

Minutes of the Meeting of the Board of Selectmen

Date: September 27, 2021
Time: 6:00 p.m.
Place: McCourt Social Hall
Memorial Town Hall, Spencer, MA
Present: Chairman Woodbury, Vice-Chair Howard, Clerk Grigg, Members Pepe and Interim
Town Administrator Bill Ross
Remote: Member Hicks

Chairman called the meeting to order at 4:34 p.m. and led the Pledge of Allegiance.

Announcement Any members that are participating remotely in accordance with Regulation 940, CMR 29.10 of the Open Meeting Law

Chairman Woodbury announced that Dr. Hicks is participating remotely in accordance with Regulation 940, CMR 29.10 of the Open Meeting Law, and as such all votes taken will be by roll call.

Review and Act on Meeting Minutes of September 20, 2021

A motion to approve the minutes of September 20, 2021 (Howard/Grigg) passed 5/0 with a roll call vote: Grigg-yes, Hicks-yes, Howard-yes, Pepe-yes, Woodbury-yes

Citizens Input

Matt Defosse, Pauls Dr., thanked the Board for ensuring the front doors at Town Hall are now unlocked during business hours.

Bill Shemeth, Dale St., would like information on COVID booster shots for residents.

Communications

Trick -or-Treat 5-7 pm

Chief Darrin reported that in the past Spencer has held Trick-or-Treat for one hour and this year he is planning to schedule it for two hours, which is customary for the surrounding communities. This will eliminate the Halloween Party, which is typically held after the one hour Trick-or-Treat. He asked that all participants wear masks to prevent the spread of COVID.

A motion to hold Trick-or-Treat hours from 5-7 pm on October 31, 2021 (Howard/Pepe) passed 5/0 with a roll call vote: Grigg-yes, Hicks-yes, Howard-yes, Pepe-yes, Woodbury-yes

New Business

Review & Act on Sunday Entertainment License from Mike Gadbois for a Live Band Performance on October 17, 2021 from 5 pm to 9 pm at the Fish and Game Club

Mike Gadbois requested a Sunday Entertainment License for a live band to raise funds for a benefit for Firefighter Pat Murray.

A motion to approve the Sunday Entertainment License for a Live Band Performance on October 17, 2021, from 5 pm to 9 pm at the Fish and Game Club (Grigg/Howard) passed 5/0 with a roll call vote: Grigg-yes, Hicks-yes, Howard-yes, Pepe-yes, Woodbury-yes

Town Administrator's Report

Report on Discussions with the Massachusetts Trial court Re: Lease Agreement for Maple Street School

Administrator Ross reported that he is in discussions with the Massachusetts Trial Court for temporary use of the upper floor of the Maple Street School. If an agreement is reached, it will be brought to the Board prior to execution.

The Audit for FY2020 will be discussed with Scanlon and Associates at the next meeting and hard copies will be in the Board's packet.

A technical review/debrief meeting will be held for Terptown and the application for 2022 will come before the Board at the October 18th meeting.

Review Fall Special Town Meeting Calendar

The Special Town Meeting calendar was reviewed.

Update on COVID-19 Cases

Mr. Ross said there have been a total of 123 cases since August 1, 2021.

Dr. Hicks would like Health Agent Daoust present at next meeting.

Board Member and Staff Comments

A 4:50 pm the Board recessed until 5 pm.

Conduct Interviews with Town Administrator Finalists

John Petrin from Community Paradigm Associates announced that the three Town Administrator Finalists candidates will be present for interviews this evening and include Jeffery Bridges, Joseph Laydon and Scott Szczebak. The Board previously received an information packet with a resume and report on each of the finalists.

The Board will interview each candidate using the same list of questions for consistency.

Jeffrey Bridges 5 pm

Jeffrey Bridges described how his career in government began when he ran for the position of Chief Elected Executive Officer for a small town in New York and realized that he liked the type of work and went on to receive a Master of Public Administration (MPA) degree. He worked in the Kansas Governor's Office for a year and moved on to work as the City Administrator in Andover, Kansas, which was one of the fastest growing cities in the State. In that role, he led several projects, including roads and parks and held that position for eleven years. He moved on to accept a position in Wethersfield, Connecticut and while there he was part of a team that conducted an \$84 million dollar renovation project for Wethersfield High School. He managed over twenty contracts for the project, administered the payments, issued the debt, and staffed the building committee. Throughout his career, he has been involved in utilities and capital construction which would be of use as Spencer embarks on a wastewater plant expansion and continues the road rehabilitation program. He also has extensive experience in collective bargaining and served as the chief negotiating officer for the Town of Wethersfield, City of Seward, and Town of Sturbridge. His management philosophy is one of teamwork, collaboration, facilitation, and mentoring.

The Board proceeded to interview Mr. Bridges. A summary his responses include:

- His leadership style is driven and he firmly believes goals and objectives can be accomplished.
- Redevelopment and blight are critical to any community. The Town can work with property owners to provide incentives.
- He has been involved in road improvement projects for over thirty years and believes they should be in the best shape possible.
- One of his more significant accomplishments was with the renovation of the Wethersfield High School in Connecticut which was finished in five years from design to completion.
- In terms of planning and prioritizing work, he will not lose sight of the goals, however he will make himself available. As an Administrator, he knows what is important and what can wait.

Mr. Bridges asked the Board what they are looking for in a Town Administrator. Mr. Pepe said he wants an Administrator who will help the Town grow and overcome obstacles. Chairman Woodbury is looking for someone who will take the time to work with employees. Mr. Grigg said he is looking for a critical thinker who is diligent. Mr. Howard said the Administrator needs to have thick skin. Dr. Hicks said he is looking for an Administrator who will listen and treat everyone with respect and unite employees.

The Board thanked Mr. Bridges for his interest in Spencer.

Joseph Laydon 6 pm

Joseph Laydon stated that he has worked in municipal government for the past twenty years and has gone through downturns, good times and bad, and has been able to make progress for each community. His primary experience is as a Community Development Director/Town Planner and in that role he has worked on several large projects. He is currently the Assistant Town Administrator in Littleton and served as their Interim Administrator where he gained relevant experience. His is confident that his vast experiences over the past twenty years will serve Spencer well.

The Board proceeded to interview Mr. Bridges. A summary of his responses include:

- He is a team player and wants people to feel heard and validated. He is a good resource for staff and is a mentor and teacher.
- In Grafton he worked to leverage the website to provide resources and direct citizens there. He applied for a Community Compact Grant to create an online permit portal to streamline the process for homeowners and staff.
- He worked on large projects including a new municipal building and town center in Wayland and a mixed used development with housing in Grafton, across from the commuter rail station.
- In terms of planning and prioritizing work, said it is important to maintain and improve services, while recognizing that residents do not have an open checkbook.
- He views the relationship between the Board and the Administrator as a partnership.
- He has a good sense of humor, an open-door policy, and will visit staff in their offices.

Mr. Laydon asked the Board about budget cuts and Town Hall not being open on Thursday afternoons and Fridays and the impact to the level of services. Mr. Pepe said the FMPC sent out a survey on staffing levels and will work with the Administrator to bring forth a recommendation. Mr. Woodbury said open communication is key. Mr. Grigg is looking for someone who will follow through, despite many disruptions.

The Board thanked Mr. Bridges for his interest in Spencer.

Scott Szczebak 7 pm

Mr. Szczebak described how he has always wanted to help people and found that working in government was the best way to accomplish that. After receiving a degree from UMass, he went on to attend law school and focused his coursework in public service. After law school, he accepted a job with Mayor Bissonnette which led to being appointed as the Human Resource Director for the City of Chicopee and after that, he moved onto the Town of Wellesley where he currently serves as Human Resource Director and is involved all aspects of government.

The Board proceeded to interview Mr. Szczebak. A summary of his responses include:

- He has a flexible leadership style depending on which department he is working with and provides honest feedback and guidance to bring staff along professionally.
- Has had budget experience in Chicopee and looks for ways to improve efficiency; he considers job cuts only as a last resort.
- He has managed a several large projects and his past work with the DPW can translate to Spencer's roads project.
- His greatest accomplishment is hiring the right person for the job.
- He believes Spencer is uniquely positioned and would strive to preserve quality of life, address concerns with residents, and work with developers to ensure projects meets the goals of the Town.
- He will bring a unique perspective to Spencer, is an out-of-the-box thinker and will work to provide consistency.

Mr. Szczebak asked how the Board evaluates the performance of the Administrator. Mr. Woodbury said it is an annual process based on previously assigned goals.

The Board thanked Mr. Szczebak for his interest in Spencer.

Executive Session under Mass General Laws, Chapter 30A, §21(a), ¶2, to conduct strategy sessions in preparation for negotiations with nonunion personnel or to conduct collective bargaining sessions or contract negotiations with nonunion personnel; (Town Administrator), not to reconvene in open session.

At 8:06 pm a motion to enter Executive Session under Mass General Laws, Chapter 30A, §21(a), ¶2, to conduct strategy sessions in preparation for negotiations with nonunion personnel or to conduct collective bargaining sessions or contract negotiations with nonunion personnel; (Town Administrator), not to reconvene in open session (Pepe//Howard) passed 5/0 with a roll call vote: Grigg-yes, Hicks-yes, Howard-yes, Pepe-yes, Woodbury-yes

Adjournment

The meeting adjourned at 8:06 PM.

Respectfully submitted,

Brenda Savoie
Executive Assistant

Referenced documents: Sunday Entertainment License; Finalists Information Packet from CPA; Interview Questions