



## Board of Selectmen

Date of Meeting: Monday, April 24, 2018  
Location: Town Hall, 221 Main Street  
Time: 4:00 PM – 6:38 PM  
Members Present: Chairman James Wood; Mike May; James Underwood; Corey Higgins, Special Town Counsel

The meeting commenced at 4:00 PM.

Pledge of Allegiance was recited.

### **Interview of April C. Steward:**

Jim Wood welcomes April to the meeting and asked her to tell us a little bit about herself. April responded thanking the board for having her come and it's an honor to be one of the final four interviewees. She has been working as the Administrative Assistant role for almost two years as well as working as an EMT for the Town; looking to make this a career move for herself. Mike May acknowledged that April came to the board as an applicant, a trusted assistant to the group and appreciates the fact that even though this is a hard position to put herself in due to the dynamic of the process she raised her hand and put herself out there. Mike asked April to provide an overview of her employment history and speak to the history of her strengths and weaknesses. April started in 2002 for Lumus and Fargo as a teller and was promoted to be a lead teller; although it was not a CMS supervisor role it was a supervisor role; dealing with 40-45 tellers addressing any issues they may have. It was an overnight shift, so she did a lot of the supervisory role while the other managers were not on site. She then moved onto Acosta Sales and Marketing; started in customer service and then moved into a business managers assistant role. Her larger accounts were Welch's and Nestle; which trusted her to a lot of work without having eyes on her every day. There was not a lot of growth in the company, so she left and went to work for Cutler Associates General Contractor as an Administrative Assistant to the VP of Operations as well as working for the field supervisor and safety officer; preparing insurance contracts, following up with the subcontractors, and developing relationships with other subcontractors. After 2.5 years with Cutler, she then came to Boylston to work. She currently works as an EMT and was a field hockey coach for Boylston.

Jamie Underwood had a few issues with being able to formulate a budget and knows she had helped with that as the Administrative Assistant but asked where you think you could bring some strength to the other departments in helping with the budget. April responded that she helped current Town Administrator Martin McNamara prepare the budget by getting excel spreadsheets together, making sure everything as in order, and has an interest in doing it herself to make sure everything looks nice and clean. She thinks one of the problems with different boards and budgets here is that people know we are having new growth within the town and we are currently not getting that tax income help from FedEx yet; people do not realize that the board is trying to help and manage the growth and money that's coming in. Seeing this growth in the town and knowing that more services are going to be needed she believes it is going to be a challenge and we need to be mindful of how we are spending money and make sure that people realize it's not a free for all and that we need to be careful because we do not know what the future holds. Jim Woods then asked what her thoughts were on the DCR. April grew up in town and mentioned she never has been impressed with the amount of land that has gone to the DCR and does not feel like there is a good give and take with small towns that have given up a portion of land to them and wants to make sure that towns have been taken care of on the other end. After speaking to the Tax Collector about it she noticed that over the last several years the assessment has never changed; The NWRA rates have gone up and there is supposed to be a kick back to the town and that concerns her that there is not. She would like to pursue looking into this and figure out how we can make a change.

Mike May asked what it would be like to have to manage managers who are also your peers and some that are not directly reporting to you; how you have thought about that and how you plan to deal with it? April has thought about this and feels as though some of the transition would be smooth because they are looking for someone that they feel comfortable with and know they can work with them; she has the management style that would not come in with a heavy hand and when people feel respected they are more willing to work with you. She expressed that people have mentioned to her that they feel a little disjointed and want to feel more cohesive in the Town Hall. She looks forward to trying to fix this issue with setting up meetings to encourage this type of growth and cohesiveness between departments.

Mike May mentioned that a direct concern he has is her role as an EMT and her relationship with the fire department; how would you interact with the police chief, fire department, superintendent and talk to them professionally. April mentioned that she is a very independent thinker. The fire department is a strong chief and directly reports to the BOS and feels as though if anything came up the board would support her and that she has a good relationship with other department heads as well; they have seen her on both sides as a EMT and on a more professional side as the Administrative Assistant.

Jamie Underwood mentioned they are looking to get someone to hit the ground running and asked how she felt as though she would be able to react to all the new things developing in Boylston and negotiations. April mentioned the board has been very involved and mentioned that she would be taking her cues from the board and once she knew what the board would want to pursue, that is the direction she would take.

Mike May asked April to speak about how he thinks the job of the Town Administrator is defined and what her role would be day in and day out. April said that this role would be the hands on for the BOS. Their role would be to take the weight off the BOS and manage things that come across the desk on a day to day basis. Things that need to be handled by herself without the BOS she is more than comfortable handling by herself however if she needed to reach out to the BOS she feels more than comfortable. This is a soft Town Administrator role and understands that there might be some frustration when you do not have authority to tell everyone what to do due to the structure of the roles in the town. She does not feel like this needs to be changed immediately but also feels as though there could be a better dynamic throughout the town.

Jim Underwood asked how she feels about leveraging contacts and writing grants. April has written two grants so far; one was declined and the other she received 50% of what she asked for. The MMA has tremendous courses and April has gone to many courses; Women Leading Government. The networking that goes on and the development of relationships has been going on well over a year and does not see that stopping. As far as grant writing goes, she wants to get better at grant writing and has many books on it as well. She has the desire to learn more about grant writing.

Mike May asked what he felt her top three challenges are facing the new TA transition would be. April responded that the first one would be wrapping up the 4<sup>th</sup> leg intersection and making sure that gets passed at the town meeting, another one would be Route 140 challenge and making sure that we would have more commercial growth in town, and the third would be the change that is going to occur with all the houses coming online and making sure that the services are adequate.

Mike May asked how April would feel if she didn't receive this job. Her response is that it wasn't her time; she went back and forth on whether not to put her name in. The Women Leading Government group encouraged her to take this opportunity. April stated that she knows there will be a learning curve however growing up in this town and knowing the residents as she does, she does not believe you will find someone more committed and more passionate about this town.

Jamie Underwood asked what kind of initiatives April would do to push the 140 project forward. She mentioned she would love to see them make improvements and be interested in pursuing making the infrastructure and making it more accessible, we could see some more business coming in along that road. She would investigate trying to find grants to pay for this.

Mike May stated that the town wants to still feel like a small town and asked how you look ahead and address that we also have the growth on 140 and guide the board to do long term planning to address those issues while still feeling like a small town. April mentioned that through connections and pushing people to want to work with us; if we do see opportunities that can help the town she would be interested in looking into more ideas on how to get that going. Mike May asked what opinion April has on limiting the growth of construction in this town. April said the opinion would be that Boylston doesn't have a lot of land left to give and feels as though it is going to happen naturally instead of making policies about it.

Jamie Underwood asked April how she would go about meeting with new developers since there seems to be a lot of new projects and interest. April responded stating there is only so much control that the town really has regarding those types of projects. When a developer buys a parcel of land, if they follow the law and they are able to get permitted, the best and only thing that the town can do is come alongside them and let them know how we feel and what we want for the best of our community; we don't have a legal leg to stand on to stop the project.

Jamie asked how April can be more proactive in these situations and to have discussions earlier, so we are not being reactive to these projects. April stated that the BOS are the officials of the town and represent the ideas of the town and the direction the town wants to go, having communication with the board and following what their thoughts are is how she would figure out which direction to go in.

Mike May mentioned that the Town Administrator's role is going to be more outside focused while the Administrative Assistant is more internally focused. April stated that she does not have a problem with speaking to people or making relationships with people and has a lot of experience with putting herself out there; working at Acosta she did a lot of trade shows where you put yourself out there, marketing and selling products. She also dealt with different subcontractors and bridging gaps between them. She acknowledged that there is going to be a learning curve however she feels as though she has started to make those connections and will continue to do so.

April closed with stating she is really grateful that she was able to come in and speak with the board, that it was a really productive meeting. One concern she had is that when she comes into meetings she normally is quiet and does not say much because that is what her role entailed however she communicates well with people and is grateful that she had the opportunity to come in and show a different side of herself that they might not have seen in the past.

#### **Interview of Christopher Paquette:**

Jim Woods welcomes Chris Paquette to the meeting and asks him to talk a little bit about himself. Chris states that he was born and raised in Leominster, MA. Has a wife and two kids and currently resides in the town of Sterling, MA. Has over 18 years of municipal experience in cities; has never worked in a town; has a master's degree with a focus in Town Administration. He received it a few years ago and has been waiting for an opportunity, interviewing at various communities throughout the area to make a change from municipal city to Town Administrator. Current position is a Member of the Board of Assessors for the city of Fitchburg, prior to that he was on the Board of Assessors for Leominster for 6 years and prior to that I was the business/economic development coordinator for the City of Leominster; liaison to the Mayor.

Mike May mentioned they started with 47 applicants and congratulated him on making the top 4 applicants. Mike asked him to describe the transferrable skills in his background from the Assessors role to the Town Administrator's role; our town's budget is significantly smaller. Chris responded saying it's hard to break into the business when you are on the other side for so long. He looks at it that instead of having one boss, he would now have three bosses being the Board of Selectman, as well as everyone in the community. Going from 40,000 bosses in Fitchburg to 4,400; everything is scaled down however he does everything to the best of his ability and gets it done.

Mike May asked what specific skills as an assessor prepares you for the Town Administrator. Chris responded that the biggest thing an assessor needs to do is communicate; besides that, the department is at a much smaller scale, he helps assist in disputes with citizens, help working on budgets, helps with projections of other sorts.

Jamie Underwood stated that the way Boylston is set up is that we have elected boards who oversee their own departments, so how would you see yourself working with individuals who don't directly report to you, how would you join them together as on cohesive unit. Chris responded that it is a team effort, getting everyone on the same page is huge especially working with a smaller community that has so much economic development going on. A preplanning meeting would be set up to make sure everyone from each department is on the same page; it takes away a lot of questions that may come up later and helps solve problems in advance.

Jim Woods stated that the DCR takes up about 45% of this town and we aren't getting enough money and asked Chris to give us an idea on how to get more money. Chris responded that working with the State Representative and Senators would be the best possible way.

Mike May mentioned that Chris went to the London School of Economics which is very impressive and asked him to speak about it. Chris stated that he is the 9<sup>th</sup> child out of 10 kids so survival of the fittest was the best way. Regarding going to the London School of Economics, he went for 4.5 months; great experience and took a lot from it. Educational experience was great.

Mike May asked Chris to speak about his staff and staff experiences. Chris stated that his current staff is two clerks, one-part time and one full time assessor. In Leominster it was two clerks and three full time assessors; small but it certainly has its challenges. They are great people and I am fortunate that they are mainly self-sufficient; the office is well oiled.

Mike May asked if Chris ever had to deal with any conflicts or situations regarding hiring or firing. Chris stated that there was an incident as an employee and not a manager role.

Jamie Underwood asked Chris to walk through any projects that he has been a part of or has spearheaded. Chris stated that when he started in Leominster there was an economic grant that he wrote for 2.75 Million for a connector road to the Lunenburg side of the park to the Leominster side of the park; Chris worked on the construction part, cut the checks and handled the paperwork. Worked with state reps to write legislation to do Road Construction Park; the road has been built but there are no industrial buildings built on this road. Also, had done an EDA Grant for the extension of sewer water from Leominster into Lunenburg; 3.5 miles of increased pipe capacity as well as major upgrades to the Leominster Waste Water Treatment Facility.

Jim Woods asked how much experience Chris has developing budgets? Chris responded that on a smaller scale he has been doing it for years, on a larger scale he mentioned he does not have the experience. As far as budgeting, he has taken classes. Easier in a municipal setting because you are given the amount where in a business you must set the budget; we look at our forest of what we would expect to have coming and decide if its low or even or high and adjust accordingly.

Mike May asked if they are meeting the certifications or assessments on time. Chris responded yes and that they try to be one of the earliest ones on time. Vision appraisal systems is fantastic and knows that Boylston uses that.

Mike May asked with the longevity in the Assessors role why make the move at this point in your career? Chris responded that this is what he wanted to do for a long time, received his master's from Clark. All the jobs since there were kind of a place holder and picked up as much information as possible. My wife has always pushed me and reminded me that this is what I wanted. As my resume will show, I don't like to jump around. I like to be in a position for multiple years. This would not be a stepping stone, this would be the position I would want to stay in. I like the role as a Town Administrator because it handles many parts; I don't like to sit around so I think this would fit my personality.

Jamie Underwood stated that a large role as the Town Administrator is to be out there in the town, leveraging contacts, grant writing, economic development and moving this town forward; How much interaction have you had with other state leaders and different agencies. Chris responded saying that he interacts a lot with different members of his community; Leominster and Fitchburg were large enough to have their own state rep. He stated he is an outgoing person and knows enough to reach out to a specific office if something is needed and can find the right person for the right answers.

Jim Woods mentioned that one thing Boylston needs to deal with is the School Administration and asked if he has had an experience with that. Chris responded that when he would deal with them would mainly be around the time of the budget and if anything came up.

Mike May asked if Chris were to get the Town Administrator role, what would be the steps that he would take to get up to speed? Chris stated that he has been reading the past meeting minutes to get up to speed, drove past a few places that are being developed, spoke to a few people to see what is going on with the town, he would speak with Martin McNamara and grab his ear about what are the hot topics; overall listening to people talk and listening to what people are going to say while filtering out the stuff that is not most prevalent and organizing what is and start working on those.

Jamie Underwood stated that coming into this role there is going to be a steep learning curve and the Board of Selectman needs someone that will be a sounding board for the Selectman; how would you instruct the town moving forward at settling down and moving in the right direction. Chris responded that if there is a master plan that is 10 years old it is probably out of date. He would suggest stepping back and reset a plan for 3 years, 3-5 years, 10 years out. He stated he would meet with everyone from different boards and get everyone on the same page; attempting to slow down some wheels so everyone isn't always in a reactive stage and

more of a proactive stage. Getting all the ducks in a row and being able to forecast what is going to happen would be the best way to go about it.

Jim Woods asked if Chris had any closing statements. Chris responded stating that he appreciates taking the time for him and feels as though it's an honor to be selected as one of the top 4 people for this position. If selected, he is a hard worker and will do whatever he can to make the people of Boylston proud.

#### **Interviews are complete for today:**

Mike May suggest reconvening for an hour or two another time.

The Town Counsel suggested that if the board ultimately decides that there is more than one qualified candidate that they rank the individuals by preference; subject to successful completion of background check, drug screen and negotiating a contract. Then you would have the ability to draw from the pool of finalists without having to reopen the search process.

Jim Woods asked what the other Board Members preferences are. Jim Woods stated that he would eliminate Mark and discussion ensued regarding him; all agreed he would not be a candidate to consider for the role. Mike May stated that another candidate he would rank lower would be Meghan Donahue; purely because of job continuation. Jamie Underwood stated he ranked her one of the highest; her connections, grant writing, pilot programs and what she has done in the past. He believes she would be an asset going forward. Discussion ensued regarding Meghan; decided to put her on hold. Jamie Underwood stated April shows initiative to move forward with her education but stated that it is a totally different role than an Administrative Assistant and does not feel that she is ready to move into the Town Administrator role. Jim Woods stated that she has a ton of experience, knows the town, and would probably be the smoothest transition. Jamie disagreed with the experience aspect. Mike May stated that he ranked April the highest. Discussion ensued regarding April.

The Board of Selectman discussed their thoughts and concerns regarding both candidates. Mike May and Jim Woods seemed as though they were ready to decide while Jamie Underwood suggested he would be willing to open the process back up again.

Town Counsel stated that the risk of going back is that the whole point of the screening committee is to vet out applicants where the chair would declare a candidate. The risk would be that the confidentiality or privacy of the other 43 candidates would not be protected since it would then be done in open meeting. The safest legal approach would be that if you vote not to proceed with any of the four finalists you would have to do another run of the entire process.

#### **Deliberation of the board:**

*Mike May motioned that the BOS schedule a meeting for 2:00PM on Friday, April 27<sup>th</sup>, 2018 for further discussion on the applicants for the Town Administrator position; Jamie Underwood seconded; voted all in favor.*

*At 6:38PM Jamie Underwood motioned to adjourn; Mike May seconded; voted all in favor.*

The meeting was adjourned at 6:38 PM.

Respectfully submitted,  
Alison Mack, Administrative Assistant to the Board of Selectman

### **Meeting Materials**

Agenda

Meeting Sign-In Sheet

TA Report

On file in Board of Selectmen's Office

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