

IN BOARD OF SELECTMEN
THURSDAY, DECEMBER 9, 1999

Present: Chairman John C. Drobinski, Kirsten D. Roopenian, and Maryann K. Clark, Selectmen.

The statutory requirements as to notice having been complied with, the meeting was convened at 8:10 a.m. by Chairman Drobinski in the Loring Parsonage, 288 Old Sudbury Road.

Town Manager Interview – Christopher Rath

Present: Candidate Christopher Rath and Mark Morse, MMA Consulting Group.

The Board convened a public meeting to interview applicant Christopher Rath, currently Executive Secretary for the Town of Auburn, Massachusetts, for the position of Town Manager for the Town of Sudbury. Chairman Drobinski welcomed Mr. Rath and explained this was the first round of interviews by the Selectmen, from which finalists would be chosen, and the goal was to have the selection process completed by mid-January with the new Town Manager on board as soon as possible in order to be prepared for the April Annual Town Meeting. He asked Mr. Rath to provide the Board with information about himself and his candidacy for the position.

Mr. Rath addressed the Board with the following: He has been in town government for thirteen years and likes to be in this profession where he can make an impact on the average citizen's life. He has been married for thirteen years and has two daughters, age 8 and 4. He comes from the South and received his Masters in Public Affairs at the University of North Carolina (and Bachelor of Arts at Oglethorpe University in Atlanta). He spent two years as Town Administrator in the Town of Ashburnham before becoming Executive Secretary for the Town of Auburn. He enjoys this line of work, particularly in addressing and resolving issues and in communicating to the citizens. He worked for the Federal government for four years in four different cities, as well.

He handed out to the Board a pamphlet he had prepared giving examples of his accomplishments. He noted that when he first comes into a town, he does a comprehensive survey to act as a benchmark, and he highlighted his Auburn experience.

Mr. Rath responded to questions from the Board as follows:

Concerning melding the competitive needs of town and schools, he noted his experience with regional districts, the importance of understanding what the ground rules are and what is trying to be achieved, establishing good and professional working relationships, and looking at where you can win.

He generally holds two department head meetings per month – one with major departments (such as Fire, Police, DPW), and one with "inside" department heads.

He has set up teams to address such areas as technical, financial, and employee benefits/personnel. An MIS Director is shared with the school department.

In balancing school needs with town needs and open space acquisition, Mr. Rath recommended long-range planning, trend analyses, forecast of finances to address capital needs. The process takes negotiation and perhaps constraints.

Working with department heads in the transition period, Mr. Rath would plan to meet with all department heads individually prior to arrival, request information, hold a series of department head meetings, and would hold meetings with Town Hall staff and the large departments to explain management style.

He described his management style as being one of coach, encouraging others, with ground rules, equitable treatment, approachable by staff and citizens.

To describe a situation within current position which challenged management style, he stated that Auburn retains many independently elected positions, having department heads with their own authority. Initially, there were differences and tensions with the Town Clerk, but now it is the best relationship. Building trust, inclusion in department head meetings, and seeking advice from the department head were positive factors, which can be applied to many situations.

As to what keeps him motivated and on track, he replied, long range planning.

As to anticipated length of time he would stay in Sudbury, he replied that he had stayed five years in Auburn, although offered other jobs. He was looking for more stability and he did not see moving again unless a great opportunity arose. He said he would definitely not move in the first year, when questioned. He believes in working in the town of employment, but the Sudbury housing market was an issue.

His approach to citizens was an open door policy. "We" are here for them. He has always lived within the community, seeing citizens around town. He documents and follows up on requests.

Regarding capital planning, what is most challenging and most fun, he replied, working closely with Chamber of Commerce and State development agencies, attracting quality businesses, and securing public works grant for \$950,000. He noted that regional planning agencies will write grant applications at no cost. He meets frequently with Highway District to get projects moving and has created committees to meet with Engineer and expedite process.

He sponsored legislation to allow small business tax exemption.

He spoke about the establishment of a capital improvement trust where the interest can be used by majority vote of Town Meeting, and the principal by 2/3 vote.

The Board asked for questions from Mr. Rath, and responded as follows:

Concerning management style, Selectman Clark replied it is an open door policy in that citizen involvement is encouraged, and Selectmen listen well and read newspapers, etc. A Town survey was conducted, a charge of the Strategic Planning Committee, and preparation of a Master Plan has brought good results. Chairman Drobinski said, in general, the Board liked as much input as possible, respected the guidance of staff, and was quasi-hands off. Selectman Roopenian added that Board members attended many meetings to gather and give input and liked to participate townwide.

As to the #1 challenge to be faced, responses were: from Selectman Roopenian, finance; from Selectman Clark, residential growth; and from Chairman Drobinski, sustainability and retaining the essence of the community.

Mr. Rath's suggesting sending surveys out with census forms as a good way to get response.

The Board thanked Mr. Rath's for his time and interest in serving Sudbury as Town Manager.

Town Manager Interview – Thomas E. O. Bercher

Present: Candidate Thomas E. O. Bercher and Mark Morse, MMA Consulting Group.

The Board interviewed applicant Thomas E. O. Bercher, currently a personal financial advisor in Cranston, Rhode Island, for the position of Town Manager for the Town of Sudbury. Chairman Drobinski welcomed Mr. Bercher and explained this was the first round of interviews by the Selectmen, from which finalists would be chosen, and the goal was to have the selection process completed by mid-January with the new Town Manager on board as soon as possible in order to be prepared for the April Annual Town Meeting. He asked Mr. Bercher to provide the Board with information about himself and his candidacy for the position.

Mr. Bercher addressed the Board as follows: He has been in municipal work until a few years ago. His last municipal job was as City Manager in Ferndale, Michigan, where he left because of a mutual disagreement. He has a Masters in Public Administration. He likes to lead by example, encouraging department heads to develop their own ideas. He would build a team dedicated to larger public service.

Mr. Bercher responded to questions from the Board as follows:

He has learned much about the mechanics of wastewater treatment plants. They must be designed properly for inflow, with regulations. They require good housekeeping and a good superintendent. They wear out in 20-25 years and then need major overhaul.

When questioned about his transition back to public work, he said that the same things that make for success apply to both public and private sectors – honesty and frankness to build trust and respect, and dealing with the issues. He would need to establish contacts with state agencies.

In building his team, he would try to interpret Selectmen and Town Meeting policies, set goals and their timeframe and then permit department heads to achieve them. He would strongly encourage department heads to consult with members of their departments in reaching decisions. He would hold weekly meetings with staff to discuss problems.

Relative to competing financial obligations, he replied that in the budget process he would send memos to the governmental bodies asking for input on budget projections, ask departments to put budget together with the town as a whole in mind, knowing that over time funds would be divided evenly, and use capital budget to create a sense of fairness.

Social interaction and department head meetings help for a cooperative, team approach.

As a rule, he does not write grant applications himself. He would deal with the agencies to establish a relationship, and related his experience in Rhode Island where it took

involvement as a committee volunteer to bring about receipt of a grant. Have your people in the right places. Department heads should become president of their associations. He would encourage department heads to write their own grants applications, assisted by the planning and development department, giving them more incentive to pursue grant.

As to how Sudbury fits into his overall career plans, Mr. Bercher said he is 55 years old and is looking at when he will be retiring. He can stay as long as protected toward that goal. His intent is to stay at least five years; it would not be economical otherwise.

Concerning the challenges ahead listed by Chairman Drobinski, Mr. Bercher said he would need to understand the direction desired for the town and his job would be to carry out those goals, not make the decisions. Relative to housing and open space, he would comply with a land plan and seize the issue of housing, identifying appropriate areas and work to make it happen, taking a leadership role when necessary.

With regard to experience in economic development, he opined the commercial sector was more difficult to deal with. This would be done working with the Chamber of Commerce and Planning Department. Survey needs to be done, then encourage appropriate businesses to come to the Town. Small businesses do not generate large revenue, contrary to the industrial sector (high-tech). The issues are land availability, executive housing, work force. One must work with the existing industry to get the word spread that the Town is a good place for industry.

Mr. Bercher said he keeps motivated by stepping back and looking at the goals. He loves being a manager and gets satisfaction in having a positive effect on the community.

In assessing himself, Mr. Bercher stated there are two issues to address: 1) how a community feels about itself – what tone and public values it sets – what kind of place it is. The manager must recognize any changes; and 2) actual physical construction – are all problems being addressed.

At invitation by the Board, Mr. Bercher posed a few questions to the Selectmen. They discussed current issues of the Town and the Board's perception of the Town work force.

The Board thanked Mr. Bercher for his time and interest in serving Sudbury as Town Manager.

Town Manager Interview – Charles J. Aspinwall

Present: Candidate Charles J. Aspinwall, and Mark Morse, MMA Consulting Group.

The Board interviewed applicant Charles J. Aspinwall, currently Town Administrator for the Town of Millis, Massachusetts, for the position of Town Manager for the Town of Sudbury. Chairman Drobinski welcomed Mr. Aspinwall and explained this was the first round of interviews by the Selectmen, from which finalists would be chosen, and the goal was to have the selection process completed by mid-January with the new Town Manager on board as soon as possible in order to be prepared for the April Annual Town Meeting. He asked Mr. Aspinwall to provide the Board with information about himself and his candidacy for the position.

Mr. Aspinwall addressed the Board as follows:

He has served as Town Administrator for the Town of Millis, a residential suburb, since 1991, and as Assistant Town Administrator for Walpole for approximately five years before that. In Millis his duties include that of Chief Financial Manager, Personnel Director, Labor Relations Manager, Director of Public Works (including water and sewer departments).

He also deals with Planning Board issues, as Millis has no Town Planner. They are in the process of creating a Village overlay district. He noted ways to guide development, such as zoning changes, creating pedestrian atmosphere with setbacks, streetscape grant, getting Mass. Highway Dept. to improve appearance, combining parcels, and site plan review. He said he has received related grants.

Personally, his performance reviews show he has good credibility, is creative, dependable, professional and has good common sense and analytical skills. He prefers a collaborative, team style – having people involved in decision making means better decisions.

Mr. Aspinwall responded to questions by the Board as follows:

Concerning the transition to working in Sudbury, he would get to know the people, the policy makers, and assess the role desired for him to take, and he would be sensitive to other boards. He has worked in larger towns with their staffs, and knows how to delegate.

As to favorite and problem parts of the job – or successes and failures, Mr. Aspinwall stated he has been instrumental in improving financial conditions, labor relations, and town atmosphere and nine overrides have been approved. In getting a percentage of the pie for the Town vs. Schools, he works with the Finance Committee. A key is planning ahead for capital needs.

Concerning methods for acquisition of open space/land bank, they have held forums and keep in contact with state representatives.

He described his management style as polite, calm and deliberate, and himself as one who enjoys fast paced work, is a listener, and deals with issues immediately.

His role as a Manager at Town Meeting has varied in the past, depending upon the desires of the Selectmen.

In working with Sudbury's professional staff, he would start each year with goal setting and, based on the Selectmen's goals, conduct separate meetings with departments heads.

Mr. Aspinwall responded that he is looking for a long-term job and would plan to stay a very long time.

In his approach to risk management, to limit legal liabilities, he stressed knowing the issues before the boards, and participating in the process, particularly site plan review, and in writing the decisions. He would work closely with Town Counsel.

At invitation by the Board, Mr. Aspinwall posed a few questions to the Selectmen. They discussed current issues of the Town and the question of expanding membership on the Board of Selectmen.

The Board thanked Mr. Aspinwall for his attendance and interest in serving the Town.

Town Manager Interview – Peter L. Fohlin

Present: Candidate Peter L. Fohlin, and Mark Morse, MMA Consulting Group.

The Board interviewed applicant Peter L. Fohlin, currently Executive Secretary for the Town of Tisbury, Martha's Vineyard, Massachusetts, for the position of Town Manager for the Town of Sudbury. Chairman Drobinski welcomed Mr. Fohlin and explained this was the first round of interviews by the Selectmen, from which finalists would be chosen, and the goal was to have the selection process completed by mid-January with the new Town Manager on board as soon as possible in order to be prepared for the April Annual Town Meeting. He asked Mr. Fohlin to provide the Board with information about himself and his candidacy for the position.

Mr. Fohlin traced his education, personal life and business career for the Board, stating he grew up in Shrewsbury, MA, attended Boston University College of Business Administration, attended the Royal University of Uppsala, Sweden, under a Rotary International Scholarship in Political Science, received an undergraduate degree from Clark University in Business Administration and a Masters of Business Administration from Dartmouth College. He is married and has a 13-year-old son. He has spent twelve years in public service, where he is happiest, after previous years in the private sector.

Mr. Fohlin responded to questions from the Board as follows:

Describing his management style, he said he instituted a "We Work for You" program in Tisbury, which is an attitude, not a formal program. He believes actions are what count and he has an open door policy.

Tisbury has not made any purchases under the land bank program, as it is only six square miles in size, close to buildout, with no large parcels left.

He wishes to make the change to Sudbury, as he is looking for an interesting job with more challenges.

In working out budget competition issues, he would use truth, respect, facts, full disclosure, and call departments together to narrow down to the real needs. A 20-year capital program has built trust among departments in Tisbury.

He believes in being accessible to department heads, the public and the Selectmen, and likes to deal face to face as much as possible.

In working out difficult issues between Oak Bluffs and Tisbury, he stressed checking out all the facts and full disclosure were keys to success.

In Tisbury, grant writing committees are formed among staff. Grant participation has been in housing initiatives, wastewater, park and recreation and historic preservation.

He would develop a working relationship with the Selectmen and take the time needed for each Selectmen, which would be greater in the case of a new Selectman. He said, "I know my place."

How to maintain a balance? He enjoys it, tries to never lose sight of the goal, and has faith in the Town Meeting system.

Mr. Fohlin opined that he has brought stability to the Town of Tisbury.

At the conclusion of the Board's questions, discussion ensued concerning the Town's Strategic Planning Committee, the Town's low commercial tax base, and the fact that the new Town Manager would have a vacant Assistant Town Manager position to fill.

The Board thanked Mr. Fohlin for his attendance and interest in serving the Town.

Contract – Swimming Pool Ventilation System Repair

Administrative Assistant Janet Silva requested the Board's approval, which had been overlooked this past summer, of a contract for the Park and Recreation Department.

It was on motion unanimously

VOTED: To approve a contract with Des Champs Laboratories, pursuant to bid opening April 22, 1999, in the amount of \$25,750.00 for repairs to the Atkinson Pool ventilation system.

The meeting was adjourned at 12:30 P.M.

Attest: _____
John C. Drobinski, Chairman