**TOWN OF FRANCONIA**

**BOARD OF SELECTMEN’S MEETING**

**SATURDAY, DECEMBER 24, 2022, AT 9:00AM AT TOWN HALL**

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**BOARD MEMBERS PRESENT:** Dan Walker, Jill Brewer, Eric Meth

**OTHERS PRESENT:** Kim Cowles, Jim Walker, Carol Walker, and Virginia Mike

**The meeting was called to order at 9:03am**

Jill Brewer read a prepared statement addressed to the Board (see attached) regarding aspects of the negotiation process with Kim Cowles and what Jill sees as the Board’s responsibilities regarding the Town Administrator position.

**PUBLIC COMMENT**

Public comment was taken from Jim Walker. He does not think the meeting is a legal meeting and he wanted that noted in the minutes.

Dan Walker made a motion that the Board go into non-public session, taking with them Kim Cowles, pursuant to RSA 91-A:3, II (a), second by Eric Meth. All were in favor per the roll call vote and the Board entered non-public session at 9:20am.

Jill Brewer made a motion to come out of non-public session, second by Eric Meth. All were in favor per the roll call vote and the Board came out of non-public session at 10:08am.

Jill Brewer made a motion to accept the Town Administrator’s resignation, second by Dan Walker. The Board voted 2 to 1 in favor and the motion passed.

There being no further business, the meeting was adjourned at 10:15am.

Respectfully submitted,

Daniel Walker

Selectman

To the Board:

This entire situation would have been over weeks ago if it were any other employee/employer situation. With anyone else, when the employee makes a salary demand and the majority of the Board says they can’t support it then the employee can either walk away or negotiate. In this situation, there were many weeks of non-negotiation including Kim having one-on-one meetings with me where she continued to push and advocate for the salary she wanted and stating that if she did not get that salary she would walk away. Kim kept pushing and pushing and pushing, and returned from vacation asking for more than had already been turned down by the Board.

That brings us to last Monday. What transpired that night was unprofessional. First, I, as a member of the Board, had absolutely no idea Kim was planning to rescind her resignation and thus was not at all prepared to address that. What was on the agenda was “TA position” which I thought meant accepting the letter of resignation and discussing the plan to staff the office. It became clear that there were members of the public who knew Kim planned to rescind her resignation.

If I had known Kim was going to ask to rescind her resignation Monday night, here is what I would have said:

We have lost sight of what we are tasked to do.

We have been debating the value of Kim to the town in a general sense. There is no way to put a number on that and what she has done for the town; she is invaluable and irreplaceable and we can all agree Franconia would not be what it is today without Kim.

But we are not tasked with assessing Kim’s general value to the town. If the Board believes we need to hire a full time TA, we are tasked with:

* Finding a good fit for the position of full time TA
* Ensuring that this person is well-qualified for the SPECIFIC DUTIES of a full time TA
* Offering a fair compensation to that person

If I could create the perfect job for Kim and her incredible assets and qualifications, it would be a Rec Director/DPW hybrid. We are not tasked with finding a good DPW or Rec Director.

Given that Kim, as she admits, is still learning aspects of the job of part-time TA and would continue learning with the full-time TA position and those additional responsibilities, it seems completely indefensible to me to offer her well outside of the salary range. Even the $72k would have been tough to defend at town meeting.

Our duty is to what the town needs not what Kim wants.

How do you justify giving a $79k salary to someone still learning the job and taking on additional aspects of the job that she is not familiar with?

I very much wish we had been able to come to an agreement about salary but we were not. It is time to find the best fit for Franconia TA and compensate that individual fairly, fair for the employee, the town, and taxpayers.