

Town of Lyme  
Select Board  
03/04/2021

In an effort to address concerns and questions from the virtual little town meeting the Select Board offers the following statement.

First and foremost, the request to the Town to combine the Town Clerk/Tax Collector positions is not based on personal feeling to or about either of the current residents that presently hold the position of Town Clerk or Tax Collector. Both of these individuals are highly respected and valued. This request was based on functionality of the Town Offices only. Over the last 6 years various Boards have discussed the desirability of combining the positions of Town Clerk and Tax Collector.

For the 2021 budgeting process, the present Select Board researched the idea and decided the timing was appropriate to bring the proposal forward for consideration. If passed, the combined position will not take effect until 2022. The combined position would remain an elected position.

The Select Board believes, given the previous discussions, research findings and the successful changes in the Select Board office, that this is the very best thing the Town can do to enable the Town Clerk/Tax Collector office to run efficiently and effectively, considering we are a small town. Training, optimizing all positions, multi-tasking, and getting rid of redundancy in the job tasks will help for the future.

The town office employees have been working on cross training so that each person can fill in for another if something should happen and one of them is out for an extended amount of time. This is good business practice and enables stable operations.

The Select Board has reached out to other towns in New Hampshire and an informal survey tells us that out of the 96 towns that have a population of 2,200 or less (similar to Lyme), 83 have a combined Town Clerk/Tax Collector position. The feedback from these towns is overwhelmingly positive. When asked for pros and cons, most had only positive comments to communicate back to the Board.

The objective is to afford better availability to the public, optimize employee time efficiently and enhance the ability to cross train, allowing for consistent operations.

The position of Town Clerk was transitioned to full-time in 1997. Many other towns had stopped paying their Town Clerk with fees (which is the way they used to be paid). Recognizing the extra hours needed during intense election years, the Select Board and Budget Committee at that time researched the hours needed to cover the various duties and established a salary based on the yearly average of hours worked by the Clerk. This amounted to what was considered a full-time position. The job became salaried, including a benefit package to make the hours and job description equitable with other full-time employees. It was noted that few people were willing or able to work the number of hours necessary to serve the residents adequately and be in

compliance with state training and operation laws on a part time basis. Lyme did this because it was the fairest way to compensate the Town Clerk position.

Because both of these positions are paid on a salaried basis there is no hourly tracking to go back to. Working through the logistics of historical office activity, open hours and yearly responsibilities, we are able to provide what we feel is a realistic average year for an FTE number.

Town Clerk- The present position is .75 FTE. This salaried position is difficult to pin down a weekly hour work amount. The office is open to the public Mon-Wed-Fri from 8:00AM to 2:00PM. Employees often stay later to deal with paperwork or other issues that come up. The weeks around election times are full of nonstop requirements. There is at least one election every year, and every fourth year there are four. These are very intense times during office operations and always required many more hours than normally realized during the rest of the year. Other weeks can fluctuate from very busy times to a more normal work day. The FTE includes two (average) elections and the regular monthly town and state required work required. The 2 part time employees share 20 hours per week (average) to cover the Town Clerks office open hours and for vacation and other time when necessary.

Tax Collector-The present position is .225 FTE. This is also a salaried position and also fluctuates from very busy times to calm times depending on the tax collection cycle. Traditional open hours have been 10:00AM to 12:00PM on Monday (pre-Covid). The intense time for the Tax Collector position is during the months of December (taxes are due) and May (liening and deeding). The FTE has been calculated allowing for 12 weeks (from 16 to 40 hours per week) of busy times and 40 (8 hours per week) calm weeks.

The long-range goal of this change is to optimize positions within this town office. The Town has had multiple part-time positions that have been geared toward one task or one responsibility. It is clear that the most effective and efficient way for a small town to get the most horse power from its dedicated staff is to have multi task positions.