



TOWN OF WARNER

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Selectboard,
Harry Seidel, Chair
Faith Minton
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SELECTBOARD MEETING MINUTES

Friday, August 11, 2023, 10:00 am
Lower Meeting Room, Warner Town Hall, 5 E Main St

10:00 am Open Meeting/ Roll Call

Harry Seidel: This is the Selectboard meeting. This is a working session of the Board. It is not a meeting with input. Faith and I are new, we do not talk to one another outside of the meeting, and we need to discuss process.

Faith: It is very important to have the process public.

A newly appointed select board, I feel it is very important for the community that the process by which the 3rd select board is appointed is fair and open.

The purpose of this meeting is to discuss and create the process. As our community may know the select board acts as a board and does not discuss issues or make decisions singularly. This allows the public to witness the process. This design is not always as fast as some would like for a variety of reasons. First of all SB meetings are generally bi-weekly. There is work on the Tuesday evening agenda, I requested that Harry and I meet for a work session to create a fair process. Next week some staff are out on planned vacation. Unfortunately in August many people are taking vacations so this is slower than some may like, getting information has taken time.

This work session is scheduled so we can move forward with the appointment.

I have been researching best practices with town counsel and the NH Municipal Association's legal team.

Harry: Our first topic is selecting a new board member until the election. How we will do that, and how it will be transparent, and the process for doing it. Faith has worked hard on questions.

Faith: I would like to go over the NHMA legal team, our Town Counsel, and have a six step process.

When the select board undertakes to fill a vacancy in the board under RSA 669:63, we would recommend the following process:

1. Advertise that the select board is seeking town residents who are registered voters who would be willing to be appointed to serve on the select board.
2. Such advertisements could include posted notices, notices on the municipal website, and newspaper notices.
3. Ask all who respond to send a letter of interest stating why they wish to be appointed to the select board.
4. Set a deadline for receipts of replies.
5. Schedule a public meeting of the select board and invite all those who sent in letters of interest to attend that meeting.
6. Conduct interviews by the board of all of those who expressed interest in being appointed.
7. After completing the public interviews, vote to appoint a person to fill the vacancy.

If the Town of Warner has already received legal guidance from your regular, municipal legal counsel on the subject of how to conduct the selection process when appointing a person to fill a vacancy in the select board, the NHMA Legal Advisory Service would defer to that attorney's advice.

It was indeed my recommendation that the select board conduct a public meeting where you would interview all of the candidates at an open session of that meeting and after completing those interviews vote to appoint a person to fill the vacant select board position.

As for the privacy interests of those who have applied to be on the select board, I would offer you the following quote from a decision of the NH Supreme Court:

We see no reason why candidates who apply for a vacancy in an elected office should have a greater privacy interest than candidates who run for that same office during an election year. In both situations, a candidate's decision to apply for an elected public office places his or her qualifications for that office at issue, and, consequently, requires members of the public, either individually or through their representatives, to evaluate the particular candidate. Thus, a candidate voluntarily seeking to fill an elected public office has a diminished privacy expectation in personal information relevant to that office.

Lambert v. Belknap Cty. Convention, 157 N.H. 375, 384 (2008).

Requesting interested volunteers in the community to fill out a volunteer form. This has been on the website and on some facebook. This has gone out to the newsletter.

We have at maybe 5, maybe more. We have not posted a deadline yet. I would suggest that we post a deadline of Monday the 14th for a deadline.

This has been open for 2 weeks.

Karen Coyne
Sara Colson
Dunstin Chamberlain
Romeo Dubreuil
Derek narducci
Michael smith
Linda LeClair

Harry: I thought of doing it on Monday the 14th. I would like to suggest that we give them two more days. We will leave the date on which they must get forms in is the 16th, that is next Wednesday.

Faith: Conduct interview by the board. Then vote for someone to fill the vacancy.

Harry: I like the idea of having a public session where they all come, and it is the same questions to each person.

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Harry: Does the next one say that we can forgo the personal interviews?

Faith: There is a little more clarity as far as having a public interview and if it were to be a private interview, my understanding, I could interview a possible candidate privately, but if it we do it jointly, then it is a public meeting.

Harry: This is not saying that the next step would be interviewing individuals.

Faith: I have been absorbing this for 7 days and want to be sure we have a process that you and I understand. And if you and I understand it, then the community can understand it.

Harry: this is saying that someone who applies...read from Faith's letter. This does not seem to mean to me that someone applying for selectboard position is entitled to a private meeting. If we just do it in an open meeting, then everybody sees the presentation that each member has done. There is nothing done outside of the public.

Faith: New Hampshire Municipal Association created this. I did not create it. Harry did not create it. Then we can look at what we think is appropriate.

Harry: I think that I want to follow the guidelines of the NHMA.

Motion by Faith to have a deadline for receiving volunteer forms of Wednesday August 16 at 5pm. Harry Second. All in favor Yes. Motion passed.

Harry – we need to figure out the dates for the public. Next Wednesday is the deadline, August 16. We would have the forms by Wednesday. First public interview, the day after the deadline. The 17th would be the first public presentation from the candidates on the 17th. We have seven already, and we could do the following the date, Friday the 18th. Then all the interviews would be done in August, and we could make a decision.

Motion to start the interview process on August 17th, to be continued on August 18th.

Friday morning.

Can we contact the people who have applied?

Faith: I would like to have a framework and what it is. How will those interview processes work. It would be important to have a time limit. 6 or 7 questions, and how we interview, this gives us a little bit of time to say how we interview.

Harry: Some people may take longer than others to get their idea out. If you said one minute, "I cannot say anything in one minutes."

Faith: Say there are 10 people by next Wednesday. We have not even discussed the questions.

Harry: 15 minutes per person.

Do we go through one question and each person

The League of Women Voters has a nice framework. I am brainstorming with you what possible systems.

Harry: the League asks it to one candidate, and then the next candidate. But if you are the 5th candidate, then you may be rehearsed from the previous people who answered.

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Faith: We could rotate so that each person is the first person to answer.

Harry: I would suggest that we let each candidate answer the 8 questions, and have a reasonable time limit. Maybe 2 minutes, 8 questions, 20 minutes per candidate. You could 9 in three hours. If we start with something that applicant #1 answers the first questions 1st. Let's make it concise and coherent. If each candidate gets to give their presentation, it is better than having interruptions. It will get confusing otherwise. Let's say 2 minutes per question. If they do it in less, they get points.

Harry: For some who came in later. Faith and I do not have an opportunity to talk to one another so this is a public meeting, but it is not open to public comment, we are just talking to one another.

Faith: I am a process person.

Harry: Do we want people to send comments to the board, after this meeting?

Faith: I receive phone calls, emails, I see people on the street. Anyone can communicate at any time with us.

Harry: we are going to have a deadline for volunteers to get their volunteers forms in. August 16th. Public meetings for candidates to present. August 17, Thursday, 6pm and then follow up on August 22nd at 6pm.

Faith: this process we are going through is important for the community. In other situations, the selectboard has appointed someone without going through the process. We had six people interested and it is a good sign that a lot of people are interested.

Harry: I think it is great that we have 7 or 8 people. Selectboards can decide how they do business in their town. Will we have a date by which we select a candidate? We have them present by the 22nd. Could we make a decision by the 29th?

Faith: once the interviews are conducted, I think it should be pretty soon thereafter.

Harry: Either the 19th or the 12th. This would be the date we announce. We would have to have a NP meeting before that to discuss the NP meeting. After completing the public interviews, it does not seem to include a way for the selectboard to discuss. If we wanted to do that, maybe we would do that on Friday to discuss.

Faith: We may need more meeting to get up to speed. We may need more working meetings. I am spending hours working on stuff and I don't get an opportunity to talk to you. We may need more public meetings, where we can work, to get up to speed. Then when we get the 3rd appointee.

Harry: We have done the interviews, we need a process for deliberating. Is that public or private. It may not be something you want to do in public. We could do it on Friday, the 25th. We have to find a time for that. We are aiming at announcing on the 29th of August.

Faith: Motion to schedule the public meeting on August 17th, with continuation on August 22 if necessary. Second by Harry. All in favor.

Discussion about meetings:

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Harry: Motion that the selectboard of Warner in their selectboard appointment process will have a deadline of August 16th at 5pm, and then the selectboard will schedule public interview, Aug 17 and 22, at 6pm, with a possible meeting on August 25 to deliberate over the candidates, with a selection date on August 29.

Faith: I second the motion.

All in favor: Faith yes, Harry yes.

Faith: The next part of the process to think about. I have a rough draft of ideas that I came up with. These are thoughts that I am having.

Here are my thoughts: Because of what we have gone through in the past month, I think it is really important that we are able to find a board member that is able to work in a way that gets the town's work done. Can listen, communicate, solve problems. It is a cumbersome process. Someone who can listen and does not have an agenda. The interest to volunteer may not have the interview to be a candidate in March. It could be part of the process. Respect, collegiality, someone who wants to stick this out, someone with knowledge of the community, and how it functions. Maybe someone who has experience in the community, maybe someone who has a committee or selectboard experience.

I am interested in why someone would want to come in now when we have had such conflict. What are the community issues. How they work with others.

Harry: Everything I see here is good.

Faith: Can you think of a way to condense it:

Harry: Here are the questions: One side is general bullet notes. The other side is more focused.

How familiar are you with the select board role? Why do you want to volunteer?

What qualities do you think would be helpful for working on a team?

What traits to have that would be helpful at this time?

Are there issues for Warner that you recognize at this time?

How would you say you work best with others?

Would you be interested in running in the next election.

General ideas from Faith, with more specific questions:

Great board service is rooted with a passion for working with the town of Warner.

Why do you want to take on this position?

What do you know about the selectboard person role?

How would you say you work best with others?

How would you say you work with people who disagree with you.

Who do you currently interact with?

Who do you share your opinion with?

Can you talk about any previous experiences when others relied upon you to get the job done?

What if any experience have you had working in local govt in NH?

How would your friends, family colleagues describe your character?

How would your friends, family colleagues describe your integrity?

What organization are you involved with in Warner? Would anyone there be able to provide a reference?

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Faith: We are working to get the job done for the Town of Warner:

Harry: I think this is a good outline.

Faith wanted to create a rubrik, but Harry disagreed.

Faith: Someone makes assumption that there is someone in mind. The process will reveal who is the best person. If we have a clear and open process, there will be two places for people to run in march. The community will be able to vote. Since you and I have te opportunity to appoint someone, we want to do it in a way that there is a thought process.

Faith: Let's wrap this up.

Harry is not wild about the rubrik. More of an understanding, purpose, appropriateness, and then in March the town will choose their leadership.

COMMUNICATION:

Harry held up a sign. "Select Board Reset Area. Warner residents Welcome." Harry approached Varick Proper and asked for a place to setup his sign. Varick suggested he could sign up at the dump. This sign would be at the transfer station. Faith and Harry could sit there.

Faith: I look at the framework of communication as receiving and disseminating information. Conflicts are a signal that communication is not as effective as it could be. I try to look at what and why and how, when there is miscommunication. There is non-communication, or misconceptions. I would like to look at how communication is being

The selectboard, people in the building, residents. Some people use the internet, some go to the library, and other do not. Maybe this is too big to look at.

How do we communicate now? Is it effective? Where are the breakdowns? How can we do it better?

Not only is it coming from people who work on committees. We have a nice group of people here, that are very interested in the community. To me, that means they want communication, and they want to share. This is something we can work on. I would like to find out how people communicate, and how we (committees) share and communicate. I really think we need to work on it. People make assumptions, presumptions, people spread information that is not true. That is involved with communications.

Meeting are recorded or voice recorded. We are unable to have zoom for every single meeting – that costs money. We have to look at how people receive their meeting. We have staff working longer hours now. There are added job responsibilities. If there is a breakdown, we will have issues. We have to think of how many different ways information is disseminated. This is to open the door to say that as a community, we can do better. As a community, you trusted me. There is a part of me you don't know yet,. There is not clear communication. It is the crux of what is happening in our town.

Harry: Very often if you look at the problem, it often suggests the solution. I made a list. We have public meetings. We have minutes. We have the town website. We have the library. We have the zoom infrastructure. Then there is outside communication – social media. Then there are FTF meetings. These are different ways that people are communicating now.

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Faith: What you listed is ways to disseminate information. It is not receiving. We have to be able to receive. I see communication and if there is a void, people create their own stuff, and it may not be true.

Harry: Right now. Let's talk about zoom. It was essential in 2021, covid was rampant. We could not meet. It was important that the board meet and a way for people to meet. And the meetings were much longer. At that same time, for 2023, the selectboard reduced the money allowed to do meeting. Then we have zoom meeting, and people want the entire verbatim. No place does it say that minutes have to be verbatim. Look at the town report.

The combination of zoom, and get the information out in minutes. This has created a burden. The allotment in the budget for secretarial aspect to be created, it was cut. Then they are busy typing up minutes verbatim, and other important information is not getting done. In the old days, you had a recording of the meeting, and everyone was engaging. This was better than people sitting at home, and complaining about the meetings, or trying to critique the minutes. With the expense of Zoom, we should consider if it is something that is essential, considering that Warner is not a rich town.

Faith: I don't think we should decide if this is something that the community wants.

Harry: If people want it, and they want zoom, and their taxes to pay for it. And minutes that are brief and to the point.

Faith: We are talking about how we get information out there through committees. Minutes and zoom are a part of it. There will be recording if there are not minutes. Once we appoint our third selectboard member, I would like to have a meet and greet, I would like to have more rapport with the community. Now that I am in this position for 7 months, I knew I would be a target, and I like the opportunity to interface with the public. The community wants to talk to people in this position. Sending out minutes is great. The community is going to have ideas too.

Harry: we have the library newsletter, the town website, the minutes. Maybe we do a weekly notice, or a biweekly notice, from the selectboard.

Faith: People make up assumption of what is happening behind the scenes. We are doing the work. People are developing ideas that may not be accurate. I like to be proactive. I don't like to wait for issues to happen. I like to say "this happened. Maybe there was some misinformation. So that there is a way for 2 way communication. We are here to help the community."

Harry: Christine and Jody did FTF meetings with residents.

Faith: I am thinking about Farmer's Market.

Harry: What do you think about putting out something from the selectboard. "what's coming up? Budget process is coming up?"

Faith: People like their own way of how they like to get their information. We need to find out how people get their information. And how would they like to communicate with boards and groups.

Harry: I think this idea of communication is a strong one. I don't want to make more work for the staff. Is this something you would take on the initiative? I think it should come from the selectboard to the community.

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Faith: When I said to someone that it is a team approach. I think the Town of Warner is on a team. When we are a community, a family, a team, we need cohesion. If there is not good communication, we need systems of communicating, and I feel it is lacking.

Harry: we have these committees in town. We have the AG committee – people may not know what it is about. Or the EDAC committee. They may not get this message out to the town. The selectboard has a liaison to each of these committees.

Faith: I am starting it now by bringing it up, just to talk about it.

I sense there is a little frustration because people want to communicate. I am open to being a liaison in the community, and people can reach out to me. They can read the minutes from this. People know how to find me.

Harry: Let's not forget about this. Faith will initiate a conversation around communication.

Faith: This is an issue in our community. I am not on some of the groups, but I hear that if there is a void, it gets filled with stuff that is not true. I get a message from someone that says I should resign, when I have not even been appointed yet. There are things that need to be improved upon, by all of us.

Harry: I think it is a good initiative, I salute you for that. We will have an action step.

Harry: Other business. The 15th we will have Tim Fountain who is doing the mapping for the Town. There is a big issue with that that we need to discuss at the meeting, in relation to it. Nancy Martin is coming from the Community Land Trust. People don't understand what the land trust is. It is helpful to helping us with our housing. The EDAC will give their report about the building. Tim Blagden will be here from the railtrail initiative, and need to be kept alive.

Harry: requests for 91:a. The Concord Monitor has taken it upon themselves to request extensive documentation for text messages and emails. We are going through all email and text messages. They can request this. What effectively happens, it means that the town team is stuck with doing this work.

Faith: The public will need to understand that people can only work so fast. We need to ask for the public's understanding and trust, and things will move along as quickly as possible.

Harry: It is a problem for the Town of Warner because Warner could very easily be buried by these requests.

Faith: I think we could bring this back to communication. If people want to know something, they obviously have not received communication that gives them trust. The team needs to work on communication so that we don't have 91:a. This is exactly what I am talking about. I am not being defensive. I see the 91:a as part of the communication. When they ask for this. We cannot get this done as quickly as possible. I would request that there be patience. We can only work within our budget. When there is that much information, there is a burden to our budget.

Harry: I feel there is an effort that this is a stack three feet high. It is staggering. Someone is paying for this. The town's people are paying for this.

Faith: If there is mistrust. Everything is out in the open.

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Harry: This is the Concord Monitor.

Faith: This is time, and time is money. We have nothing that the public cannot see.

Anything else: Diane reported that the CIP and the budget are being worked on. The CIP is due Aug 21, the day I return from vacation. Diane has spoken to Janice about the date. We have to get quotes on all of the proposed work for the Warner Community Center and the slate roof. If we do not get a CDFA for Warner Community Center, or an historic grant for the slate roof, we will have CIPs for that work, plus the computer purchases.

I.

Posted: Aug 11, 2pm. D. Ricciardelli