

Town of *Dunstable* Selectboard
Meeting Minutes
May 13, 2015
Town Hall, Dunstable, MA 01827

Convened: 10:00 am

Present: Walter F. Alterisio, Kenneth J. Leva, Daniel F. Devlin, members; Madonna McKenzie, Town Administrator

Selectboard Reviewed & Signed the Following:

- Vendor Warrants

Working Meeting

Mr. Alterisio started by explaining for the record that this is a working meeting, the intention of which is for the Board to primarily discuss the position of Town Administrator. That discussion will revolve around what it expects, what it is looking for in a Town Administrator, and what the position should look like. The Board will also briefly discuss the recent Annual Town Meeting and a personnel issue.

Town Administrator Search

Ms. McKenzie started off the discussion by informing the Board that an ad has gone out on MMA, the public access channel, and the Neighbor to Neighbor. She further elaborated that her criteria focuses on finding someone who is strong on MGL, and on procurement processes. The Board determined that it should play to its weaknesses, looking at where it is weak now and what this person could bring to the table to address them. Ms. McKenzie agreed, noting that the town is weak in some cases on MGL. Therefore, she stated this person should be somebody that understands and knows what towns are required to do. The Boards emerging consensus is that it needs to be more proactive on procurement, and ensuring that training opportunities are explored and supported. Ms. McKenzie suggested this person should also be strong on personnel. She noted that the town is in the process of setting up a wage and classification scale and that it won't be done most likely before she leaves. She stated that this is important for employees, so that they know what will happen to them. This includes knowing when raises are to be expected and so forth.

She told the Board that the new Personnel Board is great, but most of its members don't fully understand the differences between private and public employees. She noted that they along with Capital Planning will need nurturing going forward. That means that her replacement must be able to attend night meetings. She also noted that the Department Heads need to have meetings and regular information provided to them. The new Administrator will need to be hands on and willing to work with all the people here, to help bring things together and help accomplish tasks and goals. The Board agreed with Ms. McKenzie's recommendations and also suggested that a multi board meeting should occur once or twice a month. Ms. McKenzie told the Board that she has already instituted something like this and noted that these meetings were very productive. Often many different organs of the town don't have ways to communicate with each other in an effective way and this should continue to be fixed. Ms. McKenzie further recommended that there be a quarterly meeting between the Board and the Advisory Board (FinCom), Treasurer, Tax Collector, Town Clerk, Assessors, and Town Accountant. On that note, Ms. McKenzie told the Board that it can be arranged for DOR to come out and explain some of the things that are required and needed on the financial end.

From there Ms. McKenzie reminded the Board that she already meets with most department heads on a regular basis and suggested this be continued with the new Town Administrator. On that note, she informed the Board that Dunstable is unusual in having a Roads Commission. Normally a town has a Highway Chief that reports to the Board directly. The Board agreed that Dunstable may need to have some reorganization and restructuring implemented including the possibility of a DPW. There was also some discussion about how to simplify the existing structure and organization of the town. As a result, the Board discussed how different departments could more effectively share labor noting that the town contracts out a great deal that could be

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done in house, a situation that results in the spending of a considerable amount of money. The Board expressed the wish to see more cost effective ways of spending funds. Ms. McKenzie expressed the opinion that this can happen and explained that this is possible to achieve with good leadership.

From there the Board turned to discussion about how to interview with these attributes and thoughts in mind, and whether the town should accept someone who isn't fully up on all of them, but perhaps has strengths in some. Ms. McKenzie expressed the opinion that the Board may need to consider just such a candidate, someone who doesn't have strengths to counter every weakness, but who may have just enough in most of the areas the Board is looking at. Ms. McKenzie then moved the discussion to the applicant pool so far. She informed the Board that the town has received roughly 15 applications. She has set up a preliminary screening committee, which includes Sue Psaledakis, Dana Metzler, Bonnie Ricardelli, and herself. These people represent a broad spectrum of the community including the various personalities that the new Administrator will have to work with on a day to day basis. The Board agreed with the composition of the screening committee, but noted that they would like the ability to review more of the candidates than strictly who the committee brings to them. Ms. McKenzie suggested that the Board review the applications that she had. The Board agreed.

Finally, the Board concluded it will draw up an outline of what it is looking for, and will provide this to Ms. McKenzie. They also set how many candidates they are looking for, and concluded they want the candidates to have strengths on at least two of the things they are looking for. They do not want to talk too much to each candidate's strengths as much as they want to talk to what the town needs. It appears from what they have seen so far, the Board noted, that there are some candidates that look promising. Ms. McKenzie explained again her process for candidate selection and some thoughts about how some candidates will be easily eliminated from consideration due to factors such as too few qualifications, asking for too much in salary, too little experience in municipal work, and other similar areas of consideration.

Annual Town Meeting

The Board started this topic by following up on the one article that failed at Annual Town Meeting (GDRSD's requested stabilization fund). There was discussion of why the school sought the stabilization fund, and what the purpose of the stabilization fund was. It was felt that the school might have failed to fully articulate the reasoning behind their request. Ms. McKenzie suggested talking to other towns to find out what they do and whether the stabilization fund model for schools works. She noted that the School was asking for trust, which the town may have a deficit of in concern to the school district given last year's override. The Board determined that finding out where things are and what position Groton has taken is necessary.

The Board then turned to the budget, which was adopted. The Board felt it would be time to begin to look at what accounts should be tracked for this financial year. There was also discussion of having the Advisory Board come in to help establish a strategy on how to manage spending. Ms. McKenzie noted that this past winter was unusually cold and the towns bills were clearly impacted as a result. She further noted that the energy bills have increased and will likely continue to increase. There was some discussion as to the cost of buying energy from the solar project that sits on the Tyngsboro-Dunstable town lines. From there, Ms. McKenzie noted as an aside that the Advisory Board has asked her to help them determine what other towns Finance Committees do and to try and help move the Advisory Board towards those kinds of things. The goal they have is to really start thinking about long term needs of the town. She also informed the Board that the Town Accountant will be working out an overall budget plan and will be working more closely with the Advisory Board as a result.

Personnel Issue

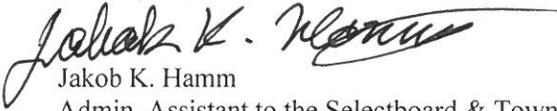
The Board started this topic off by discussing the letters it has received as part of the process. These letters have put on the record concerns about a personnel matter. The Board stated that it wants to ensure that the towns labor attorney writes a letter that responds to all of the components of the complaint. It appears that the union involved is aware of the legal complexity and inherent weaknesses concerning this matter given the present state of MGL and precedence with the courts in the Commonwealth. This aside, the Board has led the town in attempting to work this situation out in a responsible way. Ms. McKenzie noted that there is the

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potential for mediation. The Board stated that it wants a robust response to the complaint on file because having this kind of response helps substantiate that the town has not failed to act, and that no MGL has been violated here.

A motion to Adjourn at 11:16am was made by Mr. Leva, and seconded by Mr. Alterisio. The motion passed without objection.

Respectfully submitted by

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Jakob K. Hamm", with a long horizontal flourish extending to the right.

Jakob K. Hamm
Admin. Assistant to the Selectboard & Town Administrator

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