

Waterford Police Union

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Monday, March 1, 2010

First Selectman Daniel Steward
Town of Waterford
15 Rope Ferry Road
Waterford, CT
06385

Subject: Furlough Days

Mr. Steward,

Thanks for meeting with me on Friday, February 26, 2010 to discuss the furlough days that the town is requesting.

During our meeting you stated that the town will lay off two full time officers for 6 months unless we take the two furlough days, which is approximately \$20,000 in salary. You were unwilling to consider other cost savings that I brought up. I took the conversation as two furlough days or nothing. Why is the town not willing to hear our ideas other than accept two furlough days?

The town has invested in the two new officers and spent \$100,000 in salary and benefits in the last year. If they were laid off, the town would have to cover unemployment benefits for 6 months, which is no cost savings to the town budget. The town would pay unemployment benefits of approximately \$60,000 in order to save \$20,000 in police department salary.

I have noted a potential contract violation that I'd like you to be aware of prior to any decision to lay off full time employees. It's Section 9.4 of the contract between the town and our union. This section covers the department's part time employees. It states the following: "In the case of layoffs, no full time employees shall be laid off until all part time employees have been terminated". The contract language is clear. I am sure the town will not violate the current contract as it was agreed upon by our membership in good faith in 2006.

Waterford Police Department part time employees are not being asked to sacrifice anything, while full time employees are being asked to take the brunt of the town's requests. The part time employees are "at will" employee's, they do not receive any medical or retirement benefits. However, they are not asked to sacrifice while the town's loyal full time employees are expected too.

Last year alone, the Waterford Police Department had 1100 unfilled police shifts, which is \$320,000 in savings to the town budget already. There are times when the town has no officers patrolling, they are

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leaving town to pick up prisoners, assist other departments or inside the station tied up with an arrest. Laying off two full time officers will further reduce the departments responsibility to safe guard the town. If this happens, I hope that other departments i.e. New London Police, State Police, Montville Police, and East Lyme Police will be able to handle additional requests for mutual aid.

The Waterford Police Department has not increased in size since 1982, over 28 years, when the Crystal Mall was built. The town added 5 additional officers to cover this growth in 1982. Since then the town's business and tax revenue have grown four times, but no officers have been added to the department other than one Animal Control Officer who also patrols East Lyme. Our officers are doing more with less every day, and now are asked to take additional risks.

The Waterford Police Union has been financially and fiscally responsible with its union dues. We would be willing to consider a no interest one year loan to the town for \$20,000 to prevent any lay offs of its full time police department employees.

The Waterford Police Union has purchased approximately \$4000 in new equipment for the department in the past year. We recognized that the department could not purchase the equipment and stepped in to fill a budgetary gap. Even now we are willing to assist with union funds to purchase new equipment that has been requested by the town.

Officers have given their free time and worked unpaid for the betterment of the town. Several examples are the WADE and TRIAD program. They have participated in food drives and donated money to various worthy causes and Waterford High School scholarship programs. Their loyalty and dedication to the Town of Waterford is beyond reproach.

In a recent comment in The Day newspaper, Waterford Board of Finance member Bill Sheehan, who uses the screen name "wtfdnuCsailor" when commenting on The Day newspaper articles, predicted that the Town of Waterford will ask for additional furlough days to close the budget shortfall beyond the two days already requested by the town.

Here's what Sheehan stated: "Don't be surprised if the First Selectman and the Superintendent of Schools has to ask for more furlough days after the budget hearings."

Are the furlough days going to be a regular request from the town? Unfortunately, I would say yes.

I have reviewed the Waterford Police Department proposed budget and located areas where cost savings can be found instead of furlough days for our police officers.

- Deputy Chief Salary: currently WPD does not have a deputy chief, but there is a line item

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covering his half salary, which is approximately \$40,000. WPD has been almost 3 years without a Deputy chief, where has that salary been spent?

- Community Service Officer (CSO) budget: There are 9 Part Time employees of the Waterford Police Department but we are budgeted for 15 CSO's, with a line item of approximately \$50,000. Section 9.4 of our contract with the town states that "In the case of layoffs, no full time employees shall be laid off until all part time employees have been terminated"
- Marine Patrol Boat: Approximately \$21,000 in marine patrol for overtime salary, a marine patrol is not a necessary function and marine operations should be ceased.
- Cell Phones: Cellular Blackberry telephones have been issued to several WPD secretaries, \$100 for the license and \$45 per month for approximately \$1000 per year. Half of the department have been issued Blackberry Cell Phones.
- Unfilled Positions: WPD currently has two unfilled positions, one detective and one sergeant, approximately \$10,000 in savings.
- Midnight shift overtime: WPD is paying approximately \$23,000 in overtime to cover the vacancy of supervision on the midnight shift instead of promoting.
- New Vehicles/Fleet Management: WPD is scheduled for four new marked police vehicles and two unmarked police vehicles, approximately \$120,000. WPD can decline one new vehicle for a savings of approximately \$23,000
- Professional Fees: WPD budget to cover memberships to professional organizations for police commissioners and Chief, Deputy Chief, approximately \$1500 per year.
- Unpaid work: WPD Officers currently work 11 unpaid hours per year, which is approximately \$11,000 in savings to the town.
- Car Washing: \$1000 per year in car washing.
- Detective Division Salary: WPD is currently budgeted for three detectives and two detective sergeants, we currently have three detectives and one detective sergeant. WPD has an extra Detective Sergeant salary that is unused, savings of \$70,000.
- Statewide Narcotics Task Force: WPD currently does not have an officer assigned to the SNTF, but has budgeted approximately \$9000 for overtime.

These are just several ideas that I think would save the town from laying off its police officers.

In a recent letter to me, dated December 10, 2009, you stated that "The Town of Waterford has worked hard to bring our police force up to a full staff over the last few years.....the town needs your presence here to insure the safety of our townspeople and your peers on the force". Just that one statement sums up why furlough days or laying off police officers would be the wrong decision.

I hope we can work together to find a mutually beneficial agreement to prevent the furlough of full time employees. I look forward to meeting you in the near future to discuss this issue.

Working together with the community

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Very Truly Yours,

John Bunce
President
Waterford Police Union

Cc; RTM, BOF, The Day