

**Town of Newport, New Hampshire
Board of Selectmen**

**Minutes for Meeting of September 12, 2016
6:30 pm, Municipal Building**

SELECTMEN PRESENT: Jeff Kessler, Chairman; Todd Fratzel, Vice Chairman; David Hoyt, William Wilmot, John Hooper II

STAFF PRESENT: Paul J. Brown, Interim Town Manager

COMMUNITY MEMBERS PRESENT: Gary Nichols, Chris Marcotte, Ella Casey, Kaara Gonyo, Tammy Flewelling, Joanne Dufour, Dan O'Neill and Bert Spaulding, Sr.

CALL TO ORDER: Chairman Kessler called the meeting to order at 6:31 p.m. followed by the Pledge of Allegiance.

AGENDA REVIEW: Add non-public session (NPS) RSA 91-A:3, II(b)-hiring any person as a public employee (by Kessler)

TOWN MANAGER REPLACEMENT FORUM:

Chairman Kessler welcomed Mr. Paul J. Brown back as interim Town Manager. Chairman Kessler stated that the reason for the special meeting on September 12, 2016 was to begin the search for a new town manager. Chairman Kessler gave a synopsis of recent events: the resignation of Mr. O'Keefe, the acceptance of his resignation and Mr. Brown stepping up from Assistant Town Manager to Interim Town Manager.

Chairman Kessler stated that the search for a Town Manager would begin and the Board of Selectmen (BOS) wanted input from the public. He gave the history of Newport's current Town government, stating it was run under NH RSA 37. Town Manager government was voted in by the voters of Newport in the '40's or 50's. That was the reason Newport needed a Town Manager. Also, the Town is a \$12,000,000 business with 100 employees and a fulltime manager is needed to run the operation.

Chairman Kessler reviewed the most recent Town Manager search held.

- He explained the Visioning Workshop held as a part of the search. He stated the BOS wanted to know if the expectations originally drawn up were still pertinent to a future Newport town manager.
- The BOS requested input on the length of time for a search.
- And, whether to use an interim town manager in order for a lengthier search.

Chairman Kessler reviewed the previous process taken to hire a town manager, and explained the search committee used.

Chairman Kessler addressed the public present, asked for their input as to how they felt the search committee worked the first time, if there was anything different the BOS should be looking for and if they should approach the search differently.

Mr. Gary Nichols stated:

- ❖ The search committee did a good job the first time.

- ❖ In hindsight, the BOS or members of the committee should have visited the respective towns the candidates had been employed in and spoke to their respective employers, employees and community members on the candidates' personalities and work ethic.
- ❖ A long-term interim town manager should be appointed who could come in, make changes and prepare the Town for a new town manager.
- ❖ It was important for a residency requirement to be imposed for the town manager; Newport citizens have voiced that requirement

Mr. Nichols told the BOS members that a School/Town finance position should be expedited and that it could not be done with Brown as interim Town Manager.

Chairman Kessler acknowledged all members of the public who attended the meeting. They concurred with Mr. Nichols; the necessity of a Town Manager being a resident was voiced by many. They also concurred that the search committee had done an excellent job with the information they had been given, and that the last few candidates needed to be vetted with the inclusion of interviews from their previous employment.

The Chair was asked about the procedure to hire a long term interim. It was explained. The ability of the search committee to conduct a more thorough search into candidates' backgrounds was reiterated. A revolving door of town managers would not be healthy for the Town of Newport.

The importance of a Newport residency requirement was reiterated. The residency would allow first-hand exposure of the socioeconomic strata in Newport.

Mr. Dan O'Neill was acknowledged by the Chair. Mr. O'Neill reminded all that if residency was a requirement that they would significantly reduce the pool of qualified applicants. It might be a disservice to the community. He explained his reasons.

There was a general discussion on previous search committees, a residency requirement, having a potential smaller pool of applicants and conducting background checks.

Chairman Kessler addressed those in attendance. For clarification he reiterated that the citizens present thought:

- ❖ The criteria established in the original Visionary Session was still valid for Newport town manager candidates.
- ❖ The Town Manager should be willing to live and invest in the community.
- ❖ An interim town manager should be hired for the duration of the search for a permanent town manager.
- ❖ The interim town manger would take the responsibilities off the Finance Director so that his job was not split between all administrative duties.

The Chair then polled the Board members. He was told that a proper search, a more extensive background check should be done and an interim manager should be hired. The residency criterion was important but not a necessity. The Town should not rely solely on a consultant for the background check of the candidates. Also, not all applicants would fit Newport. A second advertising for the town manager position might therefore be necessary.

The Board and public discussed advertising and consultants used for the town manager position. Interim Town Manager Brown explained the resources they had used. The BOS was asked the proposed length of time until a new search was conducted.

Chairman Kessler addressed the public and stated that the BOS needed to discuss the next search committee, its make-up and the process. The use of Primex and their resources available to Newport in the search for a new town manager were listed. Because Newport had insurance through the company the services were free to the Town. Interim Town Manager Brown explained the use of the company in the last search. A discussion continued on an in-depth search; qualifications, personality and people skills were all very important.

OPEN FORUM: Mr. Bert Spaulding, Sr. addressed those in attendance and the viewing public. There was a short discussion between the Chair and Mr. Spaulding, Sr. Mr. Spaulding, Sr. assured the Chair that he would abide by the rules of the BOS restraints. He then proceeded to read aloud the letter of resignation from resigned town manager O'Keefe and other documents he had received through RSA 91-A.

Chairman Kessler addressed Mr. Spaulding, Sr. and clarified that the personnel policy stipulates that when a Town employee leaves their employ, their health insurance is continued to the end of the respective month.

Mr. Spaulding, Sr. continued reading aloud from the documents he had acquired concerning Mr. O'Keefe's termination. He repeated that he had received the information because he had made a 'Right to Know' request. Mr. Spaulding, Sr. then gave his opinion of the truthfulness of the resignation letter and other documents. He thanked the Board of Selectmen for their job in terminating the employment of Mr. O'Keefe and protecting Newport's citizens.

COMMUNICATIONS:

Selectman Hoyt had nothing to share at this time.

Selectman Fratzel had nothing to share at this time.

Selectman Wilnot reminded everyone of the Library Arts Center, "Casablanca Night" at Parlin Field on Saturday, September 17, 2016. There would be dinner, dancing and helicopter bingo. There were still tickets on sale.

Selectman Hooper stated he had the pleasure of going on a police "ride along" for six hours. The officers were very professional; he had a chance to see equipment in the cruiser used and commented on the amount of work done in a night shift. He had also gone on a "CO" occupancy permit inspection of a commercial building with the building inspector. Mr. Alan Chase and Chief Conroy were professional and very thorough.

Chairman Kessler reminded all that Tuesday, September 13, 2016 was the State Primary election. Voting would be held at the Opera House from 8 am-7pm. He encouraged all to vote.

Interim Town Manager Brown stated the Town would receive a damage report from the insurance company concerning the Corbin Covered Bridge. The Town would be contacting Arnold Graton (original contractor) for an estimate to do the repair work and work on other areas of the bridge that needed to be addressed. The Town also had to apply a new coating of fire suppressant. They would be asking for a bid on that as well.

Interim Town Manager Brown and Police Chief Burroughs had reviewed the personnel plan as had been changed by the Selectmen. A revised draft of the personnel plan would be brought before BOS at September 19, 2016 meeting. It would be passed out to the employees as well as the BOS before the meeting so all would be able to review its contents. He was asking that the Board tentatively approve the personnel policy at the October 3, 2016 meeting.

Chairman Kessler addressed the audience and encouraged all interested employees to attend.

INFORMATIONAL:

Selectmen Election Coverage

Town Manager Brown read aloud the current listing of Selectmen coverage for the State Primary election on Tuesday, September 13, 2016. Mr. Gary Nichols and Mrs. Candi Nichols had volunteered to act as pro tem Selectmen on election day as was necessary for coverage at the polls (see new RSA concerning pro tems). There was a discussion on the need to have a quorum at all times in the Opera House. On a motion by Selectman Hooper, seconded by Selectman Wilmot ; ***the Board voted to appoint Mr. and Mrs. Nichols as pro tems at the voting polls for the September 13, 2016 State Primary election day . The motion passed 5-0-0.***

Chairman Kessler thanked Mr. and Mrs. Nichols for their offer and continued community service.

Interim Town Manager Brown stated that Town Clerk Lee Dufort has predicted that the voting will be heavy at the November 8, 2016 General Election. She was anticipating needing Selectmen's help at the doors and with lines, etc.

ACTION ITEMS:

Town Manager Replacement

Interim Town Manager Brown asked if the Board would like him to solicit firms for candidates for the position of a new town manager. There was a short discussion among the BOS, Brown and citizens on the subject.

NON-PUBLIC SESSION(S):

On a motion by Selectman Fratzel, seconded by Selectman Hoyt; ***the Board of Selectmen voted by roll call to go into NPS under RSA 91-A:3,II(b) hiring any person as a public employee. The motion passed 5-0-0.***

Interim Town Manager Brown was asked to wait outside the BOS room.

The public meeting ended at 7:47 p.m.

The next regular meeting of the Board is scheduled for September 19, 2016 at 6:30 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,



Maura Stetson
Scribe

Approved on: September 19, 2016