

September 22, 2021

Dear Members of the Finance Committee,

I wanted to attend the meeting on Article 17 but unfortunately, I cannot make it tomorrow night because of childcare obligations, so I'm sharing my comments in writing. I plan to offer an amendment to the main motion on Article 17 that would increase the minimum pay level for part-time employees (grade 1) from 14.25 to 15.00.

My presentation last week with respect to Article 18 covered most of the key arguments for doing that so I will not repeat them here, but I want to offer a few additional points based on comments that were made at the meeting last week and the specifics of the Personnel Board's proposal.

It seems like one of the main concerns about the idea of raising the minimum pay level is the supposed ripple effects it would have throughout the pay scale. I have two thoughts about that:

- 1) To a large extent, those ripple effects can be mitigated by what is already planned. As discussed the other night, most of the employees who make under 15.00 an hour work for the Recreation Department. That department has already indicated that if the wage were to increase to 15, a similar percentage increase would be applied across the board to all other part-time employees. While that would not help part-time employees in other departments, that would ensure that there was no discrepancy with respect to employees who work most closely with those receiving the bottom level increase.

As for full-time employees, under the Personnel Board's plan, the maximum compensation level will increase by about 10% across the board, which is just slightly less than the percentage increase in the minimum wage if it goes from 13.50 directly to 15.00. While I understand that this would not automatically increase wages for all full-time employees, it would give departments the flexibility to increase wages for some and relieve some of the perceived issues with increasing the minimum wage.

- 2) While I am in full agreement with the idea of paying everyone more, it isn't clear to me why all wages necessarily must rise at the same time at the exact same rate. The Personnel Board's plan itself reflects that this philosophy does not hold true across the board—the proposal would increase the top level of full-time pay without a similar increase in the other three full-time pay levels. It appears that there are special reasons that justify such a targeted increase and I believe the same holds true for the bottom level of the part-time pay scale for the reasons discussed last week.

Finally, I want to reiterate that while we heard varying figures from town administration at the hearing last week, none of them indicated that the cost of raising the wage would be significant in the grand scheme of the town's budget (even in scenarios where the wage was increased by a similar percentage for all part-time workers). I encourage the Finance Committee to use this opportunity to continue to ask the town administration for cost estimates for different increase scenarios.

September 22, 2021

Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,

Cody Jacobs
16 Tamarack Road.