

**TOWN OF GUILFORD
EFFICIENCY TASK FORCE
MEETING MINUTES
TUESDAY MARCH 2, 2010
7:00 P.M. – GUILFORD TOWN HALL**

Present:

Task Force Members: Martha Carlson, Jim Galvin, Chairman Gary Gilbert, Mark Matlosz

Selectmen: Charles Havrda

Public Works Commission: Bob Guadagno, Chairman Gene Bishop, Robin Gangemi, Pat Kinney, Dean Mitchell

Clerk Karen Quercia

1. 7:00 p.m. Call to order

Mr. Gilbert called the meeting to order at 7:00 p.m.

2. 7:01 – 7:05 p.m. Approval of minutes of the February 16, 2010 meeting.

Motion: Upon a motion by Mr. Galvin,, and seconded by Mr. Gilbert, the Efficiency Task Force voted to approve the minutes of the February 2, 2010 minutes.

*Approve: Galvin, Gilbert
Oppose: None
Abstain: Matlosz*

3. 7:05 – 7:30 p.m. Discussion with Public Works Commission

Mr. Gilbert congratulated the Public Works Commission on the terrific job they did with their budget presentation to the Board of Selectmen. It was the most professional presentation he had seen. He went on to explain to the Public Works Commission (PWC) members the process the ETF has been following and the reasons for inviting them to the meeting. He noted that there seems to be some overlap between the duties of the Public Works Department, the Parks and Recreation Department and the Engineering/Facilities Departments, and was hoping the PWC could help to provide some clarification.

Mr. Bishop and the other Commissioners stated there are three main components to the Public Works Department (DPW):

1. people,
2. material
3. equipment

Some of the main functions of the DPW include:

- highway maintenance,
- road and bridge construction,
- creation, maintenance and repair of all street and road signs, (done in conjunction with the Police Department)
- catch basin cleaning,

- tree and brush removal,
- water main (Baldwin Middle School) and drainage projects
- Vehicle maintenance for all Town departments with the exception of the Fire Department
- winter road maintenance
 - plowing
 - sanding
- summer road maintenance
 - chip sealing - done on a 7 year rotation
 - street sweeping
 - mowing.

The department provides services in weather related emergencies, removes large animals such as deer which have died in roads or other public areas, removes trash discarded alongside the roads, moves the portable stage onto and off of the Town Green, and stores and disposes of items from private evictions.

Mr. Guadagno stated that the DPW is a "catch all" for every other town department, and works in conjunction with all other town departments. They get calls for everything, including residents who think the department provides services on private property (i.e. removing a tree which has fallen in someone's yard). They are the backbone of all Town maintenance; they are a very important and very needed department.

The DPW is very fortunate to have a staff which has a good knowledge base in different areas. This enables them to support the Engineering Department with their projects such as road, bridge and drainage construction.

Ms Carlson noted that through her work on the Police Commission, she is aware of the quality of service the DPW provides to the police Vehicles. The mechanics are good at what they do. They are often complemented by the police department.

Mr. Bishop noted that when Mr. Volpe, the Superintendent of Highways, started in his current position, there were 21 people on the DPW staff. They are now down to 18 (one employee is on disability) and they will soon lose an additional employee due to budget cuts. The staff has decreased, while the number of vehicles which they are responsible for maintaining has increased to 130 or more, and the miles of roads which they must maintain has increased as well. With all the new developments in recent years, there are approximately 147 -148 miles of roads to maintain.

The fleet of trucks is aging, some are more than 30 years old. It speaks to the value and effectiveness of the mechanics that they have been able to keep them going this long. In addition, the mechanics maintain lawn mowers, tractors, and outfit all new police vehicles. All this work is done in house, which speaks to the level of expertise the employees have. They do a lot with a little. Through work orders, the DPW bills the town departments for vehicle parts, but not for labor.

The Task Force inquired about duplication of efforts and services and the role regionalization could have in this regard. The PWC responded that they have looked into consortiums for buying power, and have done comparisons to get the best prices. They have investigated locking in prices through COG.

The PWC discussed a truck wash. Due to environmental concerns and permitting issues, this is a pressing matter. The PWC has looked into negotiating a price with the truck wash at Exit 54. The DPW has failed State of CT water contaminant testing several years in a row.

Mr. Havrda inquired about the aging truck fleet and the use of outside contractors to do plowing, as well as utilizing other qualified Town employees to plow. Using non-union staff to perform union work creates contractual issues. Mr. Havrda noted that he wanted to make sure the PWC was investigating all options in regards to cost saving measures for equipment and labor. A brief discussion took place regarding seasonal vs. year round staff.

The PWC pointed out that the DPW has provided substantial cost savings to the Town on road projects. Having knowledgeable staff has been very valuable. Ms Gangemi stated using town resources to complete road projects has saved the town approximately 30% over the cost of hiring an outside firm to do the job. The DPW employees take a great deal of pride in the work that they do on these projects.

Mr. Mitchell stated that if a job requires it, the Town Engineer will put a project out to bid. The Task Force discussed whether the Board of Selectmen should require a quote from an outside firm as well as an in house cost estimate for all town construction projects. Due to the economic climate, having a viable bid as a benchmark may be prudent going forward. Long term planning is done in conjunction with the Town Engineer, who provides a rough estimate of capital projects.

Mr. Gilbert asked about any overlap in services with the Parks and Recreation Department for services such as mowing, fence repair, lighting maintenance, removing trees and brush, plowing, etc. The following topics were raised:

- Are Park and Recreation employees required to have CDL's?
- Could Park and Rec staff be utilized to plow smaller roads and parking lots?
- Would it make sense to have one person control all snow plowing, mowing, etc. throughout the Town.

The Task Force discussed the differences between the job description for a Public Works Director and a Superintendent of Highways. These differences may be further considered at some point in the future.

Ms Carlson felt that the PWC was beneficial in bringing a fresh set of eyes to look at the DPW, capture redundancies, and make delineations between departments. She asked if any PWC members made surprise visits. Mr. Mitchell responded that they had. They do spot checks and receive monthly reports from the department. The DPW is a very paper intensive department. The department could use assistance from Town Hall in utilizing technology to create efficiencies. The Task Force inquired as to whether maintenance hours are tracked.

The Task Force asked if the department received any grants. The Town Engineer seeks out funding for projects. The PWC explained that the Engineering Department plans the projects, and the Public Works Department builds them. The Town Engineer & Superintendent of Highways work well together. Mr. Kinney noted that Guilford's road building capability is a skill few other towns have.

Ms Gangemi offered to provide the Task Force with a vehicle replacement schedule spreadsheet, and a budget profile of the department. The Task Force asked about "just in time" parts inventory.

Mr. Galvin spoke about workplace safety and prevention. Currently there are two DPW employees out on Worker's Compensation. This is an area that should be looked at.

The Task Force thanked the PWC for their time and insights.

4. 8:05 – 8:45 p.m. Review of information from Mr. Goldblatt regarding Worker's Compensation (Mr. Galvin)

Mr. Galvin expressed his appreciation for all the information Mr. Goldblatt provided. Mr. Galvin distributed a handout with the information he gathered and recommendations. He addressed issues such as the frequency and demographics of the claims. This is a major problem for the Town and needs to be addressed. The experience modification rate is 1.42%, which means Guilford pays 42% more than the average town in the state for Worker's Compensation.

A culture of safety and prevention needs to be addressed, from the top down. Safety violations should be written up. Training should be provided. Worker's Comp costs are something that you don't see until it is too late. Prevention can happen.

The Town currently provides an injured employee the difference in salary between what WC pays and what the employee would be paid were he/she were working. This is an item which should be addressed during contract negotiations. It is unheard of in private industry.

The Town should also evaluate the services of the insurance consultant. This is an item that should be put out to bid.

Ms Carlson asked if the Task Force should make an interim report to the Board of Selectmen. There are several issues that could be brought to their attention now, rather than wait until the final report in the fall. Mr. Gilbert will speak with Mr. Mazza to see if they can get on the agenda for an April BOS meeting to discuss some of the findings of the Task Force and to make suggestions which could be implemented now.

5. 8:45 p.m. – Discuss progress on personnel forms, organizational charts, data collection

No discussion was held.

6. 8:45 p.m. – 8:50 p.m. New Business

Town Engineer Mr. Portley will be invited to attend the March 16 meeting at 7:00 p.m.
Superintendent of Highways Mr. Volpe will be invited to attend the March 16 meeting at 7:45 p.m.

Motion: Upon a motion by Ms Carlson, and seconded by Mr. Matlosz, the Task Force voted to adjourn the meeting at 8:50 p.m.

*Approved: Carlson, Galvin, Gilbert, Matlosz
Opposed: None
Abstained: None*

Respectfully Submitted,

Karen Quercia
Clerk