



**Residents' Advisory Committee  
March 26, 2019 – 10:00 AM  
First Floor Meeting Room, Town Hall  
4 Boltwood Avenue**

**Minutes**

Members present: Keisha Dennis, Connie Kruger, Jim Pistrang

Others present: Town Manager Paul Bockelman, Community Participation Officer Angela Mills

Members of the Public: Town Councilor Darcy DuMont, Amherst College Student Cassie Chen

The meeting began at 10:00am with a brief introduction of the Members of the Public to the Members of the Committee and the Town Manager.

**Discussion**

Ms. Kruger started the meeting by proposing that the members discuss voting upon a structure for the Residents' Advisory Committee (RAC). She suggested that it might be a good idea to have a Chairperson so that Mr. Bockelman does not have to run every meeting and come up with agendas. Ms. Kruger nominated Mr. Pistrang to be the Chair.

Mr. Pistrang responded that he is fine being the Chair of the RAC but he then offered it to Ms. Dennis. She declined the offer. Mr. Pistrang told the group that he is willing to take on the title of Chair since it did not foresee it bringing a large amount of work with the title.

Ms. Kruger noted that since this committee is so tiny (only three members) the members need to be very careful about having one on one conversations since two persons gathered from this committee means they have the quorum count.

*Motion made by Ms. Kruger for Mr. Pistrang to become Chair of the Residents' Advisory Committee, seconded by Ms. Dennis. Vote was unanimous and Mr. Pistrang abstained.*

Mr. Bockelman stated that, from his careful review of the vacancies list, the following Boards and Committees would receive immediate attention and interviews:

- Energy and Climate Action Committee
- Historic Commission and Local Historical Commission

- Council on Aging

Mr. Pistrang dove into the agenda for the meeting and began a review of the Committees List and the Vacancies List. The members discovered that the Committees Complete Listing needs updating. The appointments for Planning Board and Zoning Board of Appeals needs to change to Town Council appointees. In addition, the Participatory Budgeting Committee and the Ranked Choice Voting Committee need to be added to the list of Committees as joint appointments (Town Manager and Town Council).

Ms. Kruger suggested that someone take a more careful look at the term dates for Affordable Housing Trust and update the term end dates. Mr. Bockelman explained that Ms. Jennifer Moyston and Ms. Angela Mills would take care of updating the Vacancies Listing and Board Lists.

Looking at the language from the Charter: Mr. Bockelman recommended that they first review the vacancies and then prioritize for upcoming interviews. Ms. Kruger asked if perhaps the task of outreach would become a part of what the RAC members would undertake. Ms. Kruger expressed her opinion that the RAC develop a role for volunteer advocacy. Mr. Bockelman explained that the Community Participation Officers (Ms. Jennifer Moyston, Ms. Brianna Sunryd, and Ms. Angela Mills) have been attending District meetings and engaging the public to increase the pool of applicants for vacancies on Boards and Committees.

Mr. Bockelman explained that everyone who submits a Community Activity Form (CAF) gets an interview. He also mentioned that some committees take every applicant (Shade Tree Committee is one such example). Ms. Kruger mentioned that people like being interviewed even when they are not selected for a particular Board or Committee. She has had several people mention that this is a welcome change of protocol from previous Town Manager's methods of operation.

Mr. Pistrang asked how we determine if the pool of applicants is ready to be interviewed? Is it a deep enough pool? Mr. Bockelman responded that there are several factors that help determine whether to wait for interviews, one determining factor is the functionality of the Board or Committee. It is a priority to have every board or committee at quorum plus one. Furthermore, there are certain committees that require "heavy lifting" – literally on the shade tree committee, and more figuratively in the ongoing fundraising needs of a Sister City Committee like the Kanegasaki Committee.

Ms. Mills explained that if someone has marked "General Interest" on their CAF, she calls them and tries to get a sense for their areas of interest and expertise and then invites them in for an interview at the appropriate time.

Ms. Kruger asked if we would ever reference how large a pool of applicants is at a meeting. For example, would it be helpful to say, there were 80 applicants for four vacancies? Ms. Mills responded that if the term limits are applied, it might be beneficial to keep pools of people active so that they can remain interested and available for appointments.

Mr. Bockelman informed the RAC members that the term limit set by the Select Board had been two consecutive terms (or six years, whichever came first). Ms. Kruger understood the need for such a rule since she has served on Boards and Committees where a group culture can serve to divide the group

from their intended purpose. Mr. Bockelman welcomed the RAC's input on the philosophy of term limits at one of their upcoming meetings.

Mr. Pistrang would like to know the number of applicants for the upcoming appointments to: ECAC, Historical Commission, Local Historic Commission and Council on Aging.

Mr. Bockelman explained that getting people involved is the gateway to governmental volunteering. He noted that people on the Dog Park Task Force are now interested in serving on the Conservation Commission due to their positive interactions with Town Staff.

Ms. Kruger remembered that during her time on the Select Board, appointments to Boards happened without an interview with the Town Manager – to speed things up for committees that fell below quorum or for those that needed the extra hands to do the work. Mr. Pistrang summarized that flexibility in regards to appointment protocol remains key to the process.

Review of the CAF form:

Mr. Pistrang asked to hear about changes from Citizens Activity Form to Community Activity Form. Mr. Bockelman explained that since we are a college town, many people who live here are not citizens but still have thoughts and interests and can share their expertise. This led to the name change on the form since residents are all part of our community but not necessarily citizens of our Country. Furthermore, Ms. Mills explained the reasoning behind the removal of the “rent vs. own” question in regards to a person's domicile. The CPOs did not want people feeling like we were screening out renters. CPOs also recommended making binary gender identification optional and age/race question optional to make the form feel more inclusive and less intrusive.

Ms. Kruger asked if it would be important to designate the difference between Special Municipal Employee Status (SME) and Municipal Employee Status (ME). Mr. Pistrang suggested that people usually do not read the fine print at the end of fill-in online forms. Mr. Bockelman added that he did not think that clarification between SME and ME would preclude people from volunteering their time and energy to Boards and Committees.

Mr. Bockelman noted that the Town Council members would be taking a long look at the contents of the CAF and Mr. Bockelman agreed with Ms. Kruger that a meeting of the RAC with the Town Council Committee of Outreach, Communications and Appointments (OCA) would be a great idea.

Ms. Kruger would like the following language changed or modified on the existing CAF:

- “Use this form to be *considered* for an appointment to...”
- “Thank you for expressing an interest in serving the Town of Amherst **for** ...”
- Disclose up front to the public that submission of this document makes it a public document and the contents will be shared with selection committee.
- At the end of the fine print there is a reference to Citizens Activity Form that needs to be changed to *Community Activity Form*
- Add steps on the page as to ‘what happens now/next’

- i.e. “You will receive an electronic receipt once you have submitted your CAF. If you do not receive a confirmation email please call our office: 413-259-3002.”
- Reference the turnaround time. i.e. “Sometimes it may take weeks for us to call you and set up and interview for the Board or Committee of your choosing. Please be aware that we have triaged the needs of all Boards and Committees and are moving quickly to fill vacancies. Feel free to call our office with questions: 413-259-3002”

Review of Minutes: Ms. Kruger would like to add, “Prioritization of committees needing appointments” to the minutes set before the RAC for review. *Mr. Pistrang made a motion to approve the minutes as amended. Ms. Kruger seconded. UNANIMOUS vote to approve minutes from 03-14-2019 meeting.*

### **Public Comment**

Ms. Cassie Chen, a student from Amherst College, asked about the contents of the minutes. Ms. Kruger responded that the minutes capture the discussion and the actions taken at the meeting. She added that the minutes would be posted to the Town website soon.

Mr. Pistrang asked if there could be a posting of draft minutes in addition to the approved minutes.

Ms. Kruger thought it would be nice to add their photos to the RAC web page.

### **Next Meeting**

Proposed agenda items:

- Debrief from Mr. Bockelman regarding the flurry of ECAC interviews
- Mr. Pistrang recommended that the Town Manager start taking photos of interviewees if the pool of applicants goes above 20 people and stapling the photos to their CAFs
- **Next meeting: Tuesday, April 9<sup>th</sup> at 10am in the Ground Floor (IT conference room)  
Meeting Room**

Respectfully submitted,

Angela Mills  
Community Participation Officer