

IN BOARD OF SELECTMEN
WEDNESDAY, JANUARY 31, 1996

Present: Chairman John C. Drobinski, Selectmen Lawrence L. Blacker and Maryann K. Clark.

The statutory requirements as to notice having been met, the meeting was convened at 7:35 p.m. by Chairman Drobinski in the Town Hall.

Clerk Pro Tem

It was on motion unanimously

VOTED: To appoint Janet Silva, Administrative Assistant to the Board of Selectmen, as Clerk Pro Tem for purposes of this meeting only.

Town Manager Interview - Steven L. Ledoux

Present: Candidate Steven L. Ledoux; several departments heads and Town residents.

The Board convened a public meeting to interview applicant Steven L. Ledoux, currently the Town Manager of Williamstown, Massachusetts, for the position of Town Manager for the Town of Sudbury. Chairman Drobinski welcomed Mr. Ledoux and explained the procedure that would be followed this evening. Mr. Drobinski introduced Mark Morris of MMA Consultants, the firm that assisted the Selectmen in the current Town Manager Search. Mr. Drobinski furthered that, as at the last meeting, the candidate will give a brief speech about himself; the candidate will then be given the opportunity to respond to several questions prepared by each Selectman, and finally, Town residents and department heads will be given the opportunity to ask questions of the candidate via 3 x 5 cards to be distributed during the meeting.

Mr. Ledoux addressed the Board with the following: He is flattered to be one of three candidates out of an original field of 90; that he is currently Town Manager of Williamstown; that he is married and has two children; that he is originally from Holden, MA, as is Ms. Galkowski; that he attended Catholic schools in Worcester; that he majored in political science in college and holds a Master in Public Administration; that he had served as City Administrator for four years in Michigan and as a legislative assistant for a County in New York, but that after returning to Massachusetts he has served in Williamstown (since 1984) as Town Manager; that his skills include leadership, mediation, negotiation facilitation, and being a good listener; that twelve years ago Williamstown was in flux and there was a crisis of confidence in local government (the previous Town Manager had been forced out of office), but that during his term of service this situation had been completely turned around; that improvements done under him had been the complete computerization of Town government, a very well-trained staff, an entrepreneurial highway department, and that he is proud today of the organization of Williamstown's government.

Selectman Blacker asked Mr. Ledoux how he proposed to deal with the Board of Selectmen in setting goals and in understanding Sudbury's needs; he asked about Mr. Ledoux's experience relative to privatization, school committees and financial budgeting; how he saw the role of Town Manager in general and of Town Manager of Sudbury in particular; how he sets himself apart in a field of three good finalists; what Mr. Ledoux's experience is with growth issues such as the one currently being encountered in Sudbury; and finally, if he would be able to begin in the Town Manager position on March 1, 1996. Mr. Ledoux responded to Selectman Blacker's questions by stating that he would sit down with all three Selectmen individually and would continue to communicate regularly with them with both good and bad news (e.g. before reporters call for an opinion!); he said that a "Board Retreat" is a good idea for a goal-setting session

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and that a good idea is to use goals as a measuring stick of how the Town Manager is doing; that with regard to privatization, it had made sense in western Massachusetts to rent and have a landlord for a highway building, using a creative approach; that somewhat like Sudbury, the elementary schools in Williamstown are town schools but the junior high and high schools are regionalized and that he had participated with both boards--that when Williamstown had lost local aid, the boards had locked themselves in session for three days and when they emerged, it was with a balanced budget! He said that a Board Retreat is also a good idea for Finance Committee goal setting; that he sees the role of Town Manager as one of leadership and of making things happen, of being a mediator and facilitator to get competitive boards to cooperate with each other; that in Sudbury in particular, he sees the role of Town Manager to meet with citizens groups in different neighborhoods and to be pro-active; that the other two candidates are his good friends, so it is difficult to say why he would be better than they, but that since Williamstown issues are so similar to those of Sudbury, the experience of being Town Manager there sets him apart for the Sudbury position; that a recent article published by the University of Oregon reported that although it is a common belief that growth is good, there are negative sides to growth as well, and Williamstown's experience with this problem is also similar to that of Sudbury; that there are techniques for channeling growth, e.g. forming affinity groups to study the problem (e.g. business interests, the elderly, young "natives"), zoning controls, directed growth, affordable cluster zoning, etc.; and finally, that because Williamstown is two months behind Sudbury in the budget process, on February 26 he has a budget presentation which would make his starting in a Sudbury position on March 1st difficult; however, Mr. Ledoux was willing to estimate a "March 1st ish" starting date!

Selectman Clark asked Mr. Ledoux how he proposed to keep the public and department heads informed of Town issues; she said that there are three types of people--those who make things happen, those to whom things happen, and those who watch things happen--and asked Mr. Ledoux which type he is; she asked him if he had ever held elected office and if so, what contributions he had made to that office; she asked Mr. Ledoux what a reporter might be able to write about his accomplishments after he had been in office here for three years; she asked him what his experience had been with regard to user and/or impact fees; finally, Ms. Clark asked Mr. Ledoux how he would propose to shave \$1M from the budget at the direction of the Selectmen. Mr. Ledoux answered Ms. Clark's questions by stating: in Williamstown he had relied on a radio call-in show once a month to keep citizens informed of Town issues; that although he understood that this may not be possible in Sudbury, that public access cable is a good source, that mailings work (although expensive), but that one exciting possibility is internet E-mail; in this regard, Mr. Ledoux said he understands that the Curtis school has a great "Sudbury Home Page" and this provides for instantaneous response; that he is a person who makes things happen, citing that if an organization stops moving and changing it dies; that he has been given much latitude in Williamstown, that he has created a Department of Public Works and a Municipal Finance Department, computerized operations, finished outstanding projects, and in general is not a caretaker, but an active force in bettering the community; that he had held the elected position of vice-president, then president of MMA, and that in these offices he had succeeded in diversifying the membership of the organization; that he has many contacts throughout the State; that after three years he will have solved space needs, pulled a Financial Department together, solved the garage problem and helped form a government of which the Town can be proud; that with regard to user fees, there must be a process of "developer plan review" in which the Town tries to negotiate perks for its benefit, and cited examples of what Williamstown has done successfully in this regard; finally, in trying to shave \$1M from the Town's budget, he would first look at fixed costs and if they can be done differently and then at the possibility of consolidating services, sharing equipment, things such as putting a Finance Department all together on one floor, eliminating positions and investigating bond issue interest rates.

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Chairman Drobinski asked Mr. Ledoux how, out of 300 Massachusetts towns, he happened to make his application to the Town of Sudbury; he asked him about his experience in negotiation; Mr. Drobinski asked Mr. Ledoux how his peers would describe him; he asked him his ideas on getting the message about attending Town Meeting to the general populace; he asked him about his management style; finally, Mr. Drobinski posed the hypothetical situation to Mr. Ledoux that a prominent Sudbury citizen calls him asking him to intervene with the Police Chief for a son who is in trouble with the Sudbury police. Mr. Ledoux responded that he has had affection for Sudbury from his early years when he would visit the Town's historical landmarks; that his personal family situation necessitates being closer to Boston than Williamstown is, and that Sudbury has a comparable quality of life to Williamstown; that he had experience with negotiations and cited in particular his success in improving rapport with two unions in Williamstown--the police and public works departments; that his peers would describe him thusly--his strengths are his "stick-to-it-iveness", that he strives to be accurate, open, creative and innovative, and that his weakness is that he is his own worst critic and is sometimes not able to savor his successes; that he sees the Town Warrant as being critical in getting the message to the general populace about Town Meeting and that the cable television possibilities and the League of Women Voters are also good sources to this end; that his management style is heavy reliance on department head meetings and an open door policy; finally, that other than calling the police chief to ascertain the facts, he would not interfere in police matters, that he would address a problem if "down the road" there was evidence of police mishandling, but would not interfere in the special interest of a private citizen.

Mr. Ledoux was then asked a few questions by citizens in attendance. In response to a question as to how to attract new industry to Town, Mr. Ledoux responded that he had experience in Williamstown on this exact same issue. He gave the example that Williams College faculty had difficulty accepting positions at the college, as employment for spouses was hard to find. He said there is much tax exempt property in that town. He cited tax increment financing, (20%, 50%, 70%, then full evaluations), and flat out tax breaks (capital gains breaks, historic district breaks) as examples of ways to attract businesses. He also said that Williamstown had joined the City of North Adams to create a regional economic target area. In response to the question as to how the Town Manager should be accountable to voters, Mr. Ledoux said that the Town Manager is accountable through the Board of Selectmen.

Chairman Drobinski thanked Mr. Ledoux for being interviewed and thanked everyone in attendance for their interest. He then announced that the Board will make its final decision on Tuesday, February 6, 1996, at 8:00 a.m. in a public meeting in the Town Hall and invited department heads and citizens to attend this meeting.

There being no further business, the meeting was adjourned at 8:00 p.m.

Attest: _____
Janet Silva
Clerk Pro Tem