



Town of Bellingham

BOARD OF SELECTMEN

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June 13, 2023

The Selectboard meeting was called to order at 1:00 PM in the Arcand Meeting Room by Chairman Michael Connor. Actively participating in the meeting were the following board members: Mr. Connor, Mrs. Grant, and by Zoom, Mr. Sahin and Mr. Hennessy. Also actively participating in the meeting was Interim Town Administrator Beth Cornell-Smith and Administrative Assistant Hilarie Allie. This meeting was accessible to the public either in-person or via the Zoom online option.

Municipal Consulting Firm Discussion

Mr. Connor stated this meeting was scheduled due to the announcement that CFO, Mary MacKinnon, had submitted her resignation and would be leaving the Town on July 7th. Further it had come to light that Mr. Fraine would be retiring at the end of his medical leave but no later than January 1, 2024. Mr. Connor stated he had some discussions with the HR Director regarding this as well as other vacant positions in Town including a Town Planner and the Finance Director of the School Department. Mr. Connor turned the meeting over to Mrs. Cornell-Smith, HR Director.

Mrs. Cornell-Smith stated it was her recommendation as HR Director that she will begin requesting RFQ's from consulting firms who work with municipalities to do a professional search for the most qualified candidates for these positions. From there she will set up 2 or 3 groups to conduct the interviews. In the past this has consisted of 2 Selectboard members, herself as well as 2 other individuals. She said she will include Superintendent Marano with the Town Administrator interviews and will work with him on the Finance Director for the School Department as well. She plans to get the search process started immediately.

Mr. Connor stated it is customary that the Chairman and Vice Chairman participate in a committee together but there cannot be more than 2 members of the Selectboard in a particular committee. He suggested that Mrs. Grant and Mr. Hennessy participate together as well but was open to suggestions.

Mr. Sahin stated he appreciated Mrs. Cornell-Smith's recommendation but thought the Selectboard should create committees made up entirely of Bellingham residents to hire for these positions and not use a consulting firm. He thought the hiring process for the CFO could start right away but suggested that the Board wait until after the election to start forming a committee for the hiring of the next Town Administrator.

Mrs. Grant stated the best way to have transparency in this process is to use a consulting firm because it takes all of the politics out of the hiring process. She does, however, think it would be a great idea to have one resident on each of these committees. Her feeling is that there is way too much that goes on in municipal government to have a committee made up entirely of residents. She strongly feels the committee members need to be fully versed in the municipal government setting in order to serve on these committees. She stated there is a sense of urgency and the process of putting out for RFQ's and selecting a firm will take some time and the Town does not have time to wait until the election in August.

Mr. Hennessy stated he likes the idea of a committee appointed by the Selectboard made up entirely of Bellingham residents. He stated there are a lot of professional and qualified residents in Town and by using them it would save the Town money by not having to use a consulting firm.

Mrs. Cornell-Smith stated she appreciates their opinion but will begin the process of hiring a consulting firm and that the committee members can be decided at a later date.

Mr. Dan Ranieri, Bellingham resident, expressed his concern with the process of hiring the next Town Administrator. He asked the Board where in the Charter it allowed the Interim Town Administrator to be in charge of the process of which the next Town Administrator will be hired. His opinion is that the Selectboard should vote on the process. Mrs. Grant responded to Mr. Ranieri and explained to him that Mrs. Cornell-Smith is starting the process of hiring a consulting firm to find qualified candidates in her role as HR Director. She further explained that ultimately it will be the vote of the Selectboard as to which candidate they choose for the next Town Administrator, CFO and any other position they fill. Mr. Ranieri did not agree with this and stated there was nothing transparent about this process, especially holding the meeting at 1PM on a Tuesday.

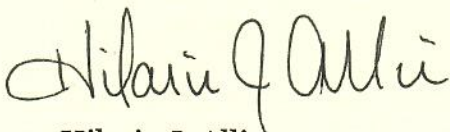
Mr. Connor stated for clarification, Mrs. Cornell-Smith will start the process of finding an outside firm and will bring the proposals to the Board as soon as they are ready. Further he would recommend a committee for selecting a Town Administrator be made up of 2 Selectboard members, the HR Director, Superintendent Marano and a citizen at large. He would like to see the committee for selecting the CFO be made up of 2 Selectboard members, the HR Director, a Fin Com member and a citizen at large. He would like to see the committee for selecting the Town Planner be made up of 2 Selectboard members, the HR Director, a member of the Planning Board and a citizen at large. And finally, the Superintendent and the School Committee can decide on how they would like to focus on the Finance Director for the School Department.

Mrs. Cournoyer, Tax Assessor, stated the Town doesn't have the luxury of waiting until the next Town Election to fill Mr. Fraine's position. Mrs. Mandile agreed with this statement. Mrs. MacKinnon stated the Town has been functioning just fine but it is unreasonable to ask Mrs. Cornell-Smith to continue her full time job as HR Director and also continue to assume the full time responsibilities as Interim Town Administrator for 7-8 months. She asked the Board to support the employees of this Town and fill the key positions as soon as possible. Mr. Aicardi asked if the Selectboard has ever voted to start a search for a qualified candidate for a position in Town. The answer was no.

Mr. Connor reiterated that Mrs. Cornell-Smith will start looking for an outside firm to help fill the open positions and would report back to the Board.

On a Grant/Connor motion the Board unanimously voted 4-0 to adjourn the meeting at 1:40PM.

Respectfully submitted,



Hilarie J. Allie
Administrative Assistant