

ATTENDANCE

Select Board

Present: Alisa Brewer, Constance Kruger, Douglas Slaughter, Andrew Steinberg, James Wald

Absent: None

Staff: David Ziomek, Interim Town Manager; Deborah Radway, Human Resource Director

Other: Bernard Lynch, Community Paradigm Associates

MOTIONS

Meeting called to order at 6:01 p.m.

Ms. Brewer noted this evening's agenda was one item, to meet with Mr. Lynch the consultant hired to assist in the Town Manager search. Members were asked if they had any other items to report on.

Ms. Kruger provided an update on her project to obtain name badges for the Select Board, providing a sample similar to that used by the Chamber. No further comments or suggestions were provided. Ms. Kruger will work with Ms. Puppel in the Town Manager's office to place an order.

Town Manager Search Process

Ms. Brewer noted each member of the Select Board had met with Mr. Lynch individually for approximately thirty minutes prior to the start of this meeting. Mr. Lynch thanked the Board, noting he had received a lot of useful information, which he will include in the community profile for recruiting a Town Manager. Mr. Lynch noted he has been putting the opening "out there" informally and noted there is a lot of interest. Two community input meetings are scheduled for January 19th and one more on the morning of the 20th in between which he will meet with key staff and board and committee members.

Key elements identified by the Board members were the capital needs of the Town, infrastructure projects including a school, library renovation, new public works and fire station facilities. Mr. Lynch noted the qualification to meet those needs would be a strong financial background. Also expressed was the need to maintain sustainable growth and bring in additional revenue in line with the residents' vision for the Town of Amherst. A manager who has the ability to work with the community and engage the citizenry as to how this type of development can take place was noted as an important qualification.

Another significant issue raised was the relationship with the University of Massachusetts, and Amherst and Hampshire Colleges, specifically how to create a partnership. A Manager with experience in working with large institutions would be desired. Mr. Lynch noted that he also heard about a strong need to ensure that the Town remains affordable, that there be housing available for Town employees and those that work at the educational institutions, so that the Town retains its diversity. Tied to that is the decreasing enrollment in public schools, impacting state aid and the ability to support quality education.

Mr. Steinberg brought up the Charter movement and the need for a Manager to address the underlying issues that brought the effort forward, as well as work through the process in a positive way. Also addressed by several members was the need to find a Manager who would work to engage citizens and build a level of trust, improve citizen satisfaction with government and its processes, and facilitate visioning and buy-in to the projects as they move forward. Ms. Kruger spoke about the challenges of a Select Board/Town Manager form of government, elected versus appointment, and how to optimize accountability to the public. Mr. Wald spoke about the understanding that the Select Board is a part-time board, not able to deal with the day to day business of the Town and that the office of Town Manager has

served Amherst well. Ms. Brewer acknowledged that there is a level of leadership needed in the Town Manager, with a residency requirement and the expectation that they lead but not dominate the face of Amherst Town government.

Education qualifications noted as important or preferred was a graduate degree in public policy, management, or planning. There was a sense for a preference of a seasoned manager with experience in like communities rather than those whose experience is only small towns. Other attributes noted as important were good communication skills, writing and public speaking, as well as being a good listener. A creative, intellectually curious, people person was also noted as key. There is a desire for someone who is team oriented, has the ability to set objectives and expectations for staff and for themselves, and able to describe their methodology. Temperament and optimism were also mentioned, as was the need for a collaborative and cooperative work style. The ability to attract talented staff but also work with seasoned staff and assist them in realizing their maximum potential was noted as essential.

Ideas to increase awareness and engage public participation in the process were discussed, including email distribution, listservs, Facebook, news venues, and messaging through school networks. Mr. Steinberg will reach out to the Gazette to assist in the public awareness campaign. Mr. Lynch provided his email for contact. Amherst Media may also be planning to tape the public meetings.

Mr. Lynch spoke about the need to include some sense of compensation and the process for the appointment of a screening committee to be in place by February 22. Mr. Lynch recommended a seven member committee with broad representation. Suggestions included members from the business community, the institutional partners, a member of the Personnel Board, Finance Committee, or Planning Board, and social services community. Mr. Lynch noted caution at inclusion of a staff member on the screening committee, to avoid appearance of a connection in the working relationship. Individuals that are interested can send an email to the Select Board. The screening committee will conduct interviews for a two week period in March.

Mr. Steinberg offered closing comments on how the loss of John P. Musante has affected the community and the recognition that we won't ever replace John, however we'll work to find the best person available for the position. Mr. Lynch noted he was honored at being able to assist in filling the position vacated by John Musante, having known and worked with him on various boards and committees in municipal management.

Next steps were reviewed. Ms. Brewer noted the Select Board can be effective at promoting the opening at the upcoming MMA meeting. Mr. Lynch thanked the Board before exiting the meeting.

Members spoke about their availability to ensure the Select Board's presence at the community meetings.

The meeting adjourned at 7:52 p.m.

Submitted by M. David Ziomek, Interim Town Manager