

HAMILTON BOARD OF SELECTMEN

MINUTES OF MEETING

July 30, 2018

Members Present: Shawn Farrell, Jeffrey Hubbard, Allison Jenkins, Scott Maddern, and William Olson

Members Absent: None.

Interim Town Manager: Not present.

Chair Shawn Farrell called the Board of Selectmen (BOS) meeting to order at 6:04 p.m. with a quorum present.

Interview and Discuss the Three Candidates for Town Manager Put Forth by the Screening Committee

Intro. from Bernie Lynch

Bernie Lynch, principal of Community Paradigm Associates, LLC, said it was important to note the work the BOS, staff, and department heads had done to identify the needs of the community, the challenges, and the skill set for a new Town Manager. The position profile was circulated and an active recruitment was conducted. They received 32 applications. The Screening Committee narrowed that down to six candidates, whom they interviewed. They narrowed that down to three. Then they did reference and background checks. Each of the candidates spent time at Town Hall meeting with department heads and staff.

The three finalists are: Christine M. Lindberg, Joseph J. Domelowicz Jr., and Ronald S. San Angelo.

Interviews

Mr. Farrell asked each candidate the questions below, which were prepared by Community Paradigm. Topics were: finance; management style; relationship with Schools, Boards, and State House; relationship with the BOS; regionalization; communication; technology; open space and natural resource preservation; project management; affordable housing; and

economic development. He ended by asking each candidate if they had any questions and/or final comments.

Questions

- 1) How do your qualifications and experiences match up with the challenges and opportunities detailed in the position profile?
- 2) Please describe your experience in creating budgets and managing finances, as well as your financial management strategies for ensuring organization sustainability. Please share an experience that illustrates your approach to capital budgeting. Hamilton's goal is to maintain its excellent credit rating while also keeping tax increases to a minimum. How would you try to "do more with less"?
- 3) How would you describe your management style and ability to motivate the professional staff? How would you build relationships and trust with all Town employees? Please describe your approach to goal setting for staff and for yourself?
- 4) Please describe how you would develop, manage, and increase relationships with other Hamilton stakeholders, particularly elected and appointed board members, such as the Finance Committee and School personnel. How about with regional, State groups, and officials?
- 5) Can you describe the process you envision for working with the Hamilton BOS to set goals and objectives? How do you envision the overall relationship with the Board will work?
- 6) Can you talk about what efforts you have made in your current or past roles in regard to regionalization and the sharing of services?
- 7) Please discuss how you have increased communications, both internally and externally, in past positions, including any use of technology and social media. Please tell us a little about your interactions and engagement with citizens in your past roles, including specific examples.
- 8) Please tell us about any technology you have implemented in your current or past roles that has improved services or processes.
- 9) Please tell us about your background in areas of Open Space and Natural Resource Preservation and include some specific projects you have been instrumental in guiding.
- 10) Please tell us about any large municipal projects you have managed in your past roles. Does anything stand out to you from the learning experiences you gained through managing these projects?
- 11) Currently Hamilton is at approximately 3% of the State-mandated 10% in affordable housing and needs about 200 more units to meet that goal. How have you dealt with affordable housing issues in your current or past roles? And how do you balance the need for affordable housing with the desire of a neighborhood to maintain its current character?
- 12) Please talk about what, if any, economic development you might try to encourage here.

Christine Lindberg is currently the Human Resources Director in Dracut, managing HR functions for approximately 172 employees. Prior to that she was Chief Aide to the Town Manager in Salisbury for four years, served as Assistant to the Town Manager in Hamilton for four years, and worked in the Scheduling Office of the Governor of Massachusetts. She has an MPA from Suffolk University with a concentration in State and Local Government. She completed her Masters Certificate in Local Government Leadership and Management through Suffolk University and the MMA [Massachusetts Municipal Association]. She also served for nine years as a Selectman in the Town of Middleton and 15 years on the Middleton Planning Board.

#1—Ms. Lindberg said municipal management is more than a profession for her, it is a passion. She pursued her education to arrive at this position.

#2—She said budgets are more than accounting and spending, they are an expression of priorities. She talked about how budgeting was handled when she was a Selectmen in Middleton. She said to inform and engage the public, you need buy-in. The budget is a living document. You need to be sure you are on target from budget to actuals. Budgets should be accountable and transparent. You need to provide a narrative so the average reader can understand where your priorities are. Your facilities and equipment are critical to operations. Without that operational capacity through your capital, you can't perform the services you identify as priorities in the community. You always want to look at your operational efficiencies. She talked about different matrices for assessment.

#3—She said she believes in an open door policy, wants people to feel comfortable to stop by. She likes to get out of the office, walk around, and engage the staff. She believes in performance evaluations once a year and said it's important to praise employees for good work, address issues, and have them give feedback to her so they feel they're being heard.

#4—As one who's been an elected official, she understands why someone wants to volunteer their time and talents to their town. It's important to be collaborative and communicative, for example, to meet with the School Committee and explain what the town can afford. A lot of it is keeping communications open and giving them the data. She always gets stopped by people asking her questions. She knows Wenham Town Administrator Peter Lombardi and has worked with him before. She knows the delegation at the State House.

#5—She was working in Hamilton when the Special Act was written. She said it's important to work with all the boards and committees, especially the Selectmen. Her job is to get them there in the most efficient way possible. There's always a constant reassessing and working jointly to achieve goals. At the end of the day, when the policies are set, even if she might disagree, it's her job to implement them.

#6—Middleton has a regional school system with Boxford and Topsfield. In Salisbury, they had regionalization of the health agent and veterans services. In small towns, they can't always have full-time employees, so it's great to partner.

#7—Social media is not an area she has had oversight on. She described some face-to-face interactions in which she would talk with someone, promise to find out more information, and then call them back in a day or two. She said oftentimes the person was in a different place emotionally after having expressed concerns and knowing someone listened to them.

#8—In Salisbury, they had an old outdated website and she solicited a bid for services.

#10—One large municipal project she worked on was as a volunteer on the School Building Committee and Library Committee. She talked about the process.

#11—She said there are misconceptions about who is going to be living in the affordable units and feelings of detracting from property value. She said in some cases an elderly person meets income criteria, but is too heavy on assets and can't qualify to live there.

#12—She said the tax base in Hamilton is 95% residential and needs to be balanced with economic development. She said that involved looking at the priorities and type of businesses the citizens and the BOS want and starting with a generalized buy-in.

William Olson asked how her experience made up for her lack of being or having been a town manager. She responded she has always told people ever since she worked for the Town of Hamilton that she is going to be a Town Manager someday and has moved around to improve on her managerial experience. She discussed honing her HR skills and explained her educational path.

Mr. Farrell asked about conflict resolution. She said she handles polarized issues with active listening to really understand what the issues are. She said people may not agree, but they're both giving their time, although on different paths. There's no ego about who's right and who's wrong. The question is: How do we get to where we want to be?

Scott Maddern noted her experience currently is about HR. As Town Manager, she would have responsibility for HR as well as everything else. She talked about the rising costs of health insurance and how they addressed the issue in Salisbury.

Mr. Maddern described the scenario in which the BOS kept the Town's spending to less than a 1% increase and set a target for school spending at 3%, while the School District proposed a more than 6% increase. He asked how she would handle that challenge, as well as that of having a largely unfunded OPEB (other post-employment benefits) fund. She said in Middletown, with the regional school committee there, if two towns voted for the budget

they had to fund it. She said it required meeting with the School Committee and explaining where they were so they aren't promising things they can't deliver.

Regarding a question about keeping her sanity in handling a lot of projects at once, she said she tries to let everyone know they are working for a common goal.

Other Discussion

Mr. Farrell thanked the Screening Committee for their work.

He said the Town Clerk informed him absentee ballots are available for the Sept. 4 primary.

Allison Jenkins said she learned in other towns they are making an effort to ensure all retirees are signed up for Medicare, which is helping keep health insurance costs down.

The BOS set August 2 for its next meeting, which will be to hire the Town Manager.

Joe Domelowicz has been Assistant Town Manager in Winthrop for the past five years. He has had direct responsibility for grants management and economic development, including spearheading efforts to purchase the commuter ferry from Winthrop to Boston and Quincy, and having had involvement in major projects and initiatives working with Winthrop's Town Council. Prior to that, he was Senior Municipal Services Coordinator at the Metropolitan Area Planning Council (MAPC). Prior to that he was editor, reporter and shareholder at the Independent Newspaper Group. He served in the Air Force (active duty and reserves).

#1—Mr. Domelowicz spoke about growing up in a family that valued public service. There are police officers and paramedics in his family. He was in the Air Force. He lives in Swampscott, which he said is a Town similar to Hamilton. He said those are the types of communities that need care since big cities can get funding smaller communities can't.

#2—He has spent a lot of time balancing budgets, was involved in the budget process at Winthrop. He described it as always a bit of give and take and you always have people wanting more than you can afford. He talked strategic financial forecasting and looking at resources, three, four, and five years ahead. Talked about the importance of identifying capital assets and figuring their life expectancy. He talked about cycle budgeting—looking out five years, but back three. He said Hamilton was in a good position because most of its revenue comes from the tax base so it isn't as susceptible to swings in the market or as dependent on State aid as other cities.

#3—He has worked with the HR director to make sure we treat our people fairly. He said employees are the most valuable asset and costly asset. He believes in regular evaluations and goal setting. He said a lot of people look at annual evaluations as a chore, but it's a good way to find out from department heads what they need to do the job you want them to do. How do you get them there—more technology or equipment to help them meet that goal. He said the vast majority of people want to work in an environment where they feel appreciated. He has an open door policy. He says it's good to have lunch with your union presidents.

Mr. Olson noted one thing said about Mr. Domelowicz is he's a person others enjoy working with.

Mr. Domelowicz gave an example of how he handled a problem where an employee had a family emergency and needed time off. In his role at the MAPC, he said he worked with town managers in cities and towns on the North Shore, as well as mayors. Mr. Lombardi was his predecessor in Winthrop and he thought they would work well together. He talked about hosting coffee hours.

#5—He said the Selectmen are the elected voices of the Town and it is his job to make sure policies and goals are carried out and consider everybody's input, not just that of the loudest in the room. His past as a newspaper reporter taught him to share both sides of a story. He also talked about owning a mistake when one is made. He doesn't think it's a weakness to make a bad decision, you just need to make amends and change it.

When asked about his volunteer experience, Mr. Domelowicz said he was a Town Meeting member, chair of his town's Article 6 Committee, which looks at regionalization and efficiency in government.

#6—In Winthrop he established a regional energy manager with Chelsea. He is currently investigating regionalizing a conservation agent. He worked to establish a regional health director who works with Chelsea, Revere, and Winthrop. During his last two years at MAPC and first two years in Winthrop, he worked on collaborating on a regional health needs assessment.

#7—He feels the best way to communicate is face to face. In Winthrop they have a Town Manager's blog, update the website, and have a good relationship with community access TV. They've look at social media policy, but haven't adopted one yet. He told a story involving social media—about learning of a safety issue involving a fence around a yard with a pool that had fallen down and taking steps to resolve the situation.

#8—He was surprised to learn Hamilton doesn't have an IT Dept. He talked about a program online where if someone sees something in the community that needs fixing, they

can take a photo and post it. He said the DPW (Department of Public Works) can either feel defensive about that or view it as a way to identify what needs improving.

#9—One large project he worked on was opening up the marsh to a walking trail and boardwalk in Winthrop.

#10—He talked about buying the ferry, a \$1.5M project and about costs overruns. He said he will always ask for a contingencies fund for a large project to cover things that might go wrong.

#11—Serving on the Home Consortium, he worked to allow affordable senior housing on a site next to a local Temple. The issue is providing affordable housing in keeping with the character of the Town. Everybody wants it, but nobody wants it next to them. He said it involved upfront conversations about smart growth and planning. He is a fan of mixed-income development.

#12—He talked about reasonable growth of the downtown district by identifying what folks wanted to have in Town. Also, he talked about finding ways to introduce revenue streams, perhaps with events. People come from out of town and spend money when they go to the events.

Mr. Olson noted Mr. Domelowicz's experience with grant writing. He responded he is a decent writer, but works with people to write grants. He said grants are a team effort.

Ms. Jenkins commented her hometown is Winthrop and she has been watching coverage of the public hearings on the pier there. He noted the matter is contentious, although he doesn't think the pier will bring in that many more fishermen than those already going there. He said it might present the Town with a good opportunity to make the place safer.

Mr. Maddern initiated a discussion of a balanced budget and what that meant. Mr. Domelowicz replied it meant the budget was going to be able protect the organization while doing its best not to cut anybody, projecting what your revenue is going to be and living within that.

Mr. Maddern talked about the update of the Town's Master Plan and how they've started with the housing element. That led to a discussion in which Mr. Domelowicz commented that people who work for the Town can't necessarily afford to live here. He talked about having ties to Wingaersheek Beach. He also mentioned an adage: If you want to go quickly, go alone. If you want to go farther, go together.

Ron San Angelo has been Town Manager of Southbridge since 2015. Prior to that he was Town Administrator of Hanson. Before that he was Senior Technology Project Manager at CGI in Andover and Project Manager at the Connecticut Department of Information Technology. In an earlier role, he was the Mayor of Naugatuck, Conn. He holds a Bachelors Degree in Business Administration from Central Connecticut State University and is a certified Project Management Professional.

#1—Mr. San Angelo said he thinks the Town has strong fiscal management and is set up in a good position for the long-term. He noted things he liked about the location.

#2—He described the budget process in Hanson and working with the Finance Committee, BOS, and Town Moderator. When he's building a budget he asks what infrastructure is needed for the next three years. Hamilton's process is the way he's used to. He commented on OPEB, free cash, and said they don't want one-time revenues for operating expenses.

#3—He likes goal setting for the staff and for himself. He uses different management styles for different situations. He said his preferred style is to use the knowledge of the team. He is not a micro-manager. He wants to get the best from every employee. He said he has every department head write down their goals on a board and they all meet and help each other. He holds weekly meetings. He said he isn't going to get good work out of the department heads unless they trust him; he doesn't sit in his office, he's out talking to his team.

#4—He said he and the school system work well together. He doesn't view the School as separate from the town. He talked about working on ALICE training and to address substance abuse and public safety issues. He brings in people to talk about grants. He conducts training on Open Meeting Law and Ethics Law. He said in Hanson they have a Capital Planning Committee, a small group that looks at the capital budget.

Mr. Olson commented Mr. San Angelo's references said he's a good listener and asked him how he accomplished that. He said he enjoys people and that's the easy part of what he does. He says when angry citizens leave his office they are happier. You have to hear what they say. He wants department heads to second guess and challenge him.

#5—He said each Selectman has his/her own individual needs for communications and preferred method, which he gets to know. He would set up individual meetings with each selectman. He said at the end of the day, you're my boss. You make the decision and it's my job to carry it out.

#6—He worked on the regionalization of a kennel and animal control officer with the towns of Whitman, Abington, and Hanson. They have a regional school with Hanson and Whitman. He said they attempted to do regional dispatch service, but it didn't make sense for them.

#7—He said one thing he excels at is working with the media to get out a positive message for the town. He developed a town Facebook page and talked about some ways you have to be careful with social media—not a place to debate people. He heavily uses public access TV and created a show that celebrates Southbridge. They often bring in department heads and BOS members to discuss what’s going on in town. Once a month they go out to film a business in town. It is free advertising for the businesses and shows the town cares. He attends numerous public events.

#8—He is a certified Project Management Professional (PMP) and for years was in the tech field. He worked for the state in IT.

#9—In Southbridge they used CPA funds for rail trails and playground improvements. He offered details.

#10—He discussed a need to have a plan instead of reacting as land becomes available. They did a Town Hall renovation, inside and outside. They started a Pay-as-You-Throw trash program and convinced the public to buy in.

#11—There was a lot of opposition in Hanson to a 40B project they had. You need to get developers to compromise and make plans smaller. Sometimes they will do that. 40B is not low-income, he said. The hard part is reducing the anxiety of the public.

#12—The best way to get growth (economic development) is with your existing businesses—improve the pedestrian process, improve the environment, make it easier to access by bike. Focus on the areas already designed for commercial use and protect the environment of the neighborhoods. In Southbridge there was no Chamber of Commerce. He created the Southbridge Business Partnership, which is essentially a networking group. A big part in engaging the business community is having them talk with each other.

In response to Mr. Maddern’s question about working with the School Committee, he said he doesn’t regard the schools as separate. He would focus on working with the School Superintendent and have him/her bring the budget package to the School Committee who then needs to sell it to the Finance Committee. At the end of the day, the BOS is responsible to the taxpayers. The schools are fighting for education. They don’t look at the budget in the same way. They have a different process.

Mr. Maddern said he thought Mr. San Angelo’s move seemed somewhat lateral since it would be a smaller environment. He replied he liked the old form of government and liked to be more directly involved in the day-to-day. He said when he came to Mass. he wanted to be in a smaller environment. He’s been in Southbridge three years. He said he would like to live in Hamilton and have his child attend school her.

In closing he reviewed his qualifications and that he was effective knowing how to work with State agencies for grants.

Further Discussion

Ms. Jenkins noted they had not received feedback from the department heads. Mr. Lynch said he saw that as a two-way thing to use in a judicious manner. He explained the purpose of the candidates meeting with the department heads was to get their observations about how they might be able to work with people, etc., and be educated about the Town.

Mr. Olson asked if the three candidates were clearly above all the others. Mr. Lynch said the Screening Committee had a few others they felt good about, but these are the ones they chose.

Chief Russell Stevens said it might be good to have Mr. Lynch at Thursday's meeting, but Mr. Lynch can't make it until 6:30 p.m. The BOS agreed to move the meeting time to 6:30 p.m.

Mr. Farrell said they will deliberate in open session and go into Executive Session for negotiating the contract.


Adjournment

Mr. Olson made a motion to adjourn the meeting at 9:17 p.m. Ms. Jenkins seconded the motion. The BOS voted unanimously (5-0) to adjourn.

Prepared by:


_____, 8/28/18
Mary Alice Cookson Date
Minutes Secretary

Attest:


_____, 9/10/18
William Olson Date

Board of Selectmen Clerk