

**TOWN OF BOLTON
BOARD OF SELECTMEN
PUBLIC INFORMATION SESSION REGARDING THE FIRST SELECTMAN'S SALARY
TUESDAY, APRIL 22, 2025, IMMEDIATELY FOLLOWING THE A/P MEETING
TOWN HALL & ZOOM
MINUTES**

Board of Selectmen Present In-Person: First Selectman Rodney Fournier, Deputy First Selectman Robert Morra, Amanda Gordon, Gwen Marrion, Mather Clarke, Tim Sadler

Board of Selectman Absent: Pamela Sawyer

Staff Present In-Person: Town Administrator James Rupert, Executive Assistant, HR Director, and Emergency Management Director Kathleen McCavanagh

Staff Present Via Zoom: Recording Secretary Kacie Cannon

Others Present in Person: Sandra Pierog, Jim Aldrich, Mary Terhune, Barry Stearns, Rhea Klein, Bryce Aaronson, Elle King, Cheryl Udin, Richard Hayes

Others Present Via Zoom: Jim Loersch, Ron Carbone

The Public Information Session began at 6:18 p.m.

1. Public Information Session Regarding the First Selectman's Salary

R. Morra explained that the Board of Selectman is in the process of considering a potential increase to the First Selectman's salary and is seeking the public's input before making a final decision. He shared salary comparison data from other towns outlining a salary range of \$30,000 to \$50,000. A. Gordon added that a request from members of the public was made to increase the salary a few years ago, prompting the previous Board of Selectmen to form a subcommittee and collect data on salary ranges of other towns for comparison.

G. Marrion explained that the Town's intern, Tim White, assisted the subcommittee with compiling salary data from towns with similar population sizes and forms of government, including those with both a Town Administrator and a First Selectman. She noted that only a few towns have both positions. G. Marrion stated that Columbia, the most comparable town, offers a \$26,000 salary, while Bolton offers \$18,000. Based on this research, the subcommittee recommended a salary range of \$30,000 to \$50,000, based on the following factors:

- Making the position more appealing to potential candidates
- Partially compensating for time taken away from the First Selectman's primary employment
- Comparative data showing Bolton's current salary is low for part-time Selectmen
- Time commitment ranging from 10 to 30 hours per week, with the position requiring the individual to be consistently on-call
- Attracting new candidates without suggesting the role is full-time

- The position does not include health or pension benefits

R. Morra asked the public for comments on the proposed salary range.

Sandra Pierog, a former First Selectman residing at 37 Brandy Street, asked that her name be reflected correctly on any Town documents to include the correct spelling of her last name and her legal name of Sandra, instead of Sandy. She noted her support of an increase up to \$30,000.00 to cover travel expenses, and stated that \$50,000.00 is excessive since the Town Administrator assists with the responsibilities of the position.

Jim Aldrich, 35 Hanover Farms Road, explained that he serves on the Charter Commission with G. Marrion and five other citizens. He added that works to recruit people to elected positions, and he supports an increase to \$50,000.00, at a minimum, due to the extensive responsibilities, numerous events, and time commitment involved.

Ron Carbone, 15 Birch Mountain Road Extension, appeared via Zoom and agreed that there is a lot involved in the First Selectman position. He stated that it is hard to put a value on the salary and responsibilities the position carries and stressed the importance of offering adequate compensation to attract the best candidates possible. Mr. Carbone added that the Agenda for the BOS A/P Meeting did not indicate that the Public Information Session would follow immediately afterward, nor did it provide information that the Public Information Session would take place within the same Zoom link. He asked that the Town provide better clarification in the future. Mr. Carbone added that he was not aware that the change to the First Selectman's salary would become effective in the FY25-26 Budget or that the discussion had this much momentum.

Mary Terhune, 40 School Road, stated that she only supports a small increase of up to \$25,000.00. She added that the increase should include additional responsibilities such as attending CCM and CRCOG meetings and spending more time at Town Hall. She expressed concerns about the public's lack of recourse if a First Selectman fails to fulfill their duties during their four-year term and the inclusion of a placeholder in the budget without prior public input. A. Gordon clarified that the placeholder has been included in the budget but has not been approved. She explained that the Finance Committee is meeting tonight to work on finalizing the Town of Bolton and Board of Education budgets. Ms. Terhune asked what the placeholder amount is. R. Fornier stated that the amount is approximately \$32,000.00, which is \$50,000.00 minus the current First Selectman salary amount of \$18,000.00.

Barry Stearns, 21 Cook Drive, asked for clarification on the towns that have Town Administrators. G. Marrion replied that Andover, Columbia, and Bolton have a Town Administrator and a part-time Selectman. Mr. Stearns asked for the average salary of First Selectmen in Table 6 of the wage comparison. G. Marrion replied that the average salary is \$67,000 and added that some of the towns have lower populations than Bolton. Mr. Stearns suggested that the public should decide on the increase through a referendum vote. R. Morra noted that increases are not done through referendums, and it has always been the decision of the Board of Selectmen. He added that increases to the salary are

typically provided in small increments each year; however, they are not always approved, and there has never been a parity adjustment that he is aware of.

Rhea Klein, (address not provided), shared concerns that there is no specific skillset required of the First Selectman. R. Morra explained that candidates such as the governor and other elected positions are not required to have specific qualifications and noted that they generally run on platforms based on various goals they wish to accomplish and a desire to manage and benefit the Town.

Bryce Aaronson, 149 Brandy Street, shared his concerns about the lack of transparency to the public on the justification for the increase and why the change is being requested at this time. He added that the First Selectman was aware of the salary when he ran for the position. R. Morra clarified that the increase is for the position, not for the person serving in the role, to provide fair compensation in accordance with the responsibilities of the job. He added that the Town has been working on the issue of adjusting the salary for a few years and has come to the point of making a decision on the amount. Mr. Aaronson asked why the information has not been made available to the public. J. Rupert replied that the information is on the website and has been outlined in the minutes of the subcommittee meetings that took place in January and February, which were both publicly advertised.

Elle King, 149 Brandy Street, noted that she is new to the town and stated that she finds it difficult to find information on the website, including the time and other details for today's meeting. She also shared her frustration of having to visit in person to review documents such as the budget proposal. T. Sadler agreed that it can be confusing to understand the Town processes and rules and noted that it can take some time to learn and navigate the website.

Barry Stearns commented that the information should be clearer and easier to find on the website as it is not obvious that the public would need to review minutes from the February meeting to get more information on the salary discussions. He added that he expected to receive a handout with more information at the public hearing tonight and encouraged the BOS to provide handouts in the future.

Cheryl Udin, 31 Keeney Drive, stated that it does say Public Hearing on the notice. She noted that she is not aware of anyone who receives double their salary as part of a salary increase and added that the Town faces enough challenges with the budget without the increase. Although Ms. Udin disagreed with doubling the salary of any elected official, she praised the First Selectman and board members for their significant and efficient accomplishments and the work that they do.

Richard Hayes, 139 Vernon Road, asked for clarification on a comment that was made about increases being based on Cost-of-Living Adjustments (COLAS). A. Gordon clarified that she did not mean to refer to COLAS and explained that increases are typically made in line with the contracted salary increases for unionized employees of the Town. Mr. Hayes explained that he has been working on the salary increase for four years as part of the Charter Commission. He stated that the Commission reviewed comparative salaries among Town Administrators, Town Managers, and both strong and weak Mayors and First Selectmen, and ultimately voted to recommend the increase to the Board of Selectmen. Mr. Hayes

explained that he has worked on the salary issue for four years as part of the Charter Commission. He emphasized that all meetings were open to the public and that the Commission made significant efforts to encourage public participation. Mr. Hayes concluded that the First Selectman's compensation should be both respectable and reflective of the role's demands.

Ron Carbone recommended using the term "compensation" instead of "salary," explaining that while salaries are often performance-based, elected officials' compensation reflects the scope of work involved.

Mary Terhune requested that a median salary be provided rather than an average in the wage comparison document.

G. Marrion suggested that another session should be held with a transparent notice outlining clear details on the meeting posted to the website along with the wage comparison data for reference. R. Morra stated that the Board cannot make that decision tonight and would need to add it to a future agenda. He thanked the public for their comments and invited them to stay for the Finance Committee meeting.

The Public Session concluded at 7:04 p.m.

Respectfully submitted by Kacie Cannon

Kacie Cannon

Please see the minutes of subsequent meetings for the approval of these minutes and any corrections hereto.