

**SPECIAL MEETING  
Village of East Syracuse  
Board of Trustees  
November 18, 2013**

**Mayor Robert T. Tackman** called the special meeting of the Board of Trustees for Monday, November 18, 2013 to order at 6:05PM.

Present: Trustee James E. Carr, Jr., Deputy Mayor Barbara Falcone Quonce, Trustee Carol Para, Trustee Daniel J. Wagner, and Mayor Robert T. Tackman.

Also Present: Village Clerk Patricia J. Derby, Fire Chief Robert Russell, and Firehouse Caretaker James Brewster.

Five Village residents attended.

Purpose of meeting is to review Employee Handbook and review department operations and budget.

**Community Comments**

**Mayor Robert T. Tackman** reviewed the purpose for the meeting and the intention to conduct the meeting as a working session rather than a business meeting. Board of Trustees is working to educate themselves with Department operations and budgets before formal budget reviews with the department Heads and their projected department estimates.

Also reviewing Employee Handbook and policies. Will schedule a time to meet with employees to discuss proposed changes prior to adoption.

**David Boldt** stated that the Board has to let people know about these meetings.

**Mayor Tackman** noted that all meetings are noticed conducted under the Meeting Procedures of the Village of East Syracuse as well as NYS Open Meetings requirements.

**Sally Seeley** asked if the Board is now meeting every week.

**Mayor Tackman** reported that while they did also meet last Monday, Special Meeting for these work sessions are held when convenient for the Board but not necessarily each week.

## Discussion: Employee Handbook

Board is considering changes to employee handbook including:

§706 Vacation Policy, §707 Sick Leave Policy, and §708 Personal Leave. Proposing elimination of these sections and the creation of a new section 706 for Earned Benefit Time, as follows:

### 706 Earned Benefit Time

**Earned Benefit time** – the Village will no longer offer vacation, sick leave or personal leave for eligible full time employees, but instead hereby establishes paid leave time for Earned Benefit Time.

Full time employees earn benefit time based on length of continuous service. Employees become eligible for paid earned benefit time upon the completion of six (6) months of continuous service from the date of hire for full-time employment. Thereafter, earned benefit time is credited each January 1<sup>st</sup> for services completed as of the employee's anniversary date.

Earned benefit time for full-time employees is provided in accordance with the schedule listed below.

After Completion of:	Earned Benefit Leave
6 months	5 days
1 year	10 days
2 – 4 years	15 days
5 – 14 years	20 days
15 – 19 years	25 days
20 + years	30 days

**Union Employees** – the Village provides paid leave for union employees in accordance with the collective bargaining agreement. Refer to the collective bargaining agreement for details regarding leave benefits.

**Part-time and Temporary Employees** – the Village does not provide this benefit for part-time and temporary employees.

### Leave Schedules

Department heads have the absolute discretion in the approval of an employee's leave schedule. Seniority is the deciding factor when authorizing leave time.

### Payment of Unused Earned Benefit Time at Separation

A full-time employee who resigns, retires, or is laid off will receive cash payment for unused earned benefit time to which the employee is properly entitled at the employee's then current straight-tie rate of pay. To be eligible to receive this payment, an employee who is to resign or retire must give written notice at least two (2) weeks in advance of the last day of employment.

In the event an employee leaves employment due to disciplinary action, the employee will not receive a settlement for unused earned benefit leave time.

Employees will receive compensation for the unused leave time earned during the current calendar year. Such prorated benefits will be calculated based on the amount of service completed between January 1<sup>st</sup> and the employee's last day of service in the current calendar year.

Any leave time used by an employee prior to its being earned must be repaid to the Village upon separation from employment.

Union employees receive compensation in accordance with the collective bargaining agreement.

#### Advance Notice to Use Benefit Leave Time

Employees must notify their department head of their request to use earned benefit time at least one (1) day prior to taking such leave. The department head may not grant leave due to schedule conflicts or other extenuating circumstances.

**Discussion:** Board of Trustees reviewed the proposal to eliminate current sections for vacation leave, sick leave and personal leave. Asked to have inserted previously stated provisions for the use of time due to sickness and clarification that all leave time must now be used within the calendar year. There is no carry over nor payments made for un-used time.

**Fire Chief Robert Russell** suggested that these changes encourage all employees to go union. He continued, asking what the PBA members receive for benefits and if their will be changed as well.

**Mayor Tackman** noted that as a union all benefits are negotiated under a bargaining agreement.

Proposed changes to be added to policy are, as follows:

#### Use of Leave for Sickness

*Proper use of leave when sick by any eligible employee includes personal illness of the employee or an employee's visit to the doctor or dentist or other recognized medical practitioner. Employees may use a maximum of fifteen (15) available*

*leave as sick days per calendar year unless authorization is obtained from the Board of Trustees to use additional sick days.*

#### *Exhausted Leave*

*In the event of a prolonged illness, an employee who has exhausted his/her accrued leave may submit a written request to the Board of Trustees to receive additional paid sick leave. Such request must include a statement from the employee's physician listing the medical facts of the employee's condition and the estimated length of the employee's absence. The Board of Trustees, at its discretion, may allow other Village employees to donate available leave to the employee. An employee may donate a maximum of five (5) days from their leave balance per calendar year unless special permission is obtained to donate additional days from the Board of Trustees. Each employee who donates leave to another employee must sign a written release authorizing the Village to deduct such leave from their leave balance.*

#### *Advance Notice to Use Leave*

*Employees must notify their department head of their request to use leave as sick time according to the following schedule:*

<i>Department</i>	<i>Call-in Time Prior to Shift Start</i>
<i>Police Officers</i>	<i>As per contract</i>
<i>Dispatchers</i>	<i>1 1/2 hours</i>
<i>All other Employees</i>	<i>30 minutes</i>

#### *Physician's Verification*

*At the end of an employee's use of three (3) consecutive sick days, a physician's verification of the employee's illness and approval to return-to-work with or without work restrictions is required.*

*In addition, a department head may require that an employee provide proper documentation verifying an illness if it is suspected that the employee has developed a pattern of sick leave use or has used an excessive amount of leave. Failure to produce such documentation may result in the employee being docked for those days. Further, if it has been found the employee has been abusing the use of sick leave, disciplinary action shall be taken against the employee, in accordance with the collective bargaining agreement or Civil Service Law (Section 75), whichever is applicable.*

*Employees will receive compensation for unused leave time earned during the current calendar year. Such prorated benefits will be calculated based on the amount of service completed between January 1<sup>st</sup> and the employee's last day of service in the current calendar year.*

- §710 New York State Disability Coverage and §711 Workers' Compensation. Propose eliminating provision where Village will pay employees for the first five (5) days, as follows:

#### **710 New York State Disability Coverage**

New York State Disability benefits are available to all full-time employees as a benefit for employees who become disabled by a non-work related injury or illness.

Employees generally receive fifty percent (50%) of their previous average weekly wages to a specified maximum. The determination of whether an employee is eligible to receive disability benefits is made by the insurance carrier.

Eligible employees are covered for the period of disability specified by their physician, up to a maximum of twenty-six (26) weeks. ~~There is a seven (7) calendar day waiting period before disability payments begin. The Village will pay employees their regular wages for the first five (5) working days of the leave. An employee's accrued sick time will not be charged.~~

Benefits, including vacation, sick, and personal time, will not accrue during a disability leave that extends more than thirty (30) calendar days. Employees will not be paid for any Village observed holidays that occur while on such leave.

Eligible employees who are on an authorized unpaid leave of absence for any reason other than their own disability will remain eligible for New York State Disability insurance benefits for up to four (4) weeks after the unpaid leave of absence commences should a qualifying injury or illness occur. After being out of work for more than four (4) weeks on an authorized unpaid leave of absence, employees will no longer be eligible for New York State Disability insurance benefits.

#### **711 Workers' Compensation**

Workers' Compensation benefits, including payment of medical costs and replacement of lost wages up to the regulated maximum, are provided for all eligible employees who suffer a job related injury. The cost of Workers' Compensation is paid entirely by the Village.

~~There is a seven (7) calendar day waiting period before workers' compensation benefits begin for employees who are unable to work due to a work related injury. The Village will pay employees their regular wages for the first five (5) working days of said injuries. An employee's accrued sick time will not be charged. Should the employee receive workers' compensation benefits for this waiting period, the employee must reimburse the Village for such payment.~~

It is the employee's responsibility to submit a written report of the injury to their department head and the Village Clerk within twenty-four (24) hours of the accident in order to ensure prompt coverage of the claim. In the event of the employee's incapacitation, the department head will complete and submit the required forms on behalf of the injured employee.

Benefits, including vacation, sick, and personal time, will not accrue during a workers' compensation leave that extends more than thirty (30) calendar days. Employees will not be paid for any Village observed holidays that occur while on such leave.

- §701 Health Insurance. Proposed increasing amount of time of service with the Village be increased from 10 years to 15, as follows:

To be eligible to purchase health insurance coverage beyond the limits allowed by COBRA, the retiree (employee) must be age fifty (50) or older, have at least ~~ten (10)~~ **fifteen (15)** years of service with the Village, and be eligible to receive a pension from the New York State Employees' Retirement System. Such health insurance will continue as long as all required contributions are made to the Village in the manner prescribed.

**Deputy Mayor Barbara Falcone Quonce** asked that a copy of proposed changes be distributed to all Departments for review prior to employee meeting.

## **Review of Health & Dental renewal**

**Village Clerk Patricia J. Derby** reviewed the proposed new health plan and coverage's. The current plan for the Village is no longer available with Excellus. The new plan SAAZ is most similar to current levels of coverage, with the exception that children will now be required to pay a co-pay charge and mail in prescription plan increases slightly.

Goetzmann & Associates looked at other offering from Excellus and well as other carriers including MVP, SSA, United, and Emblem Health. All other plans either do not meet our criteria or are more expensive for lesser services.

Dental insurance will increase slightly 2.11%.

This plan is a 7.85% reduction. This offers approximately \$23,000 in overall cost savings to the Village. Employees will see a slight reduction in their weekly contribution.

Dan Goetzmann is available to meet with the Board and employees to explain more fully these changes.

Will Board will hold a special meeting with employees and retirees to review the proposed changes to the Employee Handbook as well as the new health benefits plan on **Monday, December 2<sup>nd</sup> at 8AM.**

### **Parks Department Budget and Operations Review**

The Board looked at current Department expenditures for recreation programs, pool operations, and senior activities. Looked at revenues, especially senior trips with the intentions that fees should cover all costs for the trips. The Board, and the Parks Director monitor throughout the year the trips expenses.

Suggested that utilities and energy uses, as well as phones be reviewed separately for the Village as a whole.

### **Justice Court Budget and Operations Review**

Court budget is already very lean. Most equipment or purchases are made with Court Administration grant funds. Reviewed revenues from Court fines and fees.

### **Other Business**

**Motion** – by Mayor Tackman, seconded by Trustee Carr – To enter into Executive Session to discuss an employee matter.

At 7:25PM the Board met in Executive Session. The Board discussed issues and decided to permit attendance at training for previously approved conference.

The Board exited Executive Session at 7:56PM and adjourned the meeting.

Respectfully submitted by,

Patricia J. Derby  
Village Clerk

