

To: The Strafford Selectboard

From: Lisa Kendall, Town Clerk/Treasurer

Date: December 15, 2015

Re: Pay and Compensation Subcommittee Report

As an elected official since March of 2006, I have been involved in many municipal training sessions and attended many conferences giving me the opportunity to associate with other Town Clerks and Treasurers in the State of Vermont. These trainings and conferences give clerks and treasurers a unique opportunity to exchange a wide range of information on how other offices handle their duties, including dog licensing, tax payments, WEB work, posting minutes, etc.

It also gives me the knowledge that each town is run differently and each town has different combinations of elected and appointed officers than Strafford does.

Take Sharon for example, with an elected town clerk who is paid \$38,200, an assistant town clerk paid \$3,000, a treasurer paid \$3,000, a finance manager who is paid \$35,122, an administrative assistant to the Selectboard who is paid \$31,824, and Lister's who are paid by the hour and according to the 2014 town report received \$8,300. A total of \$119,446 is paid to elected and hired employees for the Town of Sharon.

Tunbridge is another example. The Town Clerk is paid \$44,502, the Treasurer is paid \$18,540, the Administrative Assistant is paid \$17,435 and their Lister's received a total of \$14,397, or a total of \$94,874 paid to elected and hired employees.

The Town of Strafford has a Town Clerk/Treasurer/Selectboard Assistant paid \$42,806, an Assistant Town Clerk/Treasurer paid \$30,151 and part-time clerk who is paid \$13,066, Listers who are paid \$1200, and a Zoning Administrator who is paid \$1,000 for a total of \$88,223.

Chelsea pays a total of \$93,500; Pomfret \$135,308; Fairlee \$133,165; and Royalton \$139,820, all figures were taken from the 2014 Town Reports for each town.

As you can see Strafford is well under what all other town pay to elected and appointed officers to run a town office.

I'd like to point out on page 3 and page 7 of the report it states from the Rockefeller Comparative Assessment of Vermont's Towns and the Pay and Compensation Sub Committee Report says "On average, the 49 surveyed towns spent \$50,400 on administrative salaries, while Strafford spent \$86,025." To be clear the surveyed towns were only asked to report what the Town Clerk, Treasurer, and their assistant's made. It did not take into account if other towns paid an Administrative Assistant to the Selectboard, or if they had a finance manager, or what the Listers were paid.

Another point to make is that the Town of Strafford's office is open 36 hours per week and the Rockefeller Comparative Assessment of Vermont's Towns found that other offices were open an average of 27 hours per week. That's an additional 9 more hours the Town of Strafford office is open, which would explain higher number administrative expenditures.

On page 6 the Subcommittee reports that Strafford has 90 hours of staffing per week, but does not report the total wages for all the staff hours in the other towns. For example, Sharon staffed their office for 105 hours per week. Does this include the finance manager and the administrative assistant to the selectboard at a cost of \$66,946?

So if you want to be fair, you have to compare what Strafford pays for administrative salaries verses other towns, then you must also include all wages paid, including finance managers, selectboard assistant's and whether Listers in other towns are paid to keep office hours.

Currently in Strafford, there are no Lister hours, no finance manager, and no additional person as a selectboard assistant. I was just recently appointed as selectboard assistant at no additional salary, even though I have been doing the work for the past 10 years.

The Pay and Compensation Subcommittee Report on page 3 under Executive Summary states that "this report was completed as a result of concerns raised at Town meeting 2015 unsustainable spending on pay and compensation". However, this is an incorrect statement and it should be noted that VLCT was already contracted in December of 2014 to perform a pay and classification study. (see attached).

On page 9: "We recommend reducing town-office hours based on the Rockefeller Comparative Assessment of Vermont's Towns findings." Seems counterproductive and I/we have been told on many occasions by customer, researchers, and real estate appraisers that we have the best office hours around.

Also on page 9: "We recommend that an assistant town clerk and treasurer positions be used only on an as-needed basis." Again seems counterproductive to me and how efficient would this person be? What would this person be able to accomplish on an "as-needed basis"?

If you review the "Proposed scope of work and cost estimate" submitted by VLCT, you will see that many of the tasks on this list were not completed by the Subcommittee. No. 2: "Conduct onsite interviews of supervisors and employees to discuss job descriptions and job duties." Possibly if this had been done the Subcommittee would have developed a more accurate overview and a more comparable set of comparisons. There is still no pay range developed to guide the Town in how to set pay for new employees or what to pay experienced employees for their years of service.

To conclude, it is very disappointing that some Selectboard members do not acknowledge that this report is not comparing apples to apples when it analyzes Strafford's Town Office salaries and those of other towns. The Town of Strafford Administrative costs are \$88,223 while other towns range from 93,500 to 139,820 in administrative costs, with the exception of Rochester.

I'm not sure how this can be ignored.

Sincerely,

Lisa M Kendall
Town Clerk/Treasurer