

Joint Municipal Council / Finance /Ordinance Committee
Workshop Minutes
Town Hall Auditorium
January 23, 2007
7:00 p.m.

Members present: Christopher Lawrence, Robert Lavoie, Donna McClure, Ann Connolly King, Roger Benson, Mario Pinierio, Alison Lindstrom, Hank Brennick

Also present: Mayor Thatcher W. Kezer III, and Chief of Staff Kendra Amaral; Finance Committee members, Allen Neale, Jamie Grant, Chris York and Ordinance Committee member Thomas Iacobucci. Finance Committee member Karl Wesolowski arrived at 7:20 pm.

President Lawrence opened the joint workshop on the Mayor's Executive Reorganization. There were several issues and questions that were brought up by committee and Council members. Several of those have been forwarded to the Mayors office. He asked the Mayor to start.

Mayor Kezer stated he hopes they are able to talk about some of the major points of the reorganization that have been raised. He gave an overview of what the objective is of doing an executive reorganization. When the Charter was approved ten years ago it was called for in the Charter that the Mayor submit a reorganization plan to align the town organization to correctly fall under the provisions of the charter to create a fresh start for Amesbury Municipal government at that time. That hasn't been done and he wants to meet the provisions of the charter to get the reorganization done but also as the new "CEO" of a fifty million dollar operation with somewhere around six hundred employees impacting \$2.2 billion dollars worth of assets he wants to make sure the organization is aligned in such a way that it is prepared to take on the challenges that it faces, to deal with the issues that this local government and all others are dealing with. This is the first step in the process of revamping, modernizing and making the municipal government of Amesbury as effective as possible and to be better prepared to meet the challenges of the future. The specific objectives are to realign the span of control. He gave an overview of the organizational chart and explained that there were somewhere around fifteen or sixteen direct reports and who was reporting to him. As the manager he wants to have the appropriate level of span of control and went on to explain with a power point presentation the changes he was proposing with the new organizational chart. One of the major questions that have been raised is "what's the financial impact of the reorganization?" There are 238 positions on the Town side, not including the school side which includes the Council, Board of Assessors, and Planning Board. He stated there is no financial impact of the reorganization as far as number of personnel. Mr. Basque submitted a memo stated that police, fire, administration and finance, engineering and DPW there was no change. In regard to community development and inspectional services there was some realignment of departments under those, basically they were just swapped around. There is no increase or decrease in personnel. The only area that is outside of that is Health and Human Services does not identify a department head who will assume these responsibilities. He stated provided the Mayor incorporates these additional responsibilities into the duties of an existing department head then there should be no financial impact. Mr. Basque's memo also states that the adoption of the administrative order in itself does not have a financial impact on the town but if the implementation of the reorganization creates a need for additional compensation to the department heads involved the funding mechanism would be the annual budget or a separate order. Mayor Kezer stated he does not see making any changes; however the prior council had appropriated funds for a personnel study of non-union positions in order to look at the job descriptions and the salaries and benefits of the employees in order to align the job descriptions and adjust salaries appropriate to the scope of the responsibilities. He stated before doing a detailed assessments of

individual job descriptions and salary surveys it makes sense to align the organization to what we think works best and then write the job descriptions that support meeting the goals and objectives of the organization as it is aligned. Once the reorganization is complete he will move forward on the salary survey and job descriptions, etc. He stated he has not received any specific questions in regard to the issues so he was hoping they could discuss it tonight.

Councilor Thone asked if there was any consideration of the Chief of Staff taking on the responsibility of the Health and Human Services coordinator role.

Mayor Kezer state that is one of the options he is looking at.

Councilor Lindstrom stated she wished she had this before. She said it was a wonderful explanation of what's going on. She said she doesn't believe anyone on the Council, Fin Com or Ordinance committee questioned the Mayor's ability to organize the personnel of the town she thinks that the questions they had weren't with it in the beginning, where the policy end of it was. She believes it is his job to take care of the town's employees.

Councilor Brennick asked if there would be separate budgets for each group.

Mayor Kezer said his intent is that he wants each division to have a summary page that describes what the division is, what its goals and objectives are as well as the total costs for delivering the services under that division and what the sources of revenue are that are supporting those. His main objective is to make it clear to everyone what services are supported by property taxes, fees, grants and other sources of income and to be able to set goals.

The discussion continued around the added responsibilities to department heads and if there would be an increase in compensation for the increase in responsibility. Mayor Kezer stated that he was doing an assessment of the situation and if there were going to be an added cost it would not be seen until the budget process.

Councilor Thone asked for a list of personnel by division rather than alphabetically.

Mr. York stated he thought the reorganization was a step in the right direction. He asked the Mayor is there was an idea of how much the town could potentially save.

Mayor Kezer introduced Steve McGoldrick, Planning Council who has been helping with the reorganization and Marilyn Contreas, DECD, who helped Amesbury with the Charter ten years ago and currently.

Steve McGoldrick stated you can't really see the savings before a reorganization the department head would be responsible to identify where the cost savings are through documentation once the consolidation has occurred.

Marilyn Contreas stated it's not always that you save money but that you avoid future costs because you are able to coordinate, collaborate and bring together the departments that use the same kind of equipment or can sometimes share personnel.

Mr. McGoldrick stated also the goal is to increase the quality of service as well.

Mayor Kezer stated that one of the reasons he has implemented AMESTAT is because municipal government, generally, does not do a good a job of documenting it's processes and defining it's costs,

etc. This would create the capacity to develop improvement and delivery of services and controlling of costs to avoid big increases.

Councilor Lawrence asked the Mayor if he had any plans on changing the wording in Section 1.6 of the Municipal Council coordination.

Mayor Kezer stated someone would have to articulate to him the concerns on this section. He read the section in question and stated the reporting of executive branch activities is coordinated through the Mayor's office so that he knows what information is being transmitted back and forth. He said it has been portrayed that this will prohibit Councilors from talking to department heads or it will require the Mayor's approval before talking to departments and that is a mischaracterization of it. There is no language in the bill that says there cannot be communication. It just says the coordination reports to the Municipal Council and its committees go through the Mayor so that he is aware of the communication going on. He said it also provides some protection to department heads in that a department head is not coerced into changing their priorities without bringing the Mayor into the loop. The bill states that "nothing in this section shall be construed to deny to members of the Municipal Council or its committees direct access to information that is readily available and provided by divisions and departments, to members of the general public in pursuit of their civic responsibilities or private business nor shall staff members be discouraged from providing such information through formal or informal means."

Councilor Lawrence stated he had asked for information from the Assessor's Office and he had to wait for it to go through the Mayor when he had requested it before and didn't have to wait.

Mayor Kezer explained that the request that Councilor Lawrence asked for was not readily available information the form that he had asked for it. The request required exporting the entire tax data base and converting it into an excel spread sheet and to deliver. He stated there was some back and forth correspondence to clarify exactly what Councilor Lawrence was looking for and once that was settled it got done.

Councilor King stated the Council rules states that anyone looking to access information from various committees are required to go through the chair of that committee.

Councilor Lindstrom asked if the Councilors should go through the Mayor to get information.

Mayor Kezer stated he felt going to the department head was the appropriate way to start; they would in turn apprise him of the requests if they were not readily available. Discussion of issues would take place at AMESTAT meetings.

Councilor Iacobucci asked if the budgets would still be under the control of the department head or would they be under the control of the division head in this reorganization. For example, could a division head take money from one department's budget and transfer to another department's budget within that division and if that were the case who would sign off on the transfer the department head or the division head.

Mayor Kezer stated it would be the department head's budget to be overseen by the division head and the ultimate responsibility of the Mayor. The Mayor stated there would be no difference in the way a transfer is done now, and no transfer is done until approved by the council. He stated the law would be complied with and would be defined in the budget.

Councilor McClure asked who would be doing procurement and stated how the Council initiated training for those involved. She questioned the wording that Mr. Basque delegates procurement authority and how many are trained and if others who are not trained would be involved in the procurement process.

Mayor Kezer explained that Mr. Basque is the Chief procurement officer and he can delegate a portion or all of the responsibility that he sees fit anywhere in the organization so that it is consistent with Mass General Law. He explained the necessity of professional development.

Councilor Lindstrom asked the Mayor to explain how the Library Trustees which is an elected Board is included in the Mayor's reorganization. He explained the Library Director is hired by the Mayor and the Mayor is responsible for the overall operations of the Library. The Library trustees do assist the Mayor in the filtering of applicants for the Library director. The language makes reference to the operational issues are controlled by the Library Trustees, i.e. which books to buy and what programs to run etc., however, the finances and the operations of following policies falls on the mayor. He stated throughout the document there will be language relative to other positions about professional staff who support certain boards and committees that they will provide professional support. The health nurse and the health inspector are in two different divisions but they are both responsible to provide professional support to the Board of Health. From the Board of Health perspective there is no change in the way it is being done but from the Mayor's perspective he has realigned them to better focus on what they are doing.

Councilor Lavoie stated the Ordinance Committee had a general recommendation to recommend adoption as submitted and after that some work on some refinements, specifically, in Section 1.1 the last line states supersedes all previous actions – the Ordinance Committee would recommend that the word executive be inserted before actions; in Section 1.2 recommend that it not contradict Federal and State constitutions and Massachusetts statutes; Section 1.6 it can be supplemented with language that would be reassuring to the Council in terms of how prior standard operating procedures are intended to continue.

Workshop adjourned at 9:00 pm.

Respectfully submitted

Bonnijo Kitchin
Town Clerk