

**Residents' Advisory Committee (RAC) on November 13, 2019**  
**10:00 am – 11:00 am**  
**First Floor Meeting Room, Town Hall**  
**APPROVED at the 2/11/2020 meeting of RAC**

**Residents' Advisory Committee Members Present:** Mr. Jim Pistrang, Ms. Keisha Dennis, Ms. Connie Kruger

**Town Staff Present:** Mr. Paul Bockelman, Town Manager; Ms. Angela Mills, Exec. Assistant to Town Manager and note taker for this meeting

**Special Guest:** Town Councilor Evan Ross

**Meeting called to order at 10:13 AM.**

Mr. Pistrang explained the reasons why Town Councilor Ross was invited to meet with RAC today. The RAC members wanted to compare and contrast the Town Manager appointment process to the Town Council appointment process. Councilor Ross suggested that the Town Council would be examining the Community Activity Form (CAF) in the near future.

Mr. Bockelman checked in after a year of board/committee/commission appointment activity. He wanted to ask, "Are we doing interviews the right way?" and, "Are we achieving the outcome that we want for the Town?"

Mr. Bockelman explained that the Outreach Communication and Appointments Committee (OCA – Committee of the Town Council) has the Chair of the appointing committee sit in on interviews but does not allow them to engage in any of the verbal portion of the interview. Mr. Bockelman asked, "... if that would continue?" and "Would OCA continue to require people who are up for a second term to interview again for their position (instead of getting reappointed for a second term automatically)?"

Mr. Pistrang asked the RAC members to share their perceptions on the RAC/Town Manager appointments process as it has been working for the past year. Does the process work the way it exists now? What modifications, if any, need to be made?

Mr. Pistrang asked to discuss the pros and cons of keeping the Community Activity Form (CAF) public versus keeping the Community Activity Form private.

Mr. Pistrang stated that he was skeptical of the RAC committee when it started. After this first year, he has been "sold" on it. He enjoyed the interview and appointment process. He expressed

that it remains valuable for the Town Manager to sit in on all of the interviews. People feel the seriousness of the volunteer opportunity. The current protocol provided a learning opportunity for people on both sides of the interview table. Mr. Pistrang enjoyed having the Chair in the room for the interviews and noted that they bring knowledge of the board/committee/commission specifics to the candidates. Ultimately, the appointment would still be the Town Manager's choice but the Chair can express their opinion.

Mr. Pistrang does not see value in having people re-interview for a second term. He suggested that the re-interview process for second terms would be too time consuming for the Town Manager's calendar.

Four interviews in a row felt like "speed dating" to Mr. Pistrang. Ms. Kruger noted she had a day with nine or eleven interviews for two different committees.

Ms. Dennis stated that the process worked well this past year. She also expressed the idea that there was value added by having the Town Manager in the room for the interviews. She noted that having Mr. Bockelman present, made it feel like a valued position for the candidates. The construction of the interview team provided a sense of fairness to the process. Always having four people (interview committee) in the room made it feel more equitable.

Ms. Dennis did not see the need for people to re-interview for a second term. If people expressed concerns about a person and their level of service after a first term, then, that needed to be addressed by a separate conversation. That conversation would be completely separate from the appointment process.

Ms. Kruger suggested that at times that there needed to be a larger pool of candidates for certain appointments. In general, she felt good about the work. She worried about the Town Manager's time, eleven interviews in a row, for example, felt like a huge chunk of time to pull out of the Town Manager's calendar. She would consider a level of flexibility for the Town Manager to opt-out of certain interviews. It might be controversial to have Mr. Bockelman there for some interviews and not others. She tended to defer to a Chair when there was a tie between two candidates. Ms. Kruger trusted people to choose individuals who would help complete the work of the committee. Ms. Kruger would be fine removing the staff liaison from the interview process but found the Chair of the committee invaluable to the process. The debriefing conversations after the interviews felt important to her and she asked that they stay confidential. She requested that people on the appointment committee remember and take into account the feelings of the individuals who are not appointed.

Ms. Kruger did not see the need to interview individuals who are in line for a second term. Asking people who are up for a second term to re-interview felt like 'a slap in the face' to the volunteer. This practice would create 'troubled waters' for a second term individual.

Councilor Ross highlighted the differences in process between OCA and Town Manager appointments. Staff people are allowed to attend the interviews held by OCA but are not allowed to speak for two reasons: the interviews were private, only one member of OCA was present, and advice from Town Attorney was to be wary of having an elected official on the

interview committee because having more than one would be a necessitate that it be a posted open meeting.

OCA wanted to interview a person for a second term in order to be responsive to a committee's changing needs. Since the Town Council was new – it felt weird to them to appoint people that they do not know – so they liked re-interviewing people for that second term and used it as an opportunity to get to know people.

Does an impending end of term mean that there would be a vacancy? OCA interpreted the Home Charter to mean that a vacancy occurs: if someone dies, resigns, or is coming to an end of a term – that would require a new interview process. This had been up for discussion by the Town Council members.

OCA interviews did not include the Chair of the Committee. They seek the Chairs' input at the end of the process but not during the process so that the candidates can freely express their ideas of how they might change the committee and the way it functions. OCA reached out to Chairs of the Committees, asked them, "what do you need?", and used that list of talents/needs to inform the search for new candidates.

Mr. Bockelman experienced that candidates have felt comfortable saying that they wanted to change the way a committee functioned. He felt like candidates should be willing to say that aloud in an interview setting. When a committee does not function well, that is when the interview process needs to be more responsive to the needs of the committee and the greater community.

What the Charter has to say about the appointment process, in terms of what constitutes a vacancy, has been the focus of OCA's attention. Members of OCA often asked the Town Manager, "How many people applied?" "Who applied?" Mr. Bockelman did not share names of the applicants but instead he mentioned the overall number of candidates. OCA embraced the challenge of having one Town Councilor in the interviews, but identified the need for their appointment process to become a fully public process.

Ms. Dennis noted that if the process becomes more public – then you might end up with the same group of candidates over and over, a group of people who do not mind receiving a rejection for a volunteer position publically. She noted that when the process becomes fully public it might be the first time interviewees receive a public rejection from a post they feel completely qualified to obtain.

Mr. Pistrang noted that the Town Manager appointments needed to stay private. All three members of RAC at one point expressed that they would not have applied for a spot on RAC if it had been a public process.

Mr. Pistrang noted that all committees are different. Some individuals are excellent Chairs but then struggle to enunciate what goes on in the committee's work, sometimes the staff liaison steps in and helps outline the charge for the committee. He mentioned that during the interview process, the staff liaison was a valuable resource.

Ms. Kruger mentioned that OCA and the Town Manager could have two separate processes. The ZBA and Planning appointments should be more public and she noted that in several communities these spots are elected. She challenged the idea that in a half hour interview a committee can decide whether or not someone is worthy of reappointment.

People who are new interviewees for a vacancy against someone who was due to be reappointed, from OCA's perspective you interview both and the ideal behind it is equity.

CAF – Ms. Kruger felt that the information provided is often threadbare. Difficult to ferret out people's interests on the CAF. Anything else we ask for could be viewed as a barrier for individuals.

Ms. Dennis expressed the opinion that the interview is the opportunity to learn more about people's backgrounds in a way that the CAF does not provide. She further noted that the energy and the passion that people bring to the table is what really will help people make the committee better.

Mr. Bockelman recommended getting rid of the "General Interest" box on the form. Ms. Kruger asked if perhaps adding a "what are your general interests/passions" line on the CAF might be helpful. Ms. Dennis recommended a ranking of interests or boards/committees/commissions. Mr. Pistrang asked for the candidates to check their boxes of interest in their order of interest.

Mr. Pistrang reflected on his appointments that he made as Moderator of Town Meeting. He looked for individuals who were good listeners, articulate, and willing to learn. There is a piece of that informality that still holds true in the Town Manager process.

Not many boards/committees/commissions require technical knowledge: Water Supply Protection, ECAC, ZBA and Planning.

Councilor Ross - OCA had not made any changes to their CAF yet. After they appoint the next round of ZBA and Planning (January 2020) they would examine the CAF. Councilor Ross agreed with Ms. Dennis that the interview will always say more than the CAF. One idea they have is to have one text box with a word limit for people to express, "Why they want to be on the committee/Commission/board." Operating within the boundaries of Open Meeting Law had been a difficult road for OCA in the realm of ZBA and Planning appointments. Only the CAFs of interviewees might be made public during the process.

Ms. Kruger noted that the CAF is "the ticket to get to the interview." Perhaps we offer a follow-up form after the interviews happen and ask individuals for feedback and for their demographic information.

Councilor Ross noted that there is nothing on the current CAF that reflects socio-economic status. How would they collect and make the demographic information useful? OCA was planning a more public process for the next round of appointments. OCA discussed tailoring the

CAF to specific boards – one for ZBA and one for Planning. The consistency of the process is the paramount concern for OCA.

Councilor Ross departed at 11:02 am. Mr. Bockelman departed at 11:02 am.

Approval of minutes from October 15, 2019. Unanimous Vote (3-0).

Interviews since last RAC meeting:

Select of a student to the Human Rights Commission. These interviews were overseen by Mr. Pistrang. He sat in on all interviews. They picked a Junior and thought that the two years would be a great term. All four candidates were passionate about their interest in the Commission.

Council on Aging (COA) interviews. Ms. Kruger mentioned that she would be willing to come back and finish out that process. She will be out of Town during the month of December.

In general, the pool of candidates needed to be more than one – state the other parameter – it has to be more than one. Keep the ultimate pool of applicants to be more than one person.

Reappointment vs. new interview – possible but less likely to find a new match that can bring to the table more than the individual who has served a term already. There is not a hard and fast rule that everyone should be reappointed. Nor should there be a hard and fast rules for what is an ok candidate pool size.

Trust issues with carrying people along from former systems of government. Ms. Kruger felt like she should step back from RAC over the coming summer because she wields influence from a previous administration. Mr. Pistrang felt that Ms. Kruger should stay on because she brings great history of local government to the table. Ms. Dennis noted that RAC representatives are not the only person in the room providing input during the interview and appointment process.

Next mtg February 11, 2020 at 10:00am in the First Floor Meeting Room, Town Hall.

Ms. Mills will prepare a list of people who are terming-off of boards/committees/commissions and start to plan for upcoming vacancies (and double check term dates in Access database).

**Meeting adjourned 11:21 AM.**