

TOWN OF KENNEBUNK

BOARD OF SELECTMEN WORKSHOP MINUTES

OCTOBER 18, 2016 - 6:30 P.M

1. REGULAR MEETING – 6:30 P.M.

On Tuesday, October 18, 2016, at 6:30 P.M., in Room 301 of the Town Hall, Richard Morin, Chairman of the Board of Selectmen for the Town of Kennebunk, called to order the Board of Selectmen Workshop on discussing the planning for a new Town Manager. Present were Selectmen L. Blake Baldwin, Richard Morin, Edward Karytko, Daniel Boothby, Christopher Cluff, Shiloh Schulte and Deborah Beal.

Also in attendance was Town Manager Barry Tibbetts.

The Chair proceeded to the next item.

2. DISCUSS PLANNING FOR THE NEW TOWN MANAGER

Morin explained the topics of tonight's meeting which included discussing what a candidate should have, in terms of experience and skills, in order to be the next Town Manager, recruitment strategies, a time frame of the transition process (such as the time with an interim Town Manager before getting a permanent Town Manager), etc.

Lionel Menard was the first person from the public to speak. He acknowledged that he has had both successes and failures with recruitment services. He said that a recruitment service can be very helpful in a search such as the Board of Selectmen's search for a new Town Manager. If they receive a hundred requests, for example, it may be hard for the Board, without the expertise of a recruitment service, to narrow down the number of candidates that they are strongly considering to hire or at least interview with for the position of Town Manager. However, Menard also said that the service (search agency, etc.) should have a consistent process for how they narrow down the number of applicants and their service should not be expensive. He said that it may be hard for Town employees, such as the Human Resources Director, to find the time to do the needed things in the process of hiring a new Town Manager such as background checks. So, having a kind of recruitment service can be quite helpful but can also be expensive.

Gayle Spofford, from the public, agreed with Lionel Menard. She thinks that the Town should hire someone who does searches often. She thinks that a national search for a new Town Manager should be conducted. She also said that the Town (because it is large) requires a Town Manager with a variety of skills. The new Town Manager, according to Spofford, should be able to work closely with the Finance Manager and Kennebunkport and Arundel. She also suggested creating a Background Committee made up of the Human Resources Director, perhaps a Selectman and maybe another member of the administrative team in Kennebunk. She thinks that this Committee can go through the résumés they receive to narrow down the list of candidates to the point that some of the Board members, along with some community members, can sit down with a few of the people who submitted résumés. She noted that the Town will most likely receive many résumés because many want to work in Kennebunk. Therefore, it is a good idea to have someone do some of the preliminary work so that the Board looks at the better candidates among the mix of applicants. Spofford also thinks that the Human Resources Director should work closely with the search firm.

Cluff asked Spofford what specific skill sets they should look for in an applicant.

Spofford responded to Cluff and said that work experience is important but different areas can be covered by other people such as the Human Resources Director. For example, the Town Manager does not need to know all of the laws and regulations but should know how to read them correctly. She said that it is good for applicants to have education. She also said that maybe applicants should even have a graduate degree.

She noted a good “combination” for the background of a Town Manager as being a lawyer with a degree in psychology. Finally, she talked about the importance of hiring a Town Manager with significant experience with finance. This way, the Town Manager can be useful during budget season.

Gerald Haviland, from the public, spoke. He said that he is a taxpaying property owner. He has lived in Kennebunk for about 50 years but also lives in Farmington, Connecticut, a town very similar to Kennebunk. He was significantly involved in Town government in Farmington, Connecticut. He was the mayor of Farmington. He has much experience with hiring Town Managers and reviewing their performances. He has great respect for the Town Manager position in town government. He praised the way that the Board of Selectmen are conducting the search for a new Town Manager. He thinks that they know what they want in a new Town Manager and thinks that they should have a highly qualified search committee made up of members of the Town. He warned about being tricked or fooled by applicants who want to, for example, leverage themselves in the Town that they already work in. He noted the importance of a vetting process, saying that such a process will help avoid phonies like the ones described above and people with bad pasts. He said that the relationship between the people at the beach (in Kennebunk) and Town Hall was shaky and added that the current Town Manager has made them feel welcomed by reaching out to them. They are appreciative of such. Haviland also talked about the enormous growth of Kennebunk but said that growth must be consolidated. He is saddened that he can't vote in Kennebunk but thanked Tibbetts and Baldwin for listening to him and allowing his voice to be heard.

Baldwin asked Haviland if he could provide a story of a bad hire to the position of Town Manager. Haviland responded to Baldwin, saying that one man was chosen to be Town Manager and then he left two days after his appointment to the position because where he was previously increased his salary. Simply put, the man played them.

John Costin, from the public, spoke. He asked if there is a standard method of compensation for the search services companies. Cluff responded to Costin, saying that it all depends on the firm that one works with.

Costin had the following concern about using search agencies: Such agencies have the tendency to seek candidates that want higher salaries than others. Costin thinks that they should determine the new Town Manager's scope of work as well as what the new Town Manager should get for a salary.

Baldwin said that with the Comprehensive Plan underway and the Strategic Plan already undertaken by the Board of Selectmen, it makes sense to have an interim period where they come to conclusions on the two issues before seeking someone to implement them.

Karytko wonders if a search agency will be able to determine if a particular candidate will not make a good fit. In other words, will the phonies be spotted? How do the Selectmen know that they will not be fooled into hiring a phony as a Town Manager if they decide not to use a search agency?

Many responded to Karytko. For example, Baldwin said that they used search agencies during his time as a banker and that such agencies did a good job vetting many applicants. However, he is not sure what they should do. They must know how much they should pay a search firm if they choose to use one. He does not think that they should conduct such searches during very busy times of the year such as during budget season.

Gayle Spofford spoke. She said that the search agency they used to seek a new superintendent relied greatly on professional associations to determine which applicants were sincere and had the skills that they claimed they had. She asked Tibbetts if they would be able to get information if they decided to go with a local search committee.

Tibbetts talked about various benefits of using recruiters in the search for a new Town Manager. Tibbetts suggested having recruiters come in to talk to the Board of Selectmen to explain their services fully because services vary from one recruiter to another. He also warned about all of the work that will be present if they don't use a search agency and added that the time of Town staff is limited. Sometimes, an applicant will be very far in the hiring process, and then it is determined that the applicant is not fit for the position, leading to a lot of time being lost without even hiring a new Town Manager.

David Spofford, from the public, spoke. He thinks that the person chosen as an interim Town Manager must go through this budget season. He hopes that the Town has an Interim Town Manager before February so that Joel Downs, the Finance Director, knows who will be working on the budget. Having an interim Town Manager by February was also important to David Spofford because they should get the current Town Manager's input on the budget too. The budget is the most important thing in the Town, said David Spofford. He thinks that having an interim Town Manager for, perhaps up to a year, makes sense. He believes that the new Town Manager will come from the general vicinity. He said that he is hesitant about letting the new Town Manager be someone who does not know about New England. He said that an outside agency will most likely pick up many people from outside New England. Finally, he added that he believes that many will apply for the title of Kennebunk Town Manager.

Schulte said that David Spofford made great points and added that if they want to use an outside recruiting agency, they can always set specifications on who they consider viable candidates for the position of Town Manager such as salary range, location of applicants, etc.

Susan Karytko, from the public, spoke. Referring to the question of whether or not they want to search for people regionally or nationally, they should keep in mind that there are plenty of previous New Englanders around the world who want to come back to New England. Therefore, someone with knowledge of New England, and more specifically, someone from New England, may be ignored if they limit the search to a regional rather than an international level.

Kelly Wentworth, from the public, spoke. She wants to think about local candidates. She also thinks that the Board of Selectmen should think back to the events of the last few years and decide what type of person they want to seek. She said that proven experience of one who is able to manage people is important. "People skills" should be strong for any candidate applying to be the new Town Manager. She also said that candidates must make good decisions and should show integrity. Interpersonal skills should be strong for anyone wanting to be the new Town Manager as well. Wentworth believes that a candidate for Town Manager should not be considered for at least a year. However, the interim Town Manager, during that minimum of one year time period, will be able to give the Board of Selectmen good insight into how they should move forward in the process. She even wondered if the Town Manager should have to live in Town. She said that someone who makes decisions and/or pushes an agenda for Kennebunk should pay taxes in Kennebunk. This way, according to Wentworth, a Town Manager will make decisions that matter to him/herself. Wentworth thinks that the new Town Manager should be aware of their priorities. She wants to see more checks and balances between the Board of Selectmen and the Town Manager to eliminate the divide that she sometimes currently sees between the Board of Selectmen and the Town Manager.

John Costin agrees with Wentworth and thinks that the interim Town Manager should hold such a position in Kennebunk for at least a year because of the great workload that the Town will have in making the transition to a new Town Manager. He said that staff members will be asked to give their opinions on the direction to go in regarding the process of hiring a new Town Manager and noted that staff members will most likely have harder jobs shortly.

Schulte said that focusing on input from staff members regarding the search for a new Town Manager is a good idea. Also, letting the public offer their opinions on this topic is important.

John Costin said that getting opinions from the public is indeed important.

Town Clerk, Merton Brown, spoke. He said that Kennebunk is the 17th most populated town in Maine (therefore, it is not a small town). Municipal experience is important, to Brown, for applicants to be the new Town Manager to have.

Selectman Karytko asked if there is a big difference between a Town Manager with Maine Municipal experience and a Town Manager with New Hampshire Municipal experience.

Brown responded to Karytko, saying that it may take a while for someone without Maine Municipal experience to come up to speed on various statutes from town to town.

Lionel Menard spoke, saying that Town Manager experience is just as important as interpersonal skills. He said that one essentially needs interpersonal skills when they are a Town Manager. He asked about the process regarding obtaining an interim Town Manager. He also asked if some people just go from town to town, wherever they are needed, as interim Town Managers.

Tibbetts answered Menard's second question by saying that such people do exist.

As to Menard's first question, Morin said that they may choose someone who is already a staff member because an interim Town Manager, to Morin, is there to steer them in the right direction.

Menard said that Morin's explanation of their leaning toward making someone from the current staff, Town Manager, is less worrisome than hiring someone who is not a Town staff member.

Gayle Spofford spoke, saying that she agreed with Costin that surveying the Town staff is important. She thinks that the survey should be anonymous yet detailed. Having an interim Town Manager for a year will enable the Town to see if various people are doing things correctly. Some people may be doing work, not even in their job descriptions, for other people.

Gerald Haviland spoke. He said that in the search for a new Town Manager that he was a part of, they relied greatly on an organization that he believes was called ICMA (International City Managers Association). The organization provided them with great resources and helped them understand the process of hiring a new Town Manager. Therefore, if that organization functions the same way as they had during his experience with them, he will gladly commend them to the Board of Selectmen. He thinks that it is a slippery slope to ask the next Town Manager of Kennebunk to live in Kennebunk. Haviland said that Town Managers are supposed make executive decisions not policy decisions. If you are the Town Manager of the town that you live in, your family members may have to listen to various things being said about you and may repeat such to you when you get home.

Selectman Karytko asked how often an interim Town Manager becomes a permanent Town Manager for the same town that they were interim Town Manager for.

Haviland responded to Karytko, saying that he saw such occur once.

Schulte said that he knows different teachers who don't want to live in the town that they teach in because of the reason that Haviland stated (they don't want people to say bad things about them to their family members, etc.).

Schulte asked if the "phony" Town Manager that Haviland referenced earlier was found by a search committee or if he was found via internal review.

Haviland responded to Schulte, saying that the man was found through internal review.

Kelly Wentworth spoke, saying that there are indeed two sides (pros and cons) to the idea of having the next Town Manager live in Kennebunk. She thinks that the Board of Selectmen have to evaluate the staff that they currently have in terms of various skill sets. For example, with a Finance Director present, does the new Town Manager need to have financial expertise?

Cluff said that establishing skills that they want to seek in candidates is very important.

Tibbetts cited a man in Town who is willing to come in to talk to the Board of Selectmen about successful and unsuccessful practices in finding a new Town Manager.

Schulte responded to Tibbetts, saying that having the man come in makes sense.

Lionel Menard said that being the Town Manager is a very demanding job and is most certainly not the typical 9-5 job. The Town Manager must have great communications with others in case they are needed outside of the typical workday. Town Manager's often show up to events, etc. on weekends, for example. Therefore, the Town Manager must be ready to work a lot throughout the week. Such expectations must be told to applicants wanting to be the new Town Manager, according to Menard.

John Costin spoke. He said he believes that there is no possible way to know what they want in a candidate until they sit down and evaluate what they want from the position of Town Manager. He said that the job of the previous Town Manager was very different from what it evolved into for the current Town Manager. He said that he believes that the Town Manager does more than run the day to day operations of the Town.

Morin said that he is not sure how long they will want the next Town Manager to work each week. In other words, the expectations and/or standards for the new Town Manager still have to be worked out.

Schulte said that it is important to make it known that the job of Town Manager is not necessarily a 9-5 job, but that it is equally important to make sure that a Town Manager is not completely wiped out after only a few years with the title of Kennebunk Town Manager.

David Spofford spoke. He said that Kennebunk is one of the most prominent towns in the state of Maine and the new Town Manager should understand this fact. Therefore, someone who is sophisticated should be the new Town Manager. He believes that the new Town Manager must be able to handle the sophistication found among the people of the town of Kennebunk. The politics in Kennebunk, in other words, is different than the politics of a small town in rural Maine. There is much sophistication in Kennebunk that may be absent, or somewhat absent, in other towns in Maine, especially small towns in rural areas of the State.

John Costin said that he never heard of residents being on a possible Search Committee.

Members of the Board of Selectmen said that residents can be on such a committee.

Baldwin said that the Town must move on and continue to do what is usually done even though an important search for a new Town Manager must be conducted simultaneously. He said that leadership, like anything else, must change and come to a conclusion. He quoted a passage in the Bible to prove his point. He said that supporting the staff is very important. He also said that Tibbett's greatest legacy is the team of staff members that he has built. Baldwin said that staff members will go through much pain and confusion.

Lionel Menard thanked everyone for holding this workshop. He said that a survey and more committees for this process is a good idea.

Merton Brown, Town Clerk, said that Gerald Haviland can indeed vote in Kennebunk. Haviland had previously thought that he could not do such.

Selectman Karytko said that what Baldwin said about change in leadership makes a lot of sense. He also said that the new Town Manager should keep in mind that they do not want to go backwards as a Town.

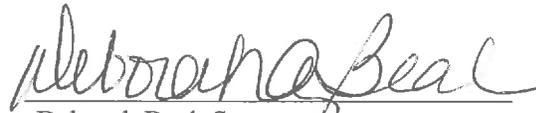
Baldwin said that change can be exciting and that having a new Town Manager is a great time to implement changes.

Morin concluded by saying that after the next meeting they will be able to move further in this process. He also commented on the fact that residents will be able to be more involved in this process.

The Chair proceeded to the next item.

3. ADJOURNMENT

At approximately 7:44 p.m., the workshop for the Board of Selectmen was adjourned.



Deborah Beal, Secretary
Kennebunk Board of Selectmen

Date: 11-8-2016