



Town of Boylston 221 Main Street, Boylston, MA 01505

Board of Selectmen Minutes 02/10/2014

Date of Meeting: Monday, February 10, 2014

Location: Town Hall, 221 Main Street

Time: 6:00 PM – 7:12 PM

Members Present: Chairman James Wood, Matthew Mecum; Michael May; Martin McNamara, Town Administrator, Lori Esposito, Administrative Assistant; (Others as listed on attached Sheet)

The meeting commenced at 6:00 PM.

Treasurer/Collector Interviews : Cheri Cox

Currently works as Assistant Treasurer/Tax Collector in Town of Northborough (since 2006). Previously worked in same position in Boylston. She has taken classes in Amherst to obtain certification as Treasurer/Collector.

Needs to take courses every year in August to maintain certification

- Matt Mecum asked her, since she last worked here, how much does she think has changed. She said she was not sure but there seems to be a lot of changes in the office since she left.
- Matt said our goal is to avoid turnover in that office. Jim asked if she would stay longer than two years. She said she is not a job-hopper.
- Mike May asked if she has any experience with technology upgrades, etc., in Northborough. She said there is a different system in Northborough from that in Boylston (Munis versus Vadar). She said she knows both systems and also uses Excel.
- Mike said he has an issue with systems not linking once moved to tax/title; no past-due bills, etc. Systemic problem – system not being integrated and residents not given notice of past-due bills so there is unrealized tax revenue. This is a concern for him and he is looking for efficiency. Cheri said the systems should be linked. The first step would be to contact Vadar. There is a tax-title component that can be linked in. Mike said there are several properties out there that we did not have a good deed to and we're not collecting taxes. We have to collect what is owed and be cognizant of systems communicating.
- Matt said we are looking for someone to go beyond day-to-day work and also make improvements in the process.
- Mike asked if she had any notable successes to share. She said she has obtained great experience working for Northborough. She worked on an OPEB project, compiling data. She collected data for GASBY project. Compiling benefit data for accountant; got data into the system to track sick/vacation time, etc.
- Mike asked if she had any concerns being a resident as well as Treasurer/Collector. She said she is sensitive to people but the Massachusetts General Laws need to be abided by and taxes need to be paid. She feels she could do well.
- The TA, during the interview, noticed her experience with payroll, ability to track sick/vacation time. Also has experience with OPEB, GASBY data collection.
- The Board asked if Cheri had any questions. She mentioned any exit interviews/results on previous Treasurers? The TA said the number of hours to accomplish work has not been enough and they have now been changed to a 32 hour/week position with an increased salary. There is also a need to be here on Fridays while the Town Accountant is here.
- Mike May said the Board will also need to evaluate those hours after a quarter. The TA said others who left enjoyed the job and the people they worked with.
- Cheri asked if we have online services to pay bills. The TA said we do.
- Cheri asked how often the Treasurer/Collector has to balance with the Town Accountant. The TA said the goal is monthly.

- Cheri asked how long has the Assistant Treasurer/Collector been here. The TA said since last June.

6:30 PM Kevin Johnston:

Mr. Johnston was born and raised in the Town of Ayer. He has been the Shirley, MA Town Treasurer since 1994. He made the decision that he would like to be a Treasurer/Collector. At their next Annual Town Meeting, Shirley is trying to pass an article to have the Collector position appointed versus elected. However, the position won't be available for two years (until the current, elected position is vacated).

- Matt Mecum asked if the commute would be a problem. Kevin said it would be a half hour and he doesn't see it as a problem.
- The TA asked him to speak to tax/title property. Kevin said that for 35-plus years, Shirley was never proactive on tax/title management. In 2009 they implemented a tax/title management program; some issues went back to the 1930s. Once implemented, they have been successful in the collection of \$1.1M to date and they did this without having to foreclose on anyone's home. There is still a significant backlog being worked on consistently.
- Mike May asked if this has been handled internally or outsourced. Kevin said they do not have a title firm but engaged a law firm to assist in the process. A senior tax work-off resident, who was a realtor, helped with the title work.
- Mike May asked him Mr. Johnston to speak to the \$23M wastewater and the Energy Committee. Kevin said that, in 1994, they made a final debt payment on the last addition to the elementary school, so all debt is gone. They put a capital plan in place and used a debt issue to purchase fire trucks, etc. This included the library.
- Capital debt issue every three years.

Zero percent interest loan, an enterprise fund.

Did a bond issue for the middle school.

In 2010-2011 they took all remaining capital debt and cleared it up with override

- Regarding the Energy Committee, Kevin said this is fairly new. About two and a half years ago they were interested in reducing their carbon footprint. Within six months they achieved green status and received a \$158K Green Community Grant. A 20% energy reduction mandate should be exceeded by the end of February 2014.
- Kevin said on December 24 they signed a deal for a three-megawatt solar farm on a wellhead; the energy will be sold to Devens for additional revenue.
- Mike May asked if we came with an offer and he leaves Shirley, what is the likelihood they will offer the Collector role to him? Kevin said if the opportunity were on the near horizon he would pursue it, but it will be two years out at least, due to the current elected position.
- Matt Mecum said we are not on the same technology level as Shirley. What would Kevin want to implement in another town that works for Shirley? Kevin said he has worn several hats over the years; has created efficiencies as a result. The most important is to collect tax-title money then find the best use for the revenue.
- Matt asked him, regarding capital projects, new buildings, etc. how much of a role has he played in selling that to the community? Kevin said he is very involved in the community. When the library was built, he was able to communicate to voters by promising debt will never cost more than it does in the first year. The cost has been less every year to each resident. He went to several neighborhood coffees to speak to financing on projects, including a sewer project with zero percent interest. He had a lot of face-to-face conversations with residents by getting out in the town and talking to people.
- Matt asked him, of all his affiliations, which is he most proud of. Kevin said he is most proud of being involved with his children's schools. Also, his basketball officiating. Workplace flexibility has allowed him to do it and now he is doing college basketball. The hours for this job allow him to continue to do these things.
- Jim asked him what he wished the Board has asked him but did not. He said he wants to know how the Town would fit him, what challenge it would offer. He would like to be part of a team environment. Matt said that is a tough question to answer. There has been a lot of turnover in that role recently. Whomever is in the position has the opportunity to make changes and improvements. We are currently open for molding.
- Mike said that is an excellent question. He is very impressed with Mr. Johnston's balanced life,

experience, etc. He is concerned that it will be a difficult fit. The workload might be far greater than the hours we have committed to in the budget; the office is not where it needs to be today. Also, taking on a new role as Collector can be a potential disconnect with his current lifestyle. Mr. May would forecast a difficult opportunity to be successful and he sees a potential conflict with the way Mr. Johnston lives. He appreciates everything he has done and the Town does need his experience but layering that against his current lifestyle, he might be unhappy, and that's a concern for Mr. May.

- Kevin said he doesn't put his hobbies before his career; he welcomes a challenge and would gladly accept the challenge.

Discussion:

Jim Wood agrees with Mike that Kevin might not fit and be happy here. He said he is leaning toward Cheri since she lives in Town and doesn't want to go through this again in two years. Matt said he liked Kevin for what he could bring to the table but was concerned about when the Collector position becomes available he would choose that over Boylston's offer.

Mike May said he doesn't have a BA degree and is not certified as a Collector. Cheri's resume shows a Bachelor's Associate degree and is certified as an Assistant Treasurer/Collector. Although Kevin seems stronger with his initiatives and office operations.

Mike May made a motion to authorize Marty McNamara to make a job offer to Cheri Cox for the Treasurer/Collector position. Matt Mecum seconded the motion; voted all in favor.

Future Agenda Items:

- Marty McNamara: February 24 – open the Warrant for article submission.
- Mike May re the Business Marketing Committee – if they are looking for a non-binding referendum, has it been done in the past? A brief presentation to the community will be made at Town Meeting to get a reaction. Jim Wood said he can't recall doing one but they have done surveys in the past. The Town Clerk could let him know. The TA said it can be on the ballot. Matt Mecum said he doesn't feel the Town Meeting is an appropriate forum. We also anticipate little free cash and several articles for discussion.

At 7:12 PM Matt Mecum made a motion to adjourn. Mike May seconded the motion; voted all in favor.

The meeting was adjourned at 7:12 PM.

Respectfully Submitted,

Lori Esposito, Administrative Assistant