

IN BOARD OF SUDBURY SELECTMEN  
THURSDAY, JANUARY 26, 2016

Present: Chairman Patricia A. Brown, Vice-Chairman Susan N. Iuliano, Selectman Robert C. Haarde, Selectman Leonard A. Simon, Selectman Charles C. Woodward, Town Manager Melissa Murphy-Rodrigues and Jon Wortmann of Novel Communications

The statutory requirements as to notice having been complied with, the meeting was convened at 5:09 p.m. in the Flynn Building, Silva Room, 278 Old Sudbury Road.

It was stated at the beginning of the meeting that this meeting would be videotaped.

### **The Meeting Minutes**

Mr. Wortmann stated this meeting would discuss the roles of the Town Manager and Chairman at meetings so Board meetings could be more productive and efficient and to also identify the liaison roles of the Board members in various committees. He did a quick review of what the Board's triggers were, and the communication tendencies that could cause stress, tension and anger during a meeting. This meeting was to help in the beginning process of putting procedures in place for regular Board meetings and Executive Sessions.

### **What is the role of the Town Manager?**

1. When there is a technical question, who speaks?  
The Board feels the Town Manager should speak up more as time goes on and her background as a lawyer is helpful with technical questions.
2. Do you want the Town Manager to speak up on technical issues or just on policy issues?
3. Board feels you should open and close the hearing each time. And can they contact Town Counsel? If there's a broken policy should it be brought up as it's happening or after the hearing? If someone in the room gets triggered and the Town Manager notices this, should the Town Manager intervene? Mr. Wortmann says it's important to stay with the topic at hand and to talk about one thing at a time.
4. Mr. Wortmann asked who should be the referee during a good political debate? The Board feels if inappropriate remarks are brought up during a meeting they should be handled by the Chair and not the Town Manager.

Mr. Wortmann asked, "Do you want the Chair to intentionally defer to the Town Manager if the Chair is in a heated debate over an issue?" The Chair feels the Town Manager should handle the meeting and bring the discussion down if the discussion escalates. The Chair should not let the meeting get out of control and the Town Manager should step in. The Town Manager feels during a heated discussion her role is first to add any technical knowledge that she has available, and to intervene. She will handle the situation one on one or after the meeting if there is a misunderstanding. The Town Manager can also ask the participant to rephrase the point. The Board feels the Town Manager has been great in keeping the meetings and hearings running smoothly. Mr. Wortmann reiterated the Board has done a good job in hiring a great Town Manager.

**The next issue addressed was the role of the Board Chair.** Mr. Wortmann felt this person should have the authority to move the conversation along and keep the meeting on track by following the agenda. Presently the Chair opens each meeting with a vote, calls the meeting to order and closes the meeting with a vote.

Mr. Wortmann asked "How has the Chair stopped conflicts effectively?" He has seen some heated & emotional discussions from past meetings, for example, when there was an issue over a tree being cut down and a heated debate arose. Mr. Wortmann feels the

Chair has the right to ask the resident to restate their opinion in an unemotional manner so the topic is brought under control and a heated discussion does not occur. The Board mentioned the Chair now has a gavel which has been effective in keeping the debates under control.

Mr. Wortmann stated the following regarding the Chair's role: use consistent language around debates, make phone calls to Board members to keep everyone in the loop on issues, work with the Town Manager as a liaison, use the gavel as needed to bring a meeting under control, keep the discussions on topic or call another meeting if a conflict of interest comes up. If a discussion is out of order, the Chair should have the right to state that the topic should be discussed at another time. One Board member feels the Chair should be fair, see that members treat the public fairly, if a person feels he/she hasn't been treated fairly, then take the topic outside of the meeting for discussion with the individual separately, or in a small group, or talk to the Town Manager about an issue. The member feels the Town Manager should be involved if there is a disagreement over a topic.

How should emails that come into the Town be handled, who is responsible for answering them? Currently, the Chair has had the responsibility of answering any incoming emails. At the beginning of each new Chairmanship, there should be clarity as to which member of the Board should field and triage the emails. For now, one member feels the email should be answered by the person with the most knowledge in town, this could be either a town staff member or another Board member. If a citizen is venting via email there should be a form letter asking this person to please revise the email in order to receive an answer to the problem. The Chair should triage and send emails down a tree to the most knowledgeable person on the Board or the Town Manager. It was decided that the Chair would triage the emails and the Town Manager would also help.

The next topic discussed was "**What is the role of the Liaisons?**". There are many Board liaison roles in the town to various projects, town committees, schools, etc. There should be a sharing of knowledge with BOS members. Mr. Wortmann asked, "What should the communication process be and what is the responsibility of the Board to get this information back to the other members after a committee meeting"? He suggested that information could be included in a report back to the Board or maybe it could be addressed at the beginning or the end of a BOS meeting where the Chair manages the conversations by allowing each member to speak for a short time and move on to the next member's committee liaison update. Mr. Wortmann feels this would allow transparency within the Board and within a BOS meeting as to what is happening in town committees. If there are any committee issues that need to be addressed, they can be considered as a future agenda item.

Mr. Wortmann asked the Board to please talk between themselves as a group or with the Town Manager when issues arise. He asked them to be easy on each other when there are misunderstandings and to keep communication civil. He thanked the Board for participating in the sessions. The Board said the sessions have been valuable and beneficial and thanked Mr. Wortmann for his time.

There being no further business, the meeting adjourned at 6:57 p.m.

Attest: \_\_\_\_\_

Melissa Murphy-Rodrigues  
Town Manager- Clerk