

Select Board's Minutes of Work Session on September 18, 2021

Members present: George Riley, Alex Bowman

Called to order at 1:00pm

1. Interview Kevin Flynn, applicant for Town Administrator

Kevin withdrew his application due to a lack of affordable housing in Sandisfield.

2. Interview Chris Valentino, applicant for Town Administrator

George and Alex introduce themselves briefly, and go on to state how impressed they were with his resume. Chris is a lawyer and a military veteran.

George asks Chris if he has ever been in a situation where he was unfamiliar with the laws and how he may have dealt with the situation. Chris goes on to explain that being in the military he has frequently moved, therefore forcing him to absorb many different cultures, regulations and laws. Chris has worked as the Cyber Security Law Expert for the U.S. Army Cyber Command. He is very comfortable with learning quickly and effectively new branches of law.

Alex asks where Chris might not have sufficient background. Chris explains that part of his success in earning respect is through asking questions and gaining knowledge from your peers. Chris goes on to state part of his strategy in gaining knowledge is through diligent studying and refers to his experience teaching Constitutional Law in the military.

George asks what tools Chris uses to determine the extent of an individual's potential. Chris explains a lot of this determination stems from a familiarity with the position and its tasks, as well as his background within Environmental Law. Chris finds he can initially place people in three categories, the first being people who know what they're doing and don't need guidance to flourish, the middle group being capable people who need some training and guidance, and the final group being those who cannot achieve competence and confidence in their craft. He notes that when you have people in the third category, it's up to the supervisor to guide them to a position where they can succeed.

Alex asks whether Chris is familiar with recent local happenings. Chris explains he is vaguely familiar and reasons his lack of knowledge is because he did not want to bring biases to the interview. Alex goes on to explain some of the vacant positions and other

situations in town. Chris states he did not want to tell the Select Board how these issues should be solved before he got a chance to feel the situation out for himself.

George requests Chris give an example of how he will deal with the inevitable pushback from the town. Chris explains that most big issues are typically solved during elections and the biggest issue is determining what small issues actually need to be dealt with and which are just “noise.” Chris goes on to say that residents have to decide what kind of town they want it to be and know when not to push back so much. However, he does note that he enjoys helping people deal with their problems and looks forward to making change in the community.

Alex asks if he has any other employment responsibilities that might affect his ability to begin work in Sandisfield. Chris explains that he has two other employment opportunities as a government contractor, but he has yet to receive any job offers.

George prompts Chris with a conflict situation involving a department head refusing to let an asset manager enter their department to conduct inventory. Chris explains he would first determine what is the “correct answer” to the situation. He would then question why this department head wouldn’t allow a professional to come in. George asks whether they should trust each department to provide their own inventory, or hire a professional to provide a report. Chris states the conflict lies in whether the town feels they can trust their employees. He also reiterates that he prefers to be more familiar with a situation when giving advice. However, if an employee has trouble communicating and dealing with their superiors, it might be time to ask them to begin looking for another job.

Alex asks how he would go about dividing the supervisory responsibilities and daily tasks. Chris explains that division has a lot to do with the competence of his employees. Chris estimates the ideal time split would be 80% of his time would be spent on daily tasks, and 20% on supervisory responsibilities.

Chris states he does not have much experience with Excel spreadsheets. Chris does not have a project management certification degree, but claims with his hands-on experience, he doesn’t feel as though he needs one.

George explains creating a budget is one of the most stressful and time consuming tasks of the position. Chris has a similar experience with the Project Objective Memorandum process. This differs from a municipality because there are limited grants and most revenue comes from project developments. This is something he admits he isn’t super comfortable with.

Alex asks about Chris' HR background. Chris explains he has an extensive background in HR. He also has experience in policy writing.

George explains the Select Board will discuss, have a meeting with the Search Committee, and let the applicant know where they stand as soon as possible, and estimates Chris will hear back within a week to 10 days.

3. Discussion and vote to enter Executive Session for negotiations with non-union personnel

Alex motions to enter Executive Session for negotiations with non-union personnel. George seconds. Motion passes unanimously.

George states he is very impressed with Chris, but cannot hire him without first interviewing at least one other applicant. He requests the Search Committee schedule an interview with their third choice candidate. Alex agrees.

Barbara Cormier and George will communicate with Kevin Flynn to determine whether there was a miscommunication in regards to relocation. Kevin would not be required to live in Sandisfield, but rather move closer to Sandisfield than his current residence near Worcester, MA.

The Search Committee will schedule an interview with their third choice before the end of the following week, and plans for Wednesday evening.

Alex motions to exit Executive Session and return to regular session. George seconds. Motion passes unanimously.

Meeting adjourned at 3:00pm.

George Riley

Alex Bowman