

Town of Loudon

Selectmen's Work Session Minutes

Wednesday, August 12, 2026

Time: 6:00 p.m.

1. Call to Order

Chairman Gilman called the work session to order and noted that Selectmen Bilodeau, Griffin, and Gilman were present. Also present were Town Administrator Brenda Pearl, Fire Chief Tom Blanchette, Police Chief Dana Flanders, and Road Agent Russ Pearl.

Chairman Gilman stated that the discussion would remain in public session and requested that everyone refer to positions rather than individual employees when discussing compensation matters. He noted the purpose of the discussion was to review and refine a proposed wage scale structure for future budgeting purposes.

2. Police Cruiser Replacement Discussion

Police Chief Flanders reported that he continues to await the final findings from the electrician's insurance carrier regarding the police cruiser that was damaged. He advised that Primex had indicated the Town would receive approximately \$21,000 for the vehicle plus 80% reimbursement for equipment installed in the vehicle.

Chief Flanders informed the Board of a fully equipped 2021 Chevrolet Tahoe police vehicle being auctioned through Municibid. The vehicle has approximately 30,000 miles and 7,000 engine hours, with bidding expected to close the following week. He requested guidance on whether to pursue the vehicle as a potential replacement.

Board members discussed concerns regarding the high engine hours. Chairman Gilman stated that he is "a firm believer of engine hours" and expressed concern about purchasing a vehicle that had not been physically inspected. Several members noted that engine hours significantly affect the usable life of police vehicles and should be considered alongside mileage.

No action was taken. The Board agreed to continue gathering information and revisit the matter at a future meeting.

3. Wage Scale and Labor Grade Review

The Board conducted a comprehensive review of the proposed labor grade and compensation matrix developed by department heads.

Town Administrator Pearl explained that the latest draft incorporated two changes from earlier versions: removal of the separate part-time police administrative assistant classification and consolidation of the part-time equipment operator and part-time mechanic positions.

Minimum Wage Scale Discussion

Chairman Gilman expressed concern that the proposed Grade 1 starting wage of \$14.51 per hour was too low to attract applicants.

He stated that "I don't think anybody in this town should be making \$14.51" and stated that the Town must establish a more competitive entry-level rate if it expects to recruit employees successfully.

Selectman Bilodeau agreed and commented that current labor market conditions generally require wages closer to \$20 per hour for entry-level workers. Fire Chief Blanchette also agreed that the proposed starting wage was low.

The Board discussed increasing the Grade 1, Step 1 base rate to \$15.00 per hour while maintaining the overall structure of the pay plan. Chief Blanchette advised that raising the base wage from \$14.51 to \$15.00 could likely be absorbed within the current Fire Department compensation budget.

Structure of Labor Grades

Chairman Gilman raised concerns that, under the draft, employees at the top of one labor grade could potentially earn more than employees starting in the next higher labor grade. He stated that situations where a subordinate employee is paid more than a newly hired supervisor could create organizational and morale issues.

The Board discussed whether each labor grade should begin at or above the maximum of the preceding grade to maintain a clear progression between classifications.

Merit and Step Progression

The Board discussed how merit increases would function within the proposed system. Department heads explained that:

- Cost-of-living adjustments (COLAs) would apply to the entire wage scale annually.
- Merit increases would be awarded through advancement to another step.
- Employees who have reached the top step of a labor grade would receive COLA adjustments but could not advance further without promotion to a higher classification.

Fire Chief Blanchette summarized the tradeoff, stating that the plan would reduce discretionary wage adjustments but provide "structure" and predictable opportunities for advancement.

Fire Department Call Member Compensation

A lengthy discussion focused on compensation for call firefighters and EMTs.

Town Administrator Pearl reported that six current call members are paid \$14.51 per hour. Fire Chief Blanchette explained that call members are compensated only when responding to calls, attending meetings, or participating in training and that many volunteer primarily out of a desire to serve the community.

Selectman Bilodeau characterized the compensation level as inadequate, stating that paying firefighters approximately \$14.50 per hour to respond to emergencies was "ludicrous." Chairman Gilman noted that firefighters face substantial risks during emergency operations and questioned whether the compensation appropriately reflected those risks.

Position Classification Review

No final labor grade structure was adopted.

By consensus, the Board directed Town Administrator Pearl to:

- Rework the labor grade matrix using a Grade 1, Step 1 starting wage of \$15.00 per hour.
- Recalculate labor grade progression using a consistent percentage-based structure.
- Distribute an updated draft to department heads and the Board for further review.

Chairman Gilman summarized the Board's direction by stating that the objective was to "build it once" and develop a future compensation plan that could be presented as part of the next budget process.

4. Budget Development Schedule

Town Administrator Pearl presented the proposed FY 2027 budget schedule.

After discussion, the Board determined that a September 2 department head meeting focused on major budget items and warrant articles was unnecessary because those discussions could occur during regular departmental budget reviews.

5. Road Agent Requests

Paving Work

Road Agent Russ Pearl reported that paving work near the bridge and School Street area was scheduled for the following day. He indicated that favorable pricing and contractor availability might create an opportunity to complete additional paving and patching work beyond what had already been authorized.

Board members discussed potential additional expenditures of approximately \$20,000 but expressed reluctance to authorize funding without a detailed proposal.

Chairman Gilman stated that any additional expenditure should be brought before the Board during a regular meeting and placed on the agenda so it could be discussed publicly and formally.

Public Safety Complex Drainage and Paving Project

Road Agent Pearl described a proposed project to correct drainage problems and repave portions of the Public Safety Complex driveway and parking area. He explained that the project would include grading improvements, installation of two catch basins, tie-ins to existing drainage infrastructure, and repaving work. Estimated cost was approximately \$20,000.

Chairman Gilman requested a formal written proposal so the Board could consider the matter at a regular meeting and vote on funding through the proper process.

6. Follow-Up on Police Cruiser Discussion

Near the conclusion of the meeting, Chief Flanders reported that the damaged Loudon police cruiser has approximately 3,556 engine hours after roughly two years of service, providing a basis for comparison with the auction vehicle previously discussed.

Chief Flanders offered to travel to Pennsylvania to inspect the auction vehicle before bidding if the Board wished. Board members concluded that the matter could wait until a regular meeting and that additional information, including maintenance records and remote inspection options, should be reviewed first.

7. Nonpublic Session

- a. Chairman Gilman made a motion to enter nonpublic session at **8:03 PM** per RSA 91-A:3, II(c) *Matters which, if discussed in public, would likely affect adversely the reputation of any person, **other than a member of this board**, unless such person requests an open meeting. This exemption shall extend to include any application for assistance or tax abatement or waiver of a fee, fine or other levy, if based on inability to pay or poverty of the*

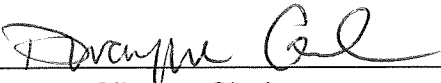
- applicant*. Selectman Griffin seconded the motion. Roll call vote: Chairman Gilman - yes, Selectman Griffin – yes, Selectman Bilodeau – yes. All in favor, the motion carries.
- b. Chairman Gilman made a motion to come out of nonpublic session at **8:51 PM**.
Selectman Bilodeau seconded the motion. All in favor, the motion carries.

Adjournment

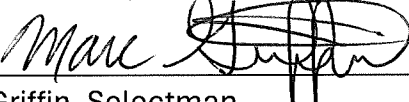
Motion by Chairman Gilman to adjourn at **8:51 PM**; seconded by Selectman Griffin. All in favor; motion carried.

Respectfully submitted,
Brenda M. Pearl, Town Administrator

Loudon Board of Selectmen



Dwayne Gilman, Chairman



Marc Griffin, Selectman

Roger Bilodeau, Selectman