

## First Selectman

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**From:** Jennifer Cox <jennifer3280@gmail.com>  
**Sent:** Monday, May 22, 2023 3:56 PM  
**To:** First Selectman  
**Subject:** Re: question on town employee positions

Gotcha. I'll speak up in favor.

On Mon, May 22, 2023, 3:47 PM First Selectman <[selectman@colchesterct.gov](mailto:selectman@colchesterct.gov)> wrote:

I totally agree with you. This is why I've been speaking with members of the BOS & BOF for bipartisan support on hiring a firm to conduct a salary survey for all our employees.

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**From:** Jennifer Cox <[jennifer3280@gmail.com](mailto:jennifer3280@gmail.com)>  
**Sent:** Friday, May 19, 2023 6:41 PM  
**To:** First Selectman <[selectman@colchesterct.gov](mailto:selectman@colchesterct.gov)>  
**Subject:** Re: question on town employee positions

Hello First Selectman Bisbikos,

Thank you for your thorough response! I appreciate the details. I know you answered my question, but your response led me to another question. If nine employees left for high pay, why is Colchester not paying more? You truly get what you pay for, and experience can often save a town (or business, etc) money by being efficient. I guess my question also relates to the proposed budget - with a 0% increase, how does the town offer the required pay for experienced professionals?

I understand that you are very busy, so you do not need to respond. But I feel strongly that people should be paid their worth, especially those that work for education, towns, and hospitals.

Thank you again for your response.

Best,

Jennifer Cox

7 Ivy Ct, Colchester, CT 06415

On Tue, May 16, 2023 at 4:09 PM First Selectman <[selectman@colchesterct.gov](mailto:selectman@colchesterct.gov)> wrote:

Good afternoon,

I'd like to start by thanking you for your inquiry rather than believing some of the disinformation that is being thrown around in the public. I always appreciate when people come to the source rather than believe and spread a false rumor.

You stated that Colchester has had many town employees leave in the past year, which is true. Partly this is due to a national phenomenon that is happening to employers across the nation and across all industries. We are also losing people due to circumstances unique to Colchester. In truth, Colchester has been losing trained, knowledgeable, experienced staff for many years because our wages and benefits are below market in many instances. For instance, we do not offer a defined benefit retirement program like the state and many other municipalities. While it has been talked about for years, no one has been willing to take the bull by the horns on this one. I have inquired with both the BOS and BOF members about hiring a firm to conduct a town-wide salary survey on all our 115+/- full and PT employees. I have been told some municipalities do this one every ten years and saw where the town of Wethersfield recently approved this at their town council meeting.

You asked me what employees have left since I began? Please see the breakdown below:

7 retired (with one referencing a difficult working relationship with a Water Dept Employee)

4 were taken from the town side and given jobs with the town BOE at higher salaries.

1 Town Planner went to the smaller town of Hebron for a higher salary.

1 Public Works Exec Assistant left for a higher salary but also referenced a difficult working relationship with a Water Dept Employee

1 Interim Public Works director returned to his prior employment and cited a difficult working relationship with a Water Dept Employee

1 Wetlands officer was offered a 12K raise by the prior Colchester First Selectman who was unable to get that approved, subsequently left Colchester for another job opportunity (However, this employee agreed to come back to work for me on a Part Time basis to help us with the Norton Park project)

1 Zoning Enforcement Officer was offered a 10K raise by the prior Colchester First Selectman who was unable to get that approved, subsequently left Colchester for another job in another state.

1 Social Services Coordinator left for a higher salary

1 Youth Services Program Coordinator left due to her pregnancy

1 Admin assistant in the Police Department left to pursue a different career

1 Part time clerk in my office left to pursue starting her own business

1 Deputy Assessor left to become the Assessor for the town of Coventry

1 Zoning Enforcement Officer left for higher salary with another municipality

1 AP Payroll left for another position

1 Finance Director for personal reasons

2 Terminations

We have gathered this information through exit interviews, verbal conversations, and resignation letters. None ever cited the First Selectman as a reason for leaving. Three of these employees all cited a difficult working relationship with one employee in the Sewer & Water Dept.

I feel the fact that our old Wetlands Officer and former Director of Operations both were willing to come back after they left and work on a part-time, or interim basis, shows that rumors of a toxic work environment are false. Also, the HR director who went to the BOE, ultimately chose to return to work for the town (even though they returned to the town, that person is listed above as having left).

When the prior first selectman was here, our Director of Operations left to the smaller town of Lebanon for more than \$30,000 in additional salary. Ten years ago, we lost an assistant assessor to a smaller town for \$10,000 more per year in salary, a four-and-a-half-day work week, and a real pension program. That employee still works for that other town today whereas we have filled that position twice.

What a lot of people do not realize is that "municipal government" is a career of its own. When we take the time to train employees, we need to find a way to retain them. While we have lost employees to other towns for more money, sometimes we hired the lost employee's replacement at a salary that was higher than the experienced employee we just lost. Now a new employee is learning about Colchester on the job and making more money than a seasoned employee we just lost. However, it should be noted that not all turnover is bad as we have made many excellent hires.

The staffing turnover in Colchester has been an issue for many years and this cannot be a motto for success. If other towns, many times smaller towns, see the value of our employees, we need to see that same value. I am hopeful I can convince our BOS and BOF to conduct a salary survey as has been done in other Connecticut municipalities.

Sincerely,

Andreas Bisbikos

First Selectman

**From:** Jennifer Cox <[jennifer3280@gmail.com](mailto:jennifer3280@gmail.com)>  
**Sent:** Friday, May 12, 2023 11:15 AM  
**To:** First Selectman <[selectman@colchesterct.gov](mailto:selectman@colchesterct.gov)>  
**Subject:** Re: question on town employee positions

Thank you. I worry about clean drinking water!

Jenn

On Fri, May 12, 2023, 10:10 AM First Selectman <[selectman@colchesterct.gov](mailto:selectman@colchesterct.gov)> wrote:

Hi Jen

Thanks for reaching out. I'll get you some information next week.

Sincerely,

Andreas

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**From:** Jennifer Cox <[jennifer3280@gmail.com](mailto:jennifer3280@gmail.com)>  
**Sent:** Thursday, May 11, 2023 4:22 PM  
**To:** First Selectman <[selectman@colchesterct.gov](mailto:selectman@colchesterct.gov)>  
**Subject:** question on town employee positions

Hi Mr. Bisikos,

I know that when a new Selectman (or Mayor, Governor, etc) starts their administration, it is expected that some town employees switch over to better match the goals of the Selectman. Higher level administration would be one, for example. It seems like Colchester has had many town employees leave in the past year. Would you be able to tell me what positions have seen turnover since you began? It worries me a little, since a town requires experience mixed with youthfulness!

Thank you,

Jennifer Cox

7 Ivy Ct

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