

Wednesday, January 3, 20234  
Select Board Meeting Minutes  
Gala Room, Town Hall, 40 South Street  
6:00pm

Members Present:

Mark Elfman, Chair (ME)  
Stephanie McGowan, Vice Chair (SM)  
Leah Gibson, Clerk (LG)  
Seth Ferguson (SF)

Also Present:

Dennis Keefe (DK)\*  
Katie Lang, Executive Assistant (KL)  
Bernie Lynch, Community Paradigm (BL)  
Bob Cutler, Town Clerk (BC)  
Joe Sanders, resident  
Debbie Giardino, TMS Committee

\*Notes Attendance via Zoom

All Select Board meetings are recorded and broadcast by Foxboro Cable Access on Government Channel 22/38 and at [FCATv.org/live](http://FCATv.org/live)

6:00pm – Announcement of the Finalist Candidates for Foxborough Town Manager

BL – Community Paradigm. Consulting for the Town with the selection process.

BC – Town Clerk. Chair of the Town Manager Search Committee.

I wanted to thank Bernie for all as his help as he was instrumental on keeping us on track on where we have landed today. Packet for you all with a brief memo on the selection process, agenda, four resumes and the interview guide, provided by Bernie to help with process going forward. Memo reviews the task at hand to provide 3-4 candidates, went through screening process of 27 applications. Unanimously we agreed to present four candidates who we feel are most qualified and experienced.

Thomas M. Guerino, Scott J. Lambiase, Joseph F. Powers, Christopher Senior

BL - Candidates that Bob has read to you, you have their resumes, placed in alphabetical order. 27 candidates applied, quickly lost 3 of those candidates to other employment opportunities. Focused in on 24. Screening committee chose a number of those to interview. Thought the numbers were good given the market and the recent search.

Thomas, currently the Executive Director of the Greenfield Housing Authority, prior to that served as the Town Administrator of Bourne for 15 years. Bourne was one of the last communities to go from a full time Board of Selectmen to part time. Thomas was the second Town Administrator, first manager only last 2-4 years – it was a major transition for the community. Both parties decided to part ways.

Scott is currently the Town Manager in Abington, former Selectmen in Whitman, prior to that served in the town of Duxbury in a role working on large capital projects and oversight of building services. Considerable amount of municipal experience.

Joseph Powers, current Town Administrator in Harwich, held for 3 years, prior to that served as the assistant and the interim. Also municipal clerk experience, in the town of Braintree. Good amount of municipal experience.

Chris Senior, currently the Town Manager in Cohasset. Previously had held a role management role in the State of NY for a large municipality.

All with good management experience within municipal government. All serving at one point or another in a lead role within those communities.

ME – Thank the committee for the time they took and the work they put in. I am a little surprised that the person that has been doing an outstanding job the last 7 months, is not on this list. Not that we wanted her to automatically go through.

BC – It was a decision of the board. It was 5 to 2 vote to not put her forward for an interview. It was unanimous that the board felt she didn't not have the experience dealing with a \$90M budget and the things that go on Rt. 1.

DK – She is doing that work now right now. I am a bit disturbed at the outcome. Things that have come up in regards to Rt 1./Gillette in the last year, she has dealt with them. She quite respected in those areas. This has been the worst kept secret that she was not on the list. No problem with the candidates that have been presented. I do not like that Paige, somehow was left off the list. Hearing the background on some of the other candidates, her resume looks even strong now.

**I would like to submit a motion to submit Paige Duncan as a candidate to be interviewed by the Select Board, by D. Keefe. 2<sup>nd</sup> by L. Gibson.**

LG – I would second the motion. I respect the committee but she has been doing the job. Someone who has been sitting in the seat, deserves a chance to interview. I do not think there is any harm in interviewing her. She has been working on Rt. 1 things for a while and I know the budget stuff is not so strong but she deserves a chance.

SM – While I was shocked or not shocked. I will go the complete opposite. I don't have anything bad in regards to the job that she is doing. A lot of what she is still doing, is her old job. I do not think she has as much input in the budget as much as Bill Keegan did, who had 20+ years of experience. We had to appoint an assistant, which we didn't have. She is not doing the job of the Town Manager. She hasn't had the bomb. She isn't doing a bad job. People are emailing and coming forward. I respect that people have submitted requests for us to interview but there have also been people who have said the opposite. I think decision to bring her forward was made before we stepped into this room tonight. If that is what the Board wanted, then it should have been brought up a while ago. She should have had an interview with the screening committee and not gotten a free pass directly to us – been on the same level. We set the qualifications and the posting. We all have the opportunity to edit. What I am hearing from Bob – the committee did their job based on those documents. We handpicked that committee – numerous applications, we had a rating system. We had the HR element. My thing is about the process. I have faith in the process. If we change now, it gives the appearance that this board had other plans before tonight, whether we did or did not. We had faith in the committee and now we are saying that we don't like their decisions. Apparently the committee came up with the most qualified with the group. I have a problem if we backtrack. I don't think it looks good for integrity purposes. If we wanted her to have an interview, it should have been brought up sooner – at the beginning. I did reach out to Bernie to make sure that these names have been released. Bernie notified the candidates and that one question all candidates will ask is if there is an internal candidate – “no.” Their employers know they are looking for other employment and I think we should stick to the process.

DK – It has been not secret at all that she has been an internal candidate. She said from the beginning, when she was named Acting Town Manager, that all she wanted was a chance to be put into the process in a fair and open process. She's earned an interview based on her performance. I have a lot of expertise in this area and worked with firms like Bernie's over the years – they usually work for me – many many times. Before retiring, I spent 17 years as CEO at two large New England healthcare systems. I participated/directed in over 100 employment searches. I've seen more resumes that I can even count. Most searches take 3-6 months so interim management was often needed. If there was an internal candidate who had strong skills for the role, the hiring authority, the board, could pick this person for the permanent role if desired. This is Paige. Screening committees are also important to help the hiring authority, the board, the committee would help screen and interview including the boards designated acting manager. The screening committee made a decision to not hire Paige. I have never seen a screening committee, who does the work for the board not interview their designated manager. Also disturbing is not interviewing eliminates her as a candidate which is also back dooring her which I know this board would never do/have supported. I don't know when we should have weigh in but here we are. I think we are not in a good place. This entire thing violates the process and it's unfair to the acting manager. No promises have been made and Paige understands – she just wants an interview that she has earned. She has 25 years of municipal experience, 6 years in the private sector, worked in 6 different towns, advanced degree, trajectory has gone up. How can anyone say she doesn't have experience? Bill Keggan promoted her to her current role as couple years ago. The role of the town manger is changing. Yesterday's Town Manager is different than what we need today in terms of skill set. Town Manager and Boards cannot just increase the taxes to balance the budget. If you haven't seen these strengths, I have the last five years. She has natural leadership, effective organizer, a great communicator, well respected. Just a strong candidate.

BC – We were only putting forth the best possible candidates. Not a single person on that committee thought she was qualified for an interview. It has nothing to do with the job she does. She is a good person, hard worker, it has nothing to do with her as a person. Just like when they posted for an HR Specialist needs to have 5+ years of experience. How can we change the guidelines now? She is doing a great job from what I have heard. She has not dealt with big issues on Rt 1. Or the budget process. No big contracts. Committee felt the four we submitted today was the most qualified. You never gave us that charge. If you change the game around, it is not fair to the four that have been named publicly.

LG – To be honest, and hindsight is always 20/20. I know we never said but I thought the person doing the job, even if the person that is doing the job, even if they aren't doing a good job, which she is doing great, you wouldn't put the Town at risk. It never crossed my mind that she would never get an interview.

Steph - I think saying she is not doing the job, is completely unfair. I don't think we really know what goes on here sitting in these seats twice a month. Even Bill Keegan, who has 20 years, had never dealt with migrant families. To say that, it's really unfair. It is a game changer. Bernie, is the acting town manager interviewed? Have you seen this before?

BL – I don't think I have ever seen a situation where if the Board wants to have someone interviewed that I haven't seen the Board express that. When you appoint a committee and give them a charge, the Board should have communicated.

DK – I think we did send that message. It was never that she couldn't have an interview or promised. I have been here a while and I kind of who how the community thinks. I think if we said that upfront, I

don't think it would have been well received here. I think it was always, let's see how things go. It was never that she couldn't have an interview. Now we are seeing the names, we have to say something.

SM – You said it wouldn't have been well received if we said it early on, what do you think this now sends to the community?

DK – I think we are being honest.

SM – Don't you think we should have said it upfront? My problem is, not Paige, but this process. Might as well just make a motion to give her the job.

LG – You are undermining the process and it's immature. We are just giving her a chance. She could walk out tomorrow, then what does Town Hall look like? I think we are trying to be honest. I didn't say it but I had just assumed she would get an interview.

SM – If this is the direction, I would have wanted to be brought up at the last meeting. I do apologize for saying she is not doing the job, she comes to work and is here but she has not run a budget process or done a contract negotiation. I needed to be clearer. I am ok with what the screening committee brought forward.

BL – I understand what Dennis is saying. Out of 100+ searches that I've done. Maybe 4-5 communities where the acting was not moved forward in the process.

LG – I had made an assumption that someone doing the job. Shame on me.

SM – I didn't think about it either.

LG – it does discount the game but it is a scenario that I did not foresee but here we are.

DK – We are not picking a Town Manger tonight. It is an issue of fairness. Fairness to Paige of what she has done in the past 7 months. Financial health is the same. Morale was low. We lost an HR director, Town Manager where the fit was not good for either party. There has been a lot going on. This is about fairness and I take offense if someone says just hire her because if there is a better candidate, I will vote for them.

SM – I agree about fairness. Just nervous what might happen with other candidates. Our financial stability has nothing to do with Paige. Yes the comradery but not the AAA bonding. Be fair when giving kudos. IF we lose qualified candidates because of this meeting – it's just a worry.

SF – Thank you to the search committee and we appreciate your service.

ME – Process was the worst kept secret in the community. Her file was negated from the beginning.

BC – It was not negated. It was just the screening committee did not want to bring her in for an interview based on her qualifications.

LG – How many?

BL – Five identified for interviews but one withdrew before the interview.

LG – So not 7.

ME – No matter which way we went, putting Paige forth as a candidate, it would have raised Facebook discussion and now at the end where it could happen again. Wondering why the person been doing the

job doesn't have a shot at least the interview. It is not a done deal as some in the community think. If there is a better candidate, then I will vote for them. We are dammed if we do and dammed if we don't. A lot of people have reached out and are very upset.

LG – What is the timeline? Have these people gone through the background check?

ME – Yes, through our labor counsel. Labor council will discuss us meeting with her before the interview process. We do have a motion on the floor to add a 5<sup>th</sup> name to list and add Paige and bring her in for an interview.

LG – I do see both sides. I want to do what's best for the town operationally and I believe it's best to give her an interview. She's being doing the job. I have heard from some people. I hope we don't lose any people. I think it is more risky not interviewing her.

SM – It will go both ways. A lot of people have reached out giving the opposite that it was not a done deal and happy with that. Gives a perception of Paige, Paige, Paige. Done deal was from people I have heard in the community.

DK – We are trying to make the best decision for the town.

**All those in favor in pushing Paige forward as a 5<sup>th</sup> candidate for an interview by M. Elfman.**

Debbie Giardino – 151 Main Street. The time we took to go through those resumes was a daunting experience. I think in doing this is a slap in the face and unravels all the work we did. I think it was a very unfair way to a committee that you picked. There was an hour discussion on how to move forward with candidates. I think you are giving a courtesy interview.

LG – We respect every single one of you. Full confidence. It's not that we don't respect the decisions. I wish I said it form the get go. It is not to undo anything you all did.

**Roll call, Leah – yes, Mark – yes, Stephanie – no, Seth – yes, Dennis – yes.**

**Approved 4 to 1.**

LG – No matter what side you are on, it's a hard decision. I'm sorry people disagree with it.

ME – Going forward on timeline. Five interviews, I think we pull names out of a hat. Two on Wednesday and three on Thursday?

BL – All should be available.

SM – Was it alphabetical order?

MF – I do need to start Wednesday at 6pm instead of 5pm.

BL – Should do three on the first night and two the second night. Based on the start time. Hard to do three in one night starting later.

ME – Yes that makes sense with the late start. Will be meeting one on one with labor counsel. She is reaching out individually to review the background checks.

LG – Do we have a base contract?

ME – Alphabetically or out of hat?

LG – No hat so maybe alphabetically.

KL – The names are in a cup, all but Paige's, if you would like to go the route of picking out of a cup.

SM – What is the date we are supposed to select?

ME – January 16<sup>th</sup> meeting.

SM – That only gives us 5 days to research post interviews. Maybe give a little more time?

LG – I think we leave it on the agenda for January 16<sup>th</sup> and If we aren't ready, then we can skip and we can meet special.

BL – The board can do whatever you choose. It is a bit odd to go to their place of employment. Makes Selectmen of that town very uncomfortable. If you go to a coffee shop, you could run into someone that loves them and off chance you run into someone that dislikes them.

LG – Maybe phone calls, internet.

JS - Scott J. Lambiase (Wednesday at 5pm), Christopher Senior (Wednesday at 6pm), Thomas M. Guerino (Thursday at 5pm), Paige Duncan (Thursday at 6pm), Joseph F. Powers (Thursday at 7pm)

LG – Need questions to drill down, assign questions, etc. Seth can take financial management.

**Motion to adjourn by L. Gibson, 2<sup>nd</sup> by S. Ferguson.**

**Roll call, Leah – yes, Mark – yes, Stephanie – yes, Seth – yes, Dennis – yes.**

**Approved 5 to 0.**

Documents:

Thomas M. Guerino Resume

Scott J. Lambiase Resume

Joseph F. Powers Resume

Christopher Senior Resume

Foxborough Screening Interview Guide (1)