



## **SELECT BOARD**

Executive Session Meeting Minutes

Monday, February 12, 2024

5:45 PM

Virtual Only

**Select Board Members Present:** Jim Snyder-Grant, Fran Arsenault, Dean Charter, David Martin, Alissa Nicol

**Additional Attendance:** John Mangiaratti, Town Manager, Paul Hodnett, Labor Council, Marianne Fleckner, Director of Administration and Finance, Thomas Begin, Assistant Town Manager, Lisa Tomyl, Executive Assistant

**Mr. Martin moved, seconded by Ms. Nicol to enter into executive session to discuss strategy with respect to collective bargaining under purpose 3 as an open session may have a detrimental effect on the negotiating position of the public body and approved unanimously 5-0.**

Mr. Mangiaratti updated the Board regarding the ongoing discussion related to health insurance and the current practice of covering the employee share of the increase in premiums (22.8% increase), explaining this has been done as an exchange for negotiations based around moving away from the Health Insurance Trust. Mr. Mangiaratti explained he is looking for support going forward with the following process. The Town has been informally negotiating with the unions including the schools, recently completing the 2<sup>nd</sup> group session. All representatives agree that the Town must leave the trust and transition to an alternative health insurance system, narrowing down the options to either GIC or MIIA. Both options require the town and schools to negotiate separately and enter either option as individual entities. The School Committee met Saturday for their budget workshop and had some discussion regarding GIC, which has some cost saving variables. Town staff met with MIIA today to discuss their plans and found that the savings are about the same as GIC but with more flexibility. One of the challenges with GIC is that the Town would not be able to join until January 2025, which would require the Town to remain in the trust for 6 months, which carries a real cost to both the town and employees. We do not recommend this route as it is not ideal for the town financially. The town would save approximately \$400K-500K by joining MIIA on July 1, 2024. Savings with the GIC would be about the same, but would be would not experience that savings until January 1, 2025. Ms. Nicol questioned about retirees being pulled over to MIIA along with current employees after transitioning to a new plan only 6 months ago, Mr. Mangiaratti noted that retirees would be moved over but not until January, allowing them to stay in their current plans for an entire year. Mr. Hodnett clarified that the GIC has requirements in place that identify the timeline for new communities looking to join, indicating that the timeline for notification to allow the town to join in July has passed. Additionally, he noted that MIIA has move advantageous timeline requirements, which the Town would still be eligible for to join on July 1, 2024. Mr. Mangiaratti noted that town leadership are holding another meeting with thtown unions tomorrow and drafting a MOA for the union representatives to review and bring back to their membership to ultimately ratify. He indicated that the feedback from the unions is that the MIIA plans and



design proposals to date are of interest to them and they would prefer going to MIIA over GIC. The hope is that we leave the meeting tomorrow with a consensus and preliminary agreement, dependent upon union ratification. It was noted that if one union do not agree with the MOA or proposal, we will need to reassess and identify whether the Town will need to exercise their rights within chapter 32B and move to a formal process. Mr. Hodnett noted the Select Board takes the formal vote, but must provide a certified notification to the unions at least 2 days before the vote on the MOA is taken. Mr. Martin questioned if MIIA has Blue Cross plans – Mr. Mangiaratti noted that MIIA has similar Blue Cross Blue Shield (BCBS) plans that are currently offered through the HIT, noting that currently 1/3 of employees are enrolled in Harvard Pilgrim plans through HIT, and would need to transition into BCBS offerings. Mr. Mangiaratti commented that the town could keep the same contribution splits providing savings to both employees and the town. He also noted that both the police and fire unions like the high deductible plans with MIIA, that also offer a health savings account (HSA). Mr. Martin questioned on the formal process – Mr. Hodnett noted if the Select Board accepted provisions 22-23 of chapter 32B, it would permit the Board to decide between GIC and MIIA, consulting with unions, that would move the town to GIC, however the intent is to stay away from the formal process while the unions work with the town in a collaborative manner. Mr. Martin questioned the cost difference switching to MIIA – Mr. Mangiaratti noted that a plan could be created closely mirroring what is already in place as well as a plan that mirrors GIC, which both would present savings to the Town. Ms. Nicol requested to having firmer numbers for the cost of the program leading up to Town Meeting since she believes the school district is moving towards GIC.

Mr. Charter voiced his approval pursuing the current route. Mr. Martin questioned when an agreement would be made before Town Meeting, Mr. Mangiaratti noted it would have to be by February 29<sup>th</sup>, or the Board would have to go towards the formal process. Mr. Mangiaratti disclosed that he is currently a member of the MMA Board of Directors through his capacity as Vice-President of the MMMA and that MIIA and MMA are separate organizations but share a CEO, and any decisions made toward MIIA has no benefit to him in his capacity as a Board member, and is asking the Board for their support in moving toward a MIIA benchmark plan that is closer to the GIC plan than the current plan structure.

**Ms. Nicol moved, seconded by Mr. Martin to support the Town Manager in its negotiation with town public unions with the intent of moving the town unions to the midpoint of the MIIA Health insurance program and unanimously approved 5-0 by roll call vote.**