

**Minutes, Board of Selectmen
March 4, 2013**

Members present: Chairman Douglas Belanger, members Sandra Wilson, Thomas Buckley, Dianna Provencher and Matt Dennison. Also in attendance was Mr. Robert Reed, Town Administrator.

Mr. Belanger opened the meeting at 6:35PM and recognized the Town Moderator, Mr. Don Cherry, to talk about the Town Administrator Search Committee. Mr. Belanger explained that Town by law specifies that the committee is made up of two members from the Personnel Board, two members appointed by the Moderator and one member from the Advisory Committee. Mr. Cherry said that his appointments were Mr. Rick Cehon of Sconset Ave and Mr. Dennis McGrail of Grove St. Ms. Bonnie Layden explained that she would be the representative from the Advisory Committee. Mr. Belanger said that members from the Edward J. Collins Center for Public Management were in attendance to describe what services they could provide to the Committee and to the town as part of the recruitment process.

Mr. Mike Ward, Director of Municipal Services at the Collins Center explained the services offered by the Collins Center and some literature was distributed. Ms. Mary Aciardi of the Collins Center explained that their usual role is facilitation and the Town was already in good shape with an existing screening committee and described further the services of the Collins Center including developing a profile of the position to assist the Town in focusing on the duties of the position as well as helping to target the recruitment.

Mr. Belanger said that the Town had an opportunity with the position vacancy and the services of the Collins Center to possibly change the position as well as help with recruitment. He explained the previous process when Mr. Reed was hired and that he did not think that process worked particularly well. Mr. Dennison asked about the role of the Massachusetts Municipal Association (MMA). Ms. Aciardi explained that they were not associated with the MMA and that the MMA does not recruit.

Mr. Cehon said that he has recruitment experience and that professional help for the Committee would be a plus. He asked about the timeframe for the process and Mr. Belanger said that the previous process went longer than expected and an interim Town Administrator was hired. Mr. Reed would retire effective July 31, 2013 and if an interim was necessary the town could hire one, but that was not preferable. Mr. Ward said that the Collins Center had a network of people who could fill in as interim.

Mr. Jeff Berthieume, member of the Personnel Board and the Screening Committee, was in attendance and also asked what tools the MMA and Collins Center might have to assist the Committee. Ms. Aciardi said the MMA is a trade organization and does not provide recruitment services. She described the recent screening and recruitment processes in South Hadley and Great Barrington as examples of how they could streamline the effort and meet timeframes. Mr. Belanger asked about background checks and Ms. Aciardi said that they do help with that. Mr. Dennison said that with a five member Board of Selectmen and the Screening Committee the Town might be able to do the recruitment on its own.

Mr. Belanger asked the Board to review the job description to see what the members might add or change. Ms. Wilson said that this is an area where the Collins Center, with its experience, could help the Board of Selectmen. Mr. Buckley said that he also felt the Collins center could help the Town with its experience. Mr. Belanger asked the attending members of the Screening Committee how they felt about the concept of using the Collins Center. Mr. Cehon said that the Committee might be able to handle the process, but it could be complicated and without the Collins Center it could take a while longer. Ms. Layden said that she also felt the services of a professional organization and its contacts would benefit the Committee. Mr. Belanger advised the members to get sworn in and begin the process. He also said the Collins center could refine their offerings with prices for the Board and Committee to consider. Ms. Aciardi said that they would produce proposals, a menu of their services, for the town. Mr. Dennison felt that this would be useful as it will be important to prioritize according to cost. Ms. Aciardi said the biggest risk was a slow process and possibly losing a good candidate.

Mr. Cherry asked what assistance the Committee could offer with background checks and what would be involved for the Committee to handle this duty. Ms. Aciardi said it would be much easier for her group to do it. As a third party the Collins Center would have better access to information as the Town would have to name a finalist before doing a background or credit check. It is a difficult liability issue and the Police should not handle this task. Mr. Cehon asked if the Committee would have access to Town Counsel and Mr. Belanger explained that they would through the same process as any other Town Committee.

Mr. Ward said that appeared that it did not look like there was interest by the Board to change the structure of the position. The by law was fairly old and much has changed in municipal government since. More and more Towns anchor the position in a Charter, for example, and a special act of the legislature was also a possibility. It is, at least, something for the Board to look at in the long term if the Collins Center won't be used for that task.

The Board then considered correspondence. The first item was notification from the Highway Superintendent that the snow and ice deficit was \$125,000.

The next item was notification of a Eagle Scout award ceremony on April 7 at 1 PM at 89 Southbridge St. in Auburn for Jacob

Next was a notice of public hearing from the Dept of Telecommunications and Energy on rates charges by Charter Communications. 10 AM March 19, 2013, at 1000 Washington St. in Boston.

Ms. Provencher moved to approve the minutes of January 28, 2013 and February 11, 2013 regular sessions, Mr. Dennison seconded, the vote was unanimous.

The members of the Advisory Committee joined the Selectmen for a budget discussion. The Selectmen discussed a request from the Ambulance Dept for repairs to ambulance one. Mr. Reed said they were needed repairs and Mr. David Connelly said Advisory had met with the EMS Director and also felt it was a needed expense. Ms. Wilson mover to approve and Ms. Provencher seconded, the vote was unanimous.

Mr. Belanger opened discussions about the budget and possible override. The Town also had the Department of Revenue report on Town finances with many recommendations to improve the

Town's budget process and finance policies. He stated that over recent years the Selectmen have found it necessary to violate their own finance policies on free cash and stabilization to keep departments and services afloat. Mr. Reed passed out budget sheets and explained that health insurance and school numbers should be more specific soon. The present school budget number being used for Fy' 14 is significantly less than the last estimate received from the schools. He also spoke about a free cash policy on how much will be in reserve and that the snow and ice deficit was significantly higher than the previous year and that both of these items would serve to increase the deficit. Agreement on the assumptions remains important, both on an override number and how long the override was planned to last; three years, five years. Mr. Buckley said that the Town and employees have been under a great deal of stress and two overrides might be necessary; one for general government and one to replenish the stabilization account. David Mero said that this would be difficult at this time as Advisory and the Town still have no idea what the school budget will be. Mr. Reed said he expected a reliable budget number from the new school superintendent soon. He also reported that the ancillary budgets requested from departments, which were not yet complete, totaled over \$400,000. in additional requests. Mr. Buskley stated that the school committee should be responsible for the school budget and the Selectmen were responsible for the municipal budgets.

Mr. Connelly specified some of the issues with departments such as Police, that were having great difficulties. The Town was at the end and an override was needed for departments to be properly funded. He also said that things were so dire that cuts would be needed even with an override. Mr. Dennison said that he had run for the position of Selectmen opposing an override, but has seen the difficulties departments, particularly Police and Highway, but all of them were having. The town needs a multi year fiscal plan and services will continue to deteriorate without additional funding. Ms. Wilson agreed the town needed an override and a multi year plan. Mr. Belanger said that the needs of the Town are one thing, but the ability of Townspeople to afford the override was also important, so the size of the override is an important consideration. Although the reserves have been depleted it was fortunate the Town had then as they have kept departments and services afloat. Mr. Reed said that he did not see where the town, in the foreseeable future and even in the best of circumstances, would be able to add money to either the stabilization fund or free cash. He also felt that the Town was not ready for an override election in the spring and it was important to put together both override and non override budgets. A general discussion of the budget followed.

Ms. Provencher moved to adjourn, Mr. Dennison seconded, the vote was unanimous. The time was 9:45 PM.

Respectfully submitted,

Robert T. Reed