a Manager, and someone from the treatment plant and a person for the water
382 distribution crew. Sewer Division has a Manager, someone from Collections (for back-ups,
383 overflows, laterals), plus a Mechanic who takes care of the pump stations as well as respond to
384 any vehicle issues as well as an Attendant for the wastewater treatment plant. The challenge in
385 the last three weeks has been working with Human Resources on who is going to cover the cell
386 phone or beeper, who going to come in and do the plant checks which has caused much stress on
387 the organization, when every single night, particularly in Sewer, you have four individuals who
388 are on call and you cannot combine those positions. When Mr. Amwake started in 2016, there
389 was a stable workforce in place. There was a three or four person rotation collection. Through
390 at least October, there will be a two person rotation. Attendants – we have 1 person. Mechanics
391 – we have 2 people. Managers – we have 2 people and Collections we have 2 people.

392

393 There are four On-Call positions and have seven staff covering. The employees are getting burnt
394 out. Mr. Amwake did a statistical analysis: Since last July 1, in this fiscal year, we will have
395 hired or promoted 26 full time staff (against the line organization of 68). Going back three years,
396 57 promotions or new staff against the line organization of 68. As of July 1, 57% of our staff
397 will have less than five years' experience. As Mr. Amwake has mentioned in the past, we can
398 fill the organizational chart, but we really need to look at what we are doing for training and
399 mentoring. In the case of Sean Baia, we have basically given him 5 individuals to train for the
400 next 6 months. He has had to move the administrative and managerial work aside in order for
401 him to accomplish this; which Mr. Baia himself has vocalized concerns about.

402

403 Mr. Amwake stated another problem that is challenging is that, for example, Southington hired
404 one Class I Operator and one Class II Operator from the Wallingford Sewer Division and they do
405 not have a merit review process, so within 30 days of them posting the job description, our staff
406 members were on their payroll. That frustrates our staff who may not understand the recruitment
407 and hiring process. Mr. Amwake added that he almost didn't get the position he's in now with

408 the Town of Wallingford due to the fact that he just sent in a resume and did not initially
409 complete an employment application.

410

411 Mr. Amwake went on to state that they have a Junior Engineer position open that they have just
412 posted for the third time in nine months. He had a conversation with the Director of Career
413 Services at Quinnipiac who is also a Wallingford resident. Mr. Amwake questioned why none of
414 the students applied for the position? It was because the Town of Wallingford still uses a paper
415 application. Although there is a PDF application on the website, there is no email address or
416 drop box to send it to. The application has to be printed out, completed and then either faxed,
417 mailed or dropped off at Town Hall. If you are a 22 or 24 year old, you are not going to do this.

418

419 Mr. Amwake mentioned that overall the Water Division is in good shape, however, he is
420 beginning to worry about staffing at Pistapaug. There is a posting out there and he is waiting for
421 the written merit exam to occur.

422

423 He went on to discuss more particulars of that position.

424

425 Mr. Amwake noted that one of the items he does want to look at in the next year is positions in
426 the organizational chart provided have been unfunded in prior years. When you factor in
427 vacation, sick time, long term medical – are we too lean of an organization? In several of our job
428 classifications, that seems to be the case. We have two people in our Water Quality team.
429 Estimating four weeks of vacation time each plus, two weeks sick time for each throughout the
430 year. That's six weeks times two people equals 12 weeks. Thus, for one quarter of the year we
431 have one person who's trying to meet all the regulatory requirements for water quality.

432

433 He believes in the next year or two, he will revisit the organizational charts and strategically add
434 another position here and there.

435

436 Mr. Beaumont added that he has no problem adding positions if they are needed.

437

438 Mr. Amwake stated that he is going to put in a request for a sixth laborer position at the WWTP
439 to which Mr. Hutt has informed him he will sign.

440

441 More discussion ensued.

442

443 Mr. Hendershot reviewed the charter in preparing for this meeting and noted an interesting
444 phrase that he found. It is at the top of page 22 at the end of the chapter on Human Resources.
445 Section Five: Salaries. At the end of this brief paragraph says "provided nothing herein shall be
446 construed to limit the power of the Board of Education to fix the compensation of professional
447 employees of the school system".

448

449 Mr. Rinebold reiterated what was said earlier and wanted to list what needs to be done at this
450 point.

451

452 1. Ask Human Resources for a credible compensation study that we will pay for or
453 undertake on our own as we're looking to normalize our compensation with like positions
from like organizations.

- 454 2. Ask Human Resources for feedback from exit interviews.
455 3. Revise the Organizational Charts to include position specifications as needed. (If a job is
456 getting too heavy on requirements, split it up).
457 4. Show support of the electronic filing with Human Resources.
458

459 We cannot afford not to have reliable Water, Sewer and Electric service.

460 Mr. Beaumont added that these services are critical to the well-being of the community.
461

462 Mr. Hendershot stated that what will now be done is to have a sit down with himself, Mr.
463 Amwake, Mr. Arborio and Mr. Hutt regarding these issues and come up with thoughtful
464 responses.
465

466 Mr. Rinebold suggested he go in with action items, not complaining. How to get critical mission
467 functions staffed? Follow up with the fact that we are all on the same team.
468

469 Mr. Zabrowski wanted to compliment the General Managers' comprehensive reports and the
470 effort that was put in.
471

472

473

474 **ADJOURNMENT**

475

476 **Motion to Close the Staffing Workshop at 10:56 a.m.**

477

478 **Made by: Mr. Zabrowski**

479 **Seconded by: Mr. Rinebold**

480 **Votes: 3 ayes**

481

482

483 Respectfully submitted,

484

485

486

487 Michelle Bracale

488 Acting Recording Secretary

489

Respectfully submitted,

Laurence Zabrowski
Secretary