

Town of Newport, New Hampshire
Board of Selectmen
Minutes for September 14, 2015 meeting
58 Main Street, Eagle Block 3rd Floor

SELECTMEN PRESENT: Gary Nichols, Chairman; Todd Fratzel, Vice Chairman; David Hoyt, William Wilmot, Jeffrey Kessler

STAFF PRESENT: Town Manager Shane P. O’Keefe

PUBLIC PRESENT: Primex Representatives Carl Weber and Sally Tanner, and resident Bert Spaulding, Sr.

CALL TO ORDER: Chairman Nichols called the meeting to order at 5:09 pm.

NEW BUSINESS:

Board Retreat

The Board held a retreat, facilitated by Carl Weber and Sally Tanner of Primex, to consider and define its priorities for the next 12 months, and to provide goals and direction to the Town Manager.

First off, the Board members discussed their individual top issues for the coming year, which fell into two broad categories: Economic Development and Personnel Matters.

Regarding personnel matters in general it was the consensus of the Board that it was important that the Town’s “house is in order” to ensure departmental consistency and accountability. It was felt that some departments are not performing optimally, and that there are differing or conflicting expectations between some departments. There was a desire expressed for better overall management flow.

Individual personnel goals included the following:

- Department head successor planning.
- Definition of the Town’s organizational chart and refine it in the future.
- Establishment of a policies handbook for employees, with directives.
- Creation of detailed job descriptions.

Weber suggested creating an organizational calendar, including built-in check-ins on goals throughout the year.

It was agreed by the Board that, by October 19, 2015, O’Keefe would update the Town’s organizational chart, assemble and review the procedures, guidelines and protocols of each department, and report to the Board with an inventory assessment with general conclusions

Subsequent steps would be to list what policies need to be created or updated, and also to ensure necessary employee training.

O’Keefe mentioned that there should be clarity about who establishes the various policies and guidelines for staff, as there appears to be Board-approved policies and those established by the Town Manager as well as by individual Department Heads.

It was agreed by the Board that, by November 16, 2015, O’Keefe would draft a statement of policy-making roles and authorities for Board review. It was suggested that city charters would be a good resource for defining these roles and responsibilities, and that Town Counsel should review the statement before Board review.

There was desire by the Board to consider short-term reorganization efforts as part of the upcoming budget process. It was agreed by the Board that, by December 7, 2015, O’Keefe would report to the Board any suggested personnel changes (to include revised job descriptions, as necessary) that have budget implication for FY 2017.

There was discussion about employee performance reviews. There was uncertainty about which departments conducted consistent performance reviews, and when they were conducted, but it was understood that there was little consistency on this front. It was agreed by the Board that in the next 12 months, and by no later than September 19, 2016, all employees would undergo goal-setting discussions and performance reviews.

Those in attendance took a dinner break from 6:30 p.m. to 6:55 p.m.

Regarding economic development matters in general, individual goals included the following:

- Reenergize ECON.
- Pursue Town/School cooperation.
- Establishment of tax incentives for businesses.
- Communication with and support of local business.

Areas of Town/School cooperation include:

- Combined finance department.
- Bus maintenance.
- Buildings & grounds.
- Capital Improvements Planning.
- Workforce development efforts. It was agreed that the “Workforce Taskforce” should be reestablished.

It was agreed by the Board that, by October 5, 2015, O’Keefe would report to the Board on the status of the Workforce Task, information for which would be available from former Town Manager Paul Brown and School Superintendent Cindy Gallagher. It was further agreed by the Board that by April 1, 2016, the Taskforce would have its first meeting, which itself will help with the goal of revitalizing ECON.

Regarding support of local businesses, the following points were raised:

- Fostering the relationship between the Town and the business community.
- Acknowledgement of the community/business atmosphere in which business operates.
- Streamlining Town permit processes. Establish “one-stop shopping” in this regard.
- Creation/maintenance of infrastructure necessary for new & existing businesses (i.e., power, water).
- Identification of needs and roadblocks for businesses.
- Vehicular access (i.e., roads, parking).
- Establishing a Town “ombudsman” for business.
- Promoting town businesses.

Regarding the Town’s permitting process, there was a strong interest in ensuring that there is consistency in process and the message delivered to permittees in the process. There was an interest in reviewing the Town’s Master Plan and the ordinances and regulations that stem from its recommendations. There was

also interest expressed in a review or audit of the permitting process in the Office of Planning and Zoning (TOPAZ). O'Keefe was asked to provide to the Board a list of firms that could do this type of work and an estimate of its cost through a request for proposals-type solicitation. The goal of the effort is to review from start to finish the permitting process in order to determine if there is a way to make the process more attractive to and/or more predictable for developers.

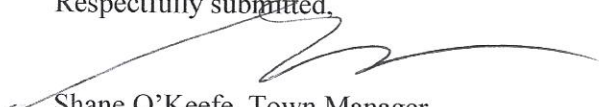
Regarding fostering relationships[s with area businesses, O'Keefe was encouraged to continue with his practice of meeting with businesses and participating in business promotion and other economic development activities.

ADJOURNMENT:

On a motion by Selectman Fratzel, seconded by Selectman Wilmot; *the Board voted unanimously to adjourn at 8:13 pm.*

The next regular meeting of the Board of Selectmen is scheduled for Monday, September 21, 2015 at 6:30 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,



Shane O'Keefe, Town Manager

Approved by the Selectboard on September 21, 2015.