

Warner Board of Selectmen
Work Session Meeting Minutes
Friday, May 10, 2019
UNAPPROVED

1. Open Meeting: Chairman Carson opened the meeting at 7:01 pm.

Attendance: Selectman Clyde Carson – Chairman, Selectman Kimberley Edelmann, Selectman Judy Newman-Rogers

Others present: Mary Whalen, Martha Mical, Donald Hall, Natalie Wells, Jonathan Lord, John Leavitt, Varick Proper, Ed Mical, Joe Mendola

2. Coverage in the Selectman's Office

Mary Whalen met with the Board to talk over how the Selectman's office will be covered in the absence of a Town Administrator. The Town Administrator emails and phone calls will be forwarded to Mary's desk for review and distribution. Mary will create the meeting agenda along with any supporting documentation that will be needed for meetings. Clyde asked Mary if she see's the need for extra help in the office and Mary said did not see the need. Judy asked Mary if she will need extra hours and Mary didn't believe so. Mary will get with Jim Bingham before he retires for passwords and log-in information. The Selectman will be contacted to approve invoices and sign time sheets when needed. The Board will also need to find a Welfare Director.

3. Fire Station Lease

A. The Selectman are working on a lease agreement for the fire station located at 27 E. Main St. The building will be leased by Olde Window Restorers with the intent to purchase. Clyde wants established an agreed selling price which Olde Window Restorers are agreeable on. The first step is establishing the cost for rent by using the appraised value, and the tax rate as a starting point and then an established portion that would go towards the down payment.

B. Martha Mical said someone needs to be responsible for the fire suppression system, she didn't see it mentioned in the draft lease. Clyde said during the Planning Board process for Olde Window Restorers, if they change the partitions they would make sure the system services the building correctly and the Fire Department would complete an inspection and forward the information back to the Planning Board (part of the Planning Board's approval). Ed Mical said there is also a fire detection system in the building that is tied in through a telephone line. Ed also mentioned Olde Window Restoration will be dealing with lead paint as a hazardous waste which should be dealt with in the lease. Clyde said that was also addressed in the Planning Board process, they need to be in compliance with the Department of Environmental Services. Martha Mical said her biggest concern is if Olde Window Restores does not purchase and leaves the property, there should be something in the lease about cleaning the building free of lead contamination, and there should be a security deposit to cover for three 55 gallon drums of waste.

C. Clyde suggests taking some of the suggestions from this meeting, add them to the draft lease and then meet with Olde Window Restorers. The town is taking care of the building damage from a snow plow and capping off the drains. Clyde proposes coming up with a figure that recovers the estimated property taxes plus the assessed value for a starting point for the rent. John Leavitt asked what happens to the money that is for the purchase of the building if Olde Window Restores does not purchase the building. Judy said in the draft lease, 90% is returned to the Leasee. Per State Statute, the town can only enter into a 12 month lease. Kimberley said if the town decides not to extend the lease, a notice needs to be determined, and she suggested a clause that is dependent on Town Meeting vote. The draft lease along with other suggestions will be sent to town council. Clyde would rather work with a local Realtor. Joe Mendola said he would volunteer to help, but recommends using town council.

D. Judy asked if the Planning Board's Notice of Decision regarding Olde Window Restorers binding. Clyde wasn't sure. Judy asked if it's covered under the Planning Board and not in a lease can the Board still hold them to it? What would a Compliance Officer hold them to, are there documents to refer to? Clyde said the Planning Board provided a notice of decision and approval to move in. Clyde noted that all the abutters were in favor of this business moving into town.

4. Town Administrator

A. Clyde said the question is how does the Board want to go about hiring a new Town Administrator. Kimberley said thoughts have been shared through emails and asked for those thoughts to be shared so all can hear.

B. Clyde began by bringing up his emails pertaining to hiring a new Town Administrator. The steps from his prospective is:

1. Review the job description and revise it if necessary.
2. Put together a search committee.
3. Identify potential candidates for the search committee.
4. Identify qualities the Board wants to see in the next Town Administrator.
5. Does the Board want to advertise or hire a service, Municipal Resource Inc. was used the last time. His first choice is to advertise.

C. Judy responded in emails things people have said to her.

1. Important to get input from those who have worked with the Town Administrator's over the last 14 years.
2. Use people's experiences with researching the position itself. The position was created for a reason and is it doing what the Board wants it to do. Has the position grown, has it served it's purpose, should it be changed, altered etc. The approach Judy is taking is what does the town want.

D. Clyde said he was not a Selectman when it was determined help is needed to do the administration of the town because the Selectmen didn't have the time to do everything required. His guess is those functions have not diminished over time, they have grown. The question in Clyde's mind is not whether we need a Town Administrator but do we have a proper job description that serves the need of the town and also the Selectboard. Judy said the position was created partially because the Selectmen didn't have the time, moving toward the future and having a Town Administrator as the town grew and as the responsibilities grew. It wasn't a position that was created to take on extra responsibilities because the town had this position. That Town Administrator was going to take care of the day to day operations allowing anybody to become a Selectman.

E. Clyde feels the town needs someone that understands budgeting and is exceptional with customer service. Judy said that is why she is recommending input from employee's and any body who has dealt with the Town Administrator because it will create the qualities in the job. Clyde likes the idea of once you get down to your final candidates, have an employee interview. Judy said because the town has a small group of employee's, it's important to be compatible.

G. Clyde said he feels the town needs a Town Administrator, the question is, what does the Board want that Town Administrator do for the Board. Kimberley said when she moved to town a Town Administrator was in place and she has no ideas how well the Town Hall functioned without one. Kimberley is going to watch and see where the gaps are without a Town Administrator. It's a great time to review whether or not the town actually needs a Town Administrator, to see how things function without one, it's a great time to find out how the Selectboard can do their jobs without the assistance of the Town Administrator. Clyde said it is a quite time of year to be without a Town Administrator, there may be some bumps along the way. Kimberley is looking forward to see what those bumps are. Clyde asked Kimberley is that saying you are not going to weigh in whether she wants a Town Administrator? Kimberley said she has no idea how the town functioned without one, she has no reference point. Clyde said if the Board said tonight are we going to start working on hiring a new Town Administrator. Kimberley would say hire one, as far as redefining or revising the job description, she is not in a position to say what is not needed in the previous job description.

H. Don Hall asked Clyde if he remembers the procedure that was done when Jim Bingham was hired. Don said it was very fair and comprised of local people and department heads. Kimberley said the point she is trying to make is she doesn't know how the Selectboard got to the point of needing a Town Administrator. Now is the time to analyze and revise if needed. Clyde feels this needs to be done quickly. Kimberley asked why. Clyde feels it will take the Board several months to bring the process to completion, it took 3 months the last time. Martha Mical said it took 5 months and the town functioned just fine without a Town Administrator, plus the absence was in the middle of the budget season. Judy said it was during the budget season, end of year and Town Report. Martha also said the town Department Heads know their jobs and work fine without a Town Administrator. Clyde said he will not be a Selectman without a Town Administrator. Martha doesn't want to see the Board rush into this process. John Leavitt said you don't want to hurry, but you don't want to delay either, you want to work at a steady pace. The problem he has seen with how this town runs is the delays that occur because things are put off and you shouldn't be doing that with a Town Administrator, should always move forward.

I. Clyde wants the Town Administrator search to be a top priority. Judy said staffing was the Board's number one priority and if there will be full-time, part-time, or a number of people, that needs to be looked at as well. Clyde suggested the Board review the Town Administrator job description.

J. Judy said she understands the concern of having someone there to do the day to day because she works full-time. She also feels it's important to include the Department Heads and make sure they are aware of their responsibilities, keep contact with them, the Board could start meeting weekly. Clyde would like to see the other weekly meeting as a work session where the Board focuses on specific things.

K. Kimberley asked Judy to expand on her thought of instead of the Town Administrator doing the work, set up committee's to do the work the Town Administrator was doing. Judy said it was just a thought, and something to look at. Clyde still feels the town needs a Town Administrator, Committee's are good if you can get them manned. Kimberley said another idea of Judy's was to reduce the number of projects. Judy said the position wasn't created to take on more, it was created to keep the day to day going, policies and procedure's up to date, it wasn't to have somebody to do more for the town. Clyde feels what ever the Board decides are the priorities for the year, the Town Administrator should help get those accomplished. Judy agreed, direction comes from the Board.

L. Judy asked Varick Proper his opinion because he was on the original committee for a Town Administrator. Judy asked Varick if he could provide some in-put from that study. What it was then, what we have now, has the town fulfilled the need of having the position, or is there anything the town should add? Varick said the scope of the position has drifted far from what was originally envisioned. The Committee in 1997 did write a report in the Town Report. There were findings that initially the Committee felt an Administrative Assistant would be a more appropriate fit and at some point transition into something more like a Town Administrator. Varick said the Committee did not feel a Town Manager was necessary. It was initially rejected by the public at the next Town Meeting and it wasn't until 2005 the town hired the first Town Administrator and at that point it was felt the scope of the position needed to be expanded. Kimberley said her observation is the scope for the Town Administrator has continued to expand because the Selectmen are good at saying "handle that". Kimberley said one of the things the Board needs to do is if the scope of the position is reduced then the Board needs to take on more responsibilities. Varick said in setting that scope it should not be given as a license to dis-board future Board's. He said some feel that has happened, a lot was delegated off to the Town Administrator ending with a relaxed authority of the Board. Varick said when he looks at the Town Administrator job description it seems very broad and overly expansive. He said another thing that should be considered that has also expanded in scope is the professional standards of the town's Department Heads. Varick questions whether the Board really needs a chief administrative officer overseeing the Department Heads when they are at a level of competency that doesn't require it. Maybe a Head of Administrative Services is a better fit to consider. Kimberley asked Varick to provide the Board his edited version of the TA job description and she would like to know the areas Varick feels the Board of Selectmen are slacking. Judy feels it's important to hear from the Department Heads, what is needed and what will provide what the departments need and yet fill the requirement of the day to day maintenance of the Selectman's office.

J. Clyde wants to have a further discussion on the job description at the next meeting on May 14.

5. Adjourn

Meeting adjourned at 8:22 pm

Board of Selectmen
Kimberley Edelmann - Chairman
Clyde Carson
Judy Newman-Rogers

Recorder of the Minutes: Mary Whalen