

Town Administrator Search Committee

Meeting Date: July 13, 2021

Members in attendance: Joe D'Amore, Chief Jeff Gillen, Chief Bob Valentine, Ruth Rivard, Janet Nolan, Beth Cunniff, Kathy Alesse, Greg Labrecque and remote Rebecca Oldham.

Meeting Start Time: 5:35 PM

- Meeting will follow agenda as presented.
- All members introduced themselves.
- Organizing principles; how group should operate to protect job applicant's privacy. Access to job box, should Katheryn remain with access or give to another? Joe offered to pick up resumes in person to distribute to protect privacy. Bob had concerns that resumes had already been distributed to some members of the Board of Selectmen. Moving forward that will not happen.
- Search task; Jeff shared his questions and concerns that this 9-member board would be responsible to screen, recommend and present candidates to the BOS. We should ask to hire a company to vet the candidates, this is such an important position that a professional company would have the ability to check into the candidates and verify qualifications. Janet agreed. Greg brought up a point that there isn't an application deadline on the current posting. He confirmed that with Katheryn. She said that the position had been posted for 30 days and then taken off the website. The job would need to be posted again. Jeff mentioned again the need to hire a company, one that would check and vet the candidates. Joe asked if we should vote to request the BOS to consider a hiring consultant. Joe mentioned he volunteered the agenda he was not given a charge from the BOS.
- Greg felt we should start at the beginning, he motioned that Joe should be the chair, second Jeff, Ruth asked for discussion. Members voted unanimously to appoint Joe as the chair. Joe requested that someone step forward to take the minutes. Beth agreed. Joe motioned to appoint Beth as the secretary, second Janet. Vote unanimous.
- Is it the job of the committee to be a search or screening committee? If a consultant is hired the second would be cheaper. Janet felt most consultants prefer to take charge of the search. Greg mentioned the Collins Institute of Boston just handled the Superintendent position that way but it is expensive. If the consultants start the search, they would meet to discuss the job description, collect the resumes and recommend candidates. Jeff mentioned that Georgetown used/using MPI for a Town Administrator position. Janet agreed a better job description is needed. Rebecca mentioned that a hybrid model may reduce the cost burden. The committee would start the process, the consultant would handle the legal and background checks. Janet asked, should the BOS put together the job description. Joe noted that the Government Study Committee did not write a job description but they put together a comprehensive guide which could be applied. Greg mentioned that the town would use Reserve Funds to pay the cost of the consultant, he was glad Ruth of the Finance Board was a member of the committee. Ruth could not speak for the Finance Board, but noted that last year the Finance Board supported the use of Reserve Funds to cover the costs associated with the loss of the Finance Director. Kathy suggested that the committee present details to the BOS for the next meeting, Monday, July 19, 2021. So, they could discuss actual proposals. Bob agreed with Rebecca's suggestion of the hybrid and the committee screens with a consultant. Joe mentioned if we handle it ourselves

there is liability to consider. Bob reminded the group that the Fire Chief position was open for two years. Jeff mentioned the importance of following proper hiring procedures during the interview process. That the committee needs to define our charge. We could check with Georgetown and Boxford who recently or are in the process of hiring a Town Administrator. Rebecca mentioned that the Merrimack Valley Planning Commission just hired an Executive Director and used Paradigm Associates. The committee should align from the start with a professional company to deflect liability, ask the proper questions, know what not to ask and to use executive session properly.

- Greg asked the question of when the BOS wants to fill this position. Going out to bid will take months. Ruth commented that the hybrid as discussed would cost less, not requiring an RFR. Greg mentioned the need for a deadline and a new advertisement with a better job description. Ruth felt that those reading the post are aware of the requirements of a Town Administrator. Additional discussion of the job posting. Rebecca confirmed there is a link on the website to a detailed job description. Joe mentioned that the Town Government Study Committee put together an appendix which was written as a reference to put together a job description.
- Executive Session Rules; Joe felt most of the work to follow would be done in executive session, Bob, Rebecca and Ruth agreed that the committee would follow MGL in order to protect the privacy of the applicants. Greg reminded the group that all meetings would open in general session, hiring a search firm, discussing the job qualifications and approval of meeting minutes would all be done in open session. Brief discussion of the in box and who would have control. Joe recommended caution in emailing or using the public server. Jeff asked about communications. Joe stated that the use of emails to set meeting times and dates and agendas is fine.
- Joe started the discussion of setting the next meeting and how often the committee should meet. The next meeting will be held on Tuesday, July 20th at 5:30, Zoom will be offered. Jeff will be on vacation.
- Open Items; Ruth mentioned Boxford just hired a Town Administrator and posted information on the website and asked the residents for feedback, questions or concerns. Joe mentioned the use of Survey Monkey, but Ruth felt that added extra layers and communication with the residents was preferred.
- Greg excused himself and left the meeting at 6:30.
- Kathy recommended that before the Monday meeting of the BOS that this committee prepare information to give the BOS regarding consultant firms available and the costs. Rebecca offered to contact Paradigm Associates, Janet offered to contact MPI, Jeff offered to check with Georgetown and Ruth offered to contact the Collins Center of Boston. Joe asked each to send an email with the discussed information.
- Joe asked for a motion to adjourn the meeting, Bob made a motion to close, second Janet.
- Meeting adjourned at 6:35.