

Town of Adams Board of Selectmen

Town of Adams DPW Director Interviews

DPW Candidate Interview
Candidate: David Nuvallie

June 6, 2014

On the Above date the Board of Selectmen held a meeting at Town Hall at 3:00 p.m. for the purpose of interviewing a candidate for the DPW Director position. Chairman Harrington presided, present were members **Arthur Harrington, Joseph Nowak, Richard Blanchard, John Duval, and Jeffrey Snoonian.**

Meeting called to order at 3:00 p.m.

Member Blanchard initiated a moment of silence in honor of D-Day in Normandy.

Chairman Harrington gave overview of interview process for the position of DPW Director, including explaining a set of questions to be used for each of three candidates.

Brief introduction and went over questions and how they will be the same for all candidates. New questions at today's session will be recorded and added to the questions for the other candidates on Monday.

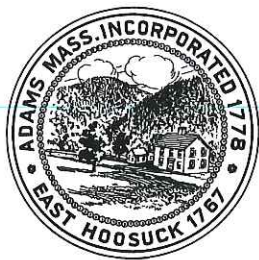
David Nuvallie, DPW Director Candidate was greeted by Chairman Harrington.

Q1(Harrington): Could you provide a brief synopsis of your background and how it led you to be interested in being a candidate for the DPW Director position in Adams?

A1 (Nuvallie): I Graduated UMASS 1983, went to work for BARC as program director there, then went to Hoosic Valley High School as Director of Buildings and Grounds, with 3 shifts of 22 employees. In 1989 I came here as the Superintendent of Parks Grounds and Cemeteries for the last 27 years and I have been the Interim Director for the last 4.

Q1-A (Harrington): Why did you decide to move forward in this position?

A1-A (Nuvallie): I was asked by Mr. Butler in February to take over as Interim Director, and I promised I would be more than happy to take it on. When we got a Director on we would have a smooth transition; the interim position went on a little longer than I thought, and I think I have been doing a relatively good job over the last 4 months, so I applied for it.



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Q2 (Novak): In order to be a good leader, I believe you need to be a good listener. How do you rate your communication skills, and do you feel that you have the right temperament to lead a diverse group of individuals who may have dissimilar mindsets and bring them together as a cohesive and like-minded work crew?

A2 (Nuvallie): I believe in an open policy of communication; I prefer an open door. If people have issues I don't want to hear about it at 3:30 pm. I have been doing this for 27 years and I feel as though I have never had many communication issues with anyone. I like to keep it open and honest, and solve things as they occur, and not let things fester for a month, have this major war and have grievances with the Union.

Q3 (Blanchard): As stated in your interview with the search committee, this board is responsible for setting policy. As far as I know, none of us are civil engineers and will have to rely on our DPW Director's expertise. As the DPW Director you may be placed in some very difficult situations. Are you prepared to stand up to other department heads or the town administrator or even this board when your professional opinion differs from any of the above?

A3 (Nuvallie): My opinion has differed in the last four months from other opinions and I have had no problem reprimanding foremen. I had a problem with the Route 8 Water Project that wasn't going according to contract and I shut that down. I normally get along with the Boards, and the Police Department. I have never had problems with Board Members or other Departments. Of course we never agree on anything 100% but we use good communication to smooth things out.

Q3-A (Blanchard): Would you have any problems coming to this board even if we don't ask you to if you see an issue?

A3-A (Nuvallie): Would I have any problem? Absolutely not.

Q3-B (Blanchard): What assurances can you give us that we will receive all pertinent information whether we ask for it or not, even if it conflicts with other Department Heads, Town Administrator, or this Board's plans?

A3-B (Nuvallie): My style is to be open and up front. Anything that could be an issue may be an issue next week. Even this afternoon I would inform Mr. Butler first, and I have no problem communicating something - even something that may be my fault or if I make a mistake in the cemetery. It may come back to have an impact in the Town. I don't want any legal surprises, and I like open communication. It is very important to me.



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Q4 (Duval): With shrinking budgets and declining population in Northern Berkshire, what are your thoughts about sharing resources and contracting out our equipment and manpower to other communities or school districts?

A4 (Nuvalle): We have been talking about that for years but it has not come to fruition. I think in the future if things keep on this trend we need to seriously look at that. We do group purchasing now for sand and salt, but I think we probably could start if it ever did happen with the school district first, and we'll work out (from there) that way. We do a lot of work for them now and they help us out so maybe we could share resources. Right now we do work with Berkshire County Sheriff's office for help with the Trial Court and get \$300,000 worth of free labor with that. We hate to rely on that resource but it has become more and more a reality. We are working with a Department of 13 people so it is more of a reality.

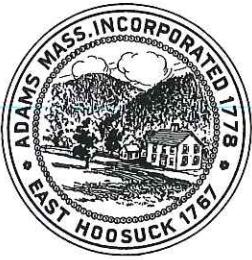
Q5 (Snoonian): Can you share with us any experience that you have with identifying grant opportunities, writing grants, and grant reporting?

A5 (Nuvalle): I have little to no experience in Grant Writing per se. I have done a lot of work with Community Development Office with Donna, working behind the scene, (on grants) that she has secured, gathering information for her, doing wage rate interviews, making sure the contracts were done according to the law, and that we were paying wage rates. I am currently writing a grant with Sandy Tyler right now for a small state grant for the Transfer Station to get professional signage up there to replace hand written items. Appearance in the Town can be improved and this is a small way to start that. The actual physical writing of the grant I have not done.

Q6 (Novak): In a position such as that of the Director of Public Works Department the individual at the helm must keep abreast of the ever-changing technological advances, and implement new strategies to rectify old existing and reoccurring problems and situations. In short, the Director must be creative and a jack of all trades. Are you that person? Explain.

A6 (Nuvalle): I believe I have been that individual for the last 27 years. With the short resources many employees are at higher end of vacation time, causing us to be short-handed. We have one mechanic so I sometimes become the small engine mechanic. We all have to wear different hats at different times. We have to find many ways to solve problems with shrinking crews. I go on sewer calls with the foremen to see what they go through in case sometime I need to go. We just do what it takes.

Q7 (Blanchard): Do you perceive any shortcomings as far as knowledge in the position and do you have plans to improve on that?



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A7 (Nuvallie): I have run half the department for 27 years and I have run the entire department over the last 4 months and it has been an extreme learning experience. Over last 4 to 5 years with budget cuts, I have never plowed a road until 4 years ago. I learned every plow route the town has and in the event someone is out sick I can hop in the truck (and plow) except for the routes with the CDL Vehicles. I have never done that before.

Q7-A (Blanchard): What I was looking for was in the grant writing. Would you consider taking a course or something on grant writing?

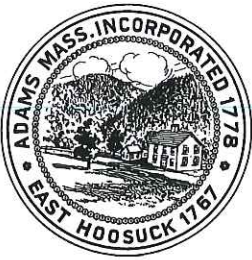
A7-A (Nuvallie): In fact I spoke with Jonathan a week ago about sending foremen to training seminars. We haven't done a lot of that over the last few years, about how to become a better foreman or choosing proper drain pipes. We usually do that in-house. I just signed up the two foremen for Bay State Roads seminars in June and August. One is not eager to go because he has too much work to do, but that's your work to do that day. I am big on training and it is relatively inexpensive to take these programs, so we might as well take advantage of that.

Q8 (Duval): Describe how you would approach a situation where two valuable employees are distrustful of and disrespectful to each other and the lack of cooperation is having an impact on organizational performance.

A8 (Nuvallie): It sounds like you know about something. We have had a major division in our department. It was the Highway Division, Highway Department/Cemetery Department, but really it is one department with two divisions. The Highway Department had a couple foremen that literally did not communicate for years and it created multiple problems. It created overlap of equipment and (miscommunication)...it was a simple thing of not talking, and now that problem has been solved and the two foremen now get along great. We did solve that problem. If it had still been going on we would have had to take disciplinary action to determine who was really at fault. This was almost 50/50.

Q8-A (Duval): In general terms, how was the problem solved?

A8-A (Nuvallie): Retirement. So it made it easy. It was a serious problem and we tried our best to solve it. It was a real personality issue. We would have had to solve that problem. If it wasn't for the retirement it would have kept coming back up. We now have a lot more communication. I don't like to let things fester for a month or you get it blowing up in your face. I have an open door policy, and Tom did too. I like to take advantage of that.



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Q-9 (Snoonian): You have been around and local a long time. My concern with anyone in any position is favoritism, or hiring friends, etc. Should you get this new position, you may get someone saying "Hey, there is an opening on the DPW and David is my buddy." How would you handle that, if you have two or three candidates for a job? It's easy to sit here and say I am going to hire the most qualified guy? That is a tricky situation. How would you go about that if ever presented with it?

A9 (Nuvallie): I would just go with qualifications and whoever is most qualified I feel should get the job. I think that happens every day in other municipalities with nepotism and other issues like that. I have been hiring for 27 years for seasonal employees, and I have had people pester me to hire this one and that one and I stay loyal to the good people and hire them back. You have to be CDL certified, Hoisting certified, have state ethics tests, and you have to have all of these tests and state wage is an issue. You have to hire the most qualified. You can't be doing that anymore.

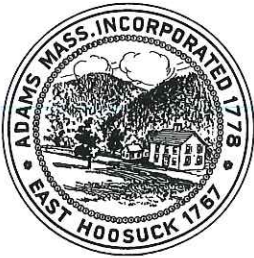
Q10 (Novak): In a time of shrinking economic resources, unpredictable funding sources, and town/city budget uncertainties, what practices, ideas or cleverness will you or have you instituted in your prior job(s) capacity to help curb the effects of these financial shortfalls?

A10 (Nuvallie): We started a program last year of cross training. We got the mindset that DPW is Parks and Grounds Department and Highway Department, but it's not. It is DPW Department with two divisions. We started cross-training people and it has faltered and I wish it hadn't. I spoke with Mr. Butler about that a week or two ago and will make it more of one crew. We have separate lists of overtime and some people cannot be called for certain things because they are not qualified. Everyone works for the DPW and needs to be qualified for whatever job we have. Everyone should be trained for every job and there is no reason not to be. I answer to the tax payer first.

Q11 (Blanchard): The public sector is a different world altogether from the work in the private or non-profit sectors. How will you balance the constant inquiries and sometimes challenging questions posed by the general public while managing the best outcome for the community?

A11 (Nuvallie): You have to prioritize. Some days there are twenty inquiries or questions, so you have to prioritize them. That is number one. Hand them out to the foreman. I take every request, record every request, and prioritize them. We have a list of certain jobs, potholes and lawn repair, and we try to do the downtown first and work out.

Q12 (Duval): If hired for this position, provide us with one existing process or policy that is not working and one new idea you would implement for the department.



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A12 (Nuvallie): New idea is to bring in more training, train through UMASS and Bay State Roads programs; the biggest problem we had is now working better, and that was communication. I am keeping communication open. I would like to bring in training and cross-training to bring together one group instead of two divisions. We are going to change job descriptions.

Q13 (Snoonian): What is your experience with Union oversight and collective bargaining?

A13 (Nuvallie): I have never sat in collective bargaining because it was never my job here. I work with the unions, respect unions; I have had several grievances against me and have never lost one. As far as contracting it has never been part of my job. I have never had any experience with that whatsoever. I have a very good relationship with the Union. We have a new Union Steward just elected a couple weeks back. He happens to work for my department in the Parks Division. He is fair to us and fair to the workers. Solve it before it gets to the grievance point because grievances waste a lot of time.

Q14 (Harrington): What are your opinions of 4-way stop signs at intersections?

A14 (Nuvallie): I never really thought about it. They seem to work and seem to be efficient but, in this town? I think they could work. People would have to get used to it. They work great in a small town. You have to implement it over time and I wouldn't put every 4-way stop through that system.

Q15 (Duval): Do you feel we still need to have the two different divisions within the DPW department?

A15 (Nuvallie): I think we do need to have them, I do.

Member Blanchard inquired of Candidate Nuvallie if he had any questions for the Board regarding the position.

Chairman Harrington advised that the Board would meet to deliberate would mull over his responses, and they have two other interviews before making a decision. The person chosen will know soon.

**Motion to adjourn was made by Member Novak
Second by Member Blanchard
Unanimous vote
Motion passed**

Meeting adjourned 3:30 p.m.

Respectfully submitted for Melissa Schaffrick,
Recording Secretary, by Deborah J. Dunlap