

TOWN OF GROVELAND

2019 OCT 24 AM 11:48

TOWN CLERK  
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6:31 P.M. – Call meeting to order

BOARD OF SELECTMEN

MEETING MINUTES

Monday, September 23, 2019

Groveland Town Hall

183 Main St, Groveland, MA 01834

This meeting was not televised.

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**APPOINTMENTS:**

Appointment of Karen LeBel, 16 Rollins St, to the Recreation Committee through June 30, 2020. Motion made by Selectman Bill O’Neil for favorable appointment, seconded by Selectman Wood. Unanimous all in favor.

Appointment of Jessica Stokes, 7 Cannon Hill Rd Ext, to the Recreation Committee through June 30, 2020. Motion made by Selectman Bill O’Neil for favorable appointment, seconded by Selectman Wood. Unanimous all in favor.

**WORK SESSION:**

Discussion about the Town Administrator/Town Manager position and process:

- What are the benefits to the Town?
- What will the position be called?
- What is the Board looking to accomplish with this position?
- What authority will they have?
  - Who will report to them?
  - Will they have appointing authority or recommending authority?
- Discuss the next steps:
  - Other BOS Workshops?
  - Public/employee/board input?
  - Other

Chair Dunn made a statement that this meeting is only a work session, and not a public input session. There is no one currently in attendance, however, if anyone attends, there will not be public comment.

Chair Dunn stated that after tonight’s meeting, he does not feel that the Finance Director should be present at the meetings to discuss this topic. He believes it is doing a disservice to the Finance Director, as if this moves forward and she plans to apply, it will look unfavorable towards her.

Selectwoman Kastrielis feels that there should be day-to-day oversight. She feels that as an elected Selectmen, they should not be expected to be in town hall conducting daily business. There should be someone with a management presence. Someone should be here to oversee department heads and staff. She also feels that personnel matters should be handled privately, by a Town Manager, and not in a public setting, like an executive session. She believes there would be cost savings by eliminating redundancies and more streamlined purchases. Overtime application of grants would become part of that position. She would also expect that individual would provide oversight to projects, like 23 School St. These are her initial thoughts, and may have more as things are discussed.

Selectman Watson feels that some of the items that Selectwoman Kastrinelis brought up were under the control of the Water and Sewer Commissioners. He believes those matters that fall under elected boards should be brought to the public, so the public is aware of what is going on, so if you want to change what happens there, maybe the public would vote differently. Selectman Watson doesn't think it makes sense that personnel grievances go through the Town Administrator and/or Personnel Director. Grievances should be heard by someone outside of the town hall. He is not sold on this position and his main reason is because of cost. Looking at the breakdown that was handed out see Rowley, closest to Groveland's population. Their Town Administrator is paid \$120k to \$138k. They also have two assistant Town Administrators. They also have a BOS Admin Asst. Georgetown has a secretary to the Board of Selectmen, Hadley, Lexington, both have an Administrative Assistant for the BOS and several other assistants. Not only are these towns paying a town administrator, but they are still paying for additional staff. Before you put this to the townspeople, some questions need to be answered. What is this going to cost us? How much are my taxes going to go up? "I'd like to see the taxpayers get a break. I think it's about time to give back to the taxpayers." He feels that the town administrator should be an attorney to save money on litigation. In West Newbury, the Town Clerk is an attorney and they save money. Maybe there is an attorney looking to retire, they may want to take a job as a Town Administrator.

Selectman Wood disagrees with Selectman Watson. He feels we're doing a disservice to the town by only meeting twice a month. He also doesn't agree that the Town Administrator should be an attorney. Unless someone has a buddy they are trying to get a job here. The Finance Director is already doing most of this work, it's a natural progression to change her role, add some money, and give her the authority.

Selectman O'Neil isn't really concerned with what other towns are paying. He doesn't like to compare towns and feels it is irrelevant. Groveland should pay what they want, if someone doesn't want that salary, then they should go elsewhere. He's looking at approximately \$20,000 more than the current budgeted salary (Finance Director salary) and that would only be a drop in the bucket to the taxpayers. He is in favor of this and feels this should move forward as expeditiously as possible.

Chair Dunn discussed when this first topic came up. He met with West Newbury to discuss their process. Now, he's heard that West Newbury is having issues with authority and the new Town Manager still has to get too much authorization from the BOS at their meetings.

Selectman O'Neil feels the authority needs to be given. If not, the structure is not going to work, the Town Manager would become obsolete. Selectman Wood agrees, the authority needs to be given.

Chair Dunn feels the Board should make a pros and cons list. Selectwoman Kastrinelis liked Selectman O'Neil's statement that a Town Manager is a natural evolution of progress. She feels the Board has done a good job changing to highly professional positions, now we need to add oversight to the positions. Someone should be here to see and make sure the jobs are getting done. The BOS should define the scope of authority to best serve Groveland. It doesn't matter if they have an elected board. All appointments go through the BOS, they oversee all employees, therefore a Town Manager should oversee all employees. For the amount of taxes she pays, she expects matters to be handled efficiently and expeditiously. Decisions shouldn't be based on the ten people that show up at a meeting. We should be broadcasting a positive image for that town.

Chair Dunn- if we move this way, what will be the role of the BOS? Are we giving up all our authority? Selectwoman Kastrinelis compared it to the School Committee. There is a chain of command and issues work their way up the ladder. We oversee the head position and define their responsibilities and would perform evaluations. Selectman Wood – it's no different than any company in the world. There is a CEO and a board of directors. This would be the same way.

Chair Dunn – How would a town manager handle elected positions? Would the Town Manager have any authority over elected boards? How would that work? Selectwoman Kastrinelis - we only butt heads when there is a problem, but if you have a constant presence they can foster a better relationship and promote communication among departments.

Selectwoman Kastrinelis – Feels there should be a go-to in town hall. If someone has a problem, they should not be going to individual board members. Selectman Watson feels the BOS members should offer advice to residents and tell them where to turn to. Selectwoman Kastrinelis doesn't believe that is his right. His voice is only one of five and other BOS members might not feel that advice was correct. She thinks BOS members don't know some things until things are blowing up. We should be able to go to a Town Manager and have them look into issues instead of waiting for the board to meet. Selectman Watson said we do that now with the Finance Director.

Selectwoman Kastrinelis wants to clarify the difference between taxes and valuation. You cannot collect beyond the 2 1/2 % cap. Only if there is new revenue and new growth. How we divvy up the pie to pay for this position, is the least of our worries.

Chair Dunn – We hired a guy at \$95k to run the Highway Department, they should worry about their staff. The Town Administrator should worry about the department heads.

Chair Dunn feels some people think the Finance Director has too much authority and a lot of people think she is already the Town Manager. They know she is doing most of the job.

Selectwoman Kastrinelis – anytime the town goes forward a step, there is going to be a segment that believes someone has too much power or there are too many members on the BOS. If Town Meeting were to vote to go forward with this, after the initial angst, it would work out really well. Nancy used to fill in the gaps and stepped up when needed and now Denise has stepped up in some difficult times.

#### PROS:

- Adds immediate value to the town citizens by streamlining the process and handling matters as they occur
- Eliminates the needless delay in time
- Could implement personnel evaluations
- Could look to go back to a three member board
- Oversight of grants
- Delegation and direction
- Better communication and relationships
- Project oversight
- Personnel matters dealt with privately, not at a meeting
- Someone would be here everyday, instead of every other week
- Prepare studies and documents to aid in decision making
- Strategic vision and forecasting
- Build organizational capacity to solve problems and measure results
- Eliminate redundancies in purchases – capital and procurement

CONS:

- Possibility that we may need to add extra bodies to really bring the whole thing to fruition
- An awful lot to expect from one individual to be an expert or to be in charge of staff in other buildings, like cemetery, water/sewer, custodians.
- Cost – might become more costly
- Duplication of services
- It will cost us money – need to design a flow chart and show how over the long run this will cost less than continuing to hire high paid individual department heads
- Change in structure might not be accepted by some
- Become a training ground for larger communities

Selectman O'Neil – Change is inevitable in life. Sometimes change is necessary, money isn't so problematic that you wouldn't be able to show the benefits. We would write our job description and make the position whatever we want, we wouldn't need to have a duplication of services.

Chair Dunn – sometimes change is good.

Selectman Watson – generally in these jobs, you get a Town Administrator in place just to build their resume and they leave for a larger community. Smaller communities become a training ground for larger communities. It started in the school side – bring in someone from outside the district and their “life expectancy” is short. They will build a resume and move on. That's what people do. Most people who come to a municipality stay for a good long time.

Selectman O'Neil – I think that is more of an excuse than a reason. I don't know how you can ever move forward if you have a fear they will leave. It doesn't make sense to me. We shouldn't be afraid, we should be confident and believe what we do is for the betterment of society and not afraid of a future catastrophe.

Selectman Wood – 30/40 years ago people went to work and stayed forever, that isn't the case today. Change is good, people move on, bring in new energy, that's what happens in business and government. No one goes to GE and works for 40 years and retires.

Selectman Watson – I don't look at this as a fear, but I look at it as a drawback. I think people bounce around much more quickly – they go where the benefits are offered. I know people who have changed 3 jobs in one year. It is not a fear, but a disadvantage. Selectman Wood – Yeah, I'm one of them.

Selectman O'Neil – So should we not hire a fire chief because they may leave in a few years? What about the Planner and Highway Superintendent, are you afraid they'll leave?

Selectman Wood – He doesn't feel he uses places as a training ground, people move for a better position for them. That's why people move – better position, better pay, better for them.

Selectwoman Kastrielis – She doesn't want to lower the bar to try and get someone to stay for 30 years. She wants to make sure the salary matches the job and the best person is hired.

Chair Dunn – He likes to go back to his experiences in life. He reflected last night in his own business and how this relates. Until you are in the position and running the whole thing, you take all the responsibility, and you need to have the layer of people beneath you to have that knowledge. Not having the right person in the position may hurt us. Having a manager in town, people will have someone to answer to. Daily oversight is worth it. If he's not at his business, it is mayhem, because he runs the show and delegates. I think that's what you need in any business and in government. Change is good and will add something to the town. May cost us money initially, but in the long run will save money.

The Finance Director clarified that requires special legislation, and would only require a town meeting vote. A ballot question would not be needed.

Selectman Wood – He's good to put this to town meeting

Selectman Watson – Thinks this should be opened up to a public forum. We should accept written or in-person comments and questions.

Selectwoman Kastrinelis – thinks there should be a hierarchy and/or flow chart to present to people

Chair Dunn – we need to have a few more meetings – we need to have an agenda on a specific topic

Selectman Wood – comments should be in person or with a name only – anonymous comments with people hiding behind their keyboards are not fair

Selectman O'Neil – We, as a board, need to present a united front. I don't think we have a united front and unless we do, I think we are just shoveling crap into the tide. It only takes one to halt the momentum. One dissenting vote would pull people in the opposite direction.

Chair Dunn – Do we want to have another meeting to see if people change their mind? Or do you think it would matter.

Selectwoman Kastrinelis – If there is a dissenting vote, that person should step down from the table and speak separate from the Board. They should take the floor as a minority opinion at town meeting. It becomes very confusing.

Selectman Watson – “I think we're leaving a lot on the table – what are you going to pay an administrator? What are the duties and responsibilities going to be” How do you bring this to the townspeople without those answers? You cannot be hiding what the cost would be, we need to be up front with it.

Chair Dunn – Need to meet more – have dedicated agenda items to discuss those items and be ready for this to be brought to the public

Selectwoman Kastrinelis - We need a job description and a salary – everyone should write one and what they think should be in it.

Selectwoman Kastrinelis – Motion that the Board should continue to explore the Town Manager for Groveland discussion. Selectman O'Neil seconded the motion and it was voted 4-0-1 with Selectman Watson abstaining.

Selectman Watson – it should be spelled out to the townspeople that maybe down the road the elected boards may be eliminated and or changed to an advisory role – ask the people what they would like to weigh in and be more educated in their vote.

For the next meeting:

- What will the position be called?
- Start working on job description

The Board discussed dates to meet and decided to add time to each regular meeting agenda to discuss this matter. They will focus on certain agenda items each meeting.

Selectman Wood – motion to adjourn at 8:06pm, seconded by Selectwoman Kastrinelis – voted - all in favor

*Respectfully Submitted:*  
*Denise M. Demboski*  
*Finance Director*

*\*\*\* Approved Unanimously on October 15, 2019 \*\*\**