



# Town of Adams Board of Selectmen

## Town of Adams DPW Director Interviews

### **DPW Candidate Interviews**

**June 9, 2014**

***Candidates: Joseph Bettis, Matthew Billetter***

On the Above date the Board of Selectmen held a meeting at Town Hall at 6:00 p.m. for the purpose of interviewing candidates for the DPW Director position. Chairman Harrington presided, present were members **Arthur Harrington, Joseph Nowak, Richard Blanchard, John Duval, and Jeffrey Snoonian.**

**Chairman Harrington called the meeting to order at 6:00 p.m. and greeted Joseph Bettis, DPW Director Candidate.**

Chairman Harrington advised that this was an interview for the DPW Director position, and that a discussion with the board regarding candidates would take place on the next regular Select board meeting to make the hiring decision. An introduction of the Select board and Candidate Bettis followed, and Chairman Harrington advised there would be a list of questions to follow that were being given to all candidates.

**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 (Bettis):** My past experience includes 13.5 years in Public Works, 5 years in the Sewer Department, 3 years prior as a Forman. I have served on Savoy Select Board, Conservation Commission, Northern Berkshire Solid Waste Management, and many town boards including the Board of Health in Savoy. I have worked in local government and am comfortable in that area.

**Q1-A (Harrington):** Why are you interested in this position?

**A1-A (Bettis):** I like managing people, take ownership of my work, and there is no question that I enjoy running something to make something better. For example, last year I ran 1,000 feet of sewer line, and this year 1,000 feet of water main line. I like challenges and want to use my talents.

**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?



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**A2 (Bettis):** Yes. With what I do now I have 5 Full Time positions under me, and there are 10 or so in the Department DPW now. Different people will provide different situations. I like working with people. It is important to listen to learn anything. I went to a Management Training at Crane & Co. to learn to work with different people in different situations so I feel well-equipped.

**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? Even if your opinion was not solicited?

**A3 (Bettis):** Absolutely. Past situations have required difficult decisions. For example, I had to let a Fire Chief go. Things like that are not always easy at times, but I don't stray away from handling it. I like to talk things out; communication is key, and paramount. If there is an issue it is important to talk about it and to be informed to make the correct decision.

**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?

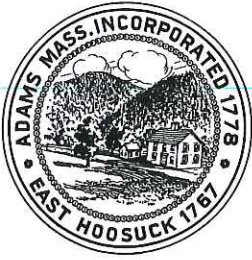
**A4 (Bettis):** I would bring it to the Board. Both Williamstown and Adams School district do this; everyone helps each other out, and keeps tabs for each other, free of charge, to help each other out. Renting equipment is another issue, though. My philosophy is to help other towns if we are able, though the townspeople may not approve.

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

**A5 (Bettis):** I have investigated grants in the past, but have not written any grants myself. I looked into a grant for the Fire Department in Savoy and a joint grant with the Town of Cheshire. I am not experienced in writing grants but am familiar with them.

**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.





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**A6 (Bettis):** I believe I am. In my current position I have been going back to school. The majority of jobs require continuing education, and I would be crazy to think a new position would not have a learning curve. I like to stay abreast of things and laws and grants as they change and the only way to do it is to keep learning.

**Q7 (Blanchard):** Do you plan on continued education to compensate for any shortcomings you may have with the position?

**A7 (Bettis):** Absolutely. The office is my weak point; I am not a fast typist, so this is an area where I could do training to become better.

**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 (Bettis):** First I would try to diffuse the situation, and talk to both immediately. I would appease the situation as best as I could, then speak with Mr. Butler or the Town Administrator, take note, and do what is proper for the situation.

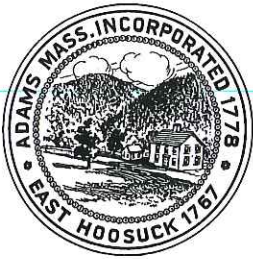
**Q9 (Harrington):** Describe how you would go about choosing a candidate for a job in the DPW. What factors would you consider?

**A9 (Bettis):** From the Town Manager to Superintendent and Superiors I would want excellence in employees. I currently am at a higher grade than my superior and the highest grade I can legally get, and I would expect the same from my employees.

**Q9-A (Harrington):** If a person has less education that the job requires what is your expectation?

**A9-A (Bettis):** A person at the 2C level cannot do a job at the 2B level, and that is not acceptable. Everyone should be up to par, and that makes the department strong. If someone is not able to perform a function when another person is not there it doesn't work. The only thing to hold back the training to get everyone up to the same level is money – money to take classes, to upgrade licenses, etc. In my opinion it is money well spent.

**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?



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**A10 (Bettis):** Just repeating what I said earlier, when all employees are trained up to par, we can get a lot done. For example, in Williamstown, if you add up the work to do and not what you have to pay (other) people to do, it saves money. When everyone is up to par, having proper equipment also saves money.

**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 (Bettis):** There are always going to be issues. I would handle them the best I can, and sometimes you hit a nerve or it brings something up. For example, with the Fire District, the contractor was called up two times at night to get him to do (the job) right. This is what to expect and what you have to do.

**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.

**A12 (Bettis):** For the change to make, I have never agreed with the two foreman setup; a foreman and superintendent is a smart move to make. Another thing I would like to do in Public Works is to get a sewer router and sewer camera; though a sewer camera is very expensive, there are a lot of streets where roots infiltrate the pipes and we would be able to do a better job of maintenance to prevent it, and save on equipment and money.

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

**A13 (Bettis):** I have very little experience, being in management and not being in the Union. I have never sat down at a bargaining table. On the Select Board I have done a little bargaining for the town, but no major issues.

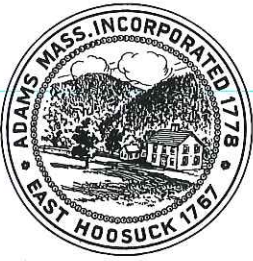
**Q14 (Harrington):** What are your opinions of 4-way stop signs at intersections?

**A14 (Bettis):** 4-Way intersections are very good. In Vermont, there are stop signs at every corner, and it makes it very safe. I am happy to see it on several streets in town.

***Chairman Harrington inquired of Candidate Bettis if he had any questions for the Board regarding the position.***

**(Bettis) Q1:** What do you think of the idea of hiring a Superintendent and Forman structure?





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**Blanchard A1:** More information is needed, pay scales need to be looked and we would need to sit down and look at what makes sense.

**Novak A1:** We would need to sit down and look at the financial aspect of why this would work, and the advantages it would be to us.

**Duval A1:** It would be a non-union position, and I would like to hear more about your thoughts on this.

**Snoonian A1:** I am here to convince, and would like to hear more.

**Harrington A1:** Regarding the Superintendent specific issue, there are more questions to be explained, and I am open to hear anything that would make the department run better. It would not happen overnight, because pay scale, job descriptions would have to be worked out.

**(Bettis):** It would be technically management and non-union.

**Tom (audience member):** There used to be a Highway superintendent before, years ago, and it was open for a long time and not filled due to the cost. We need it, but it has been vacant for a long time. My suggestion is to eliminate money somewhere else to put it into the Highway Superintendent position. It is tough to do two jobs and do them well.

Chairman Harrington announced the meeting would adjourn and recess until the next candidate arrived. He told Candidate Bettis he would hear from the Board soon, after the following Wednesday night, as it is not on the agenda for this Wednesday night.

***Motion to Adjourn/Recess made by Member Blanchard***

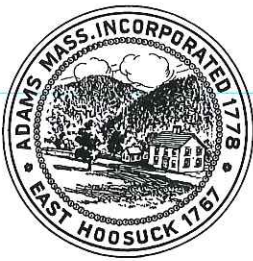
***Second by Member Duval***

***Unanimous vote***

***Motion passed***

***6:28 p.m. meeting in recess until the next candidate is ready.***

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**6:58 p.m. Chairman Harrington brought meeting to order, back in session for the DPW Director Candidate interview with Matthew Billetter.**

Chairman Harrington explained to Candidate Billetter how the interview would work, that the search committee may follow up with questions that come up during the process that are not on the list. Chairman Harrington advised no decision would be made tonight, that Channel 17 would have it televised on Time Warner Cable on the Government Channel, and that Candidate Billetter was the last candidate to be interviewed for the position.

**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 (Billetter):** I grew up in the Berkshires, studied Civil Engineering and have been working for over 20 years as a Civil Engineer and for the City of Pittsfield as a Civil Engineer for 13 years. I am excited about the position and it is the logical next step in the progression of my career. I am looking for a challenge and looking to advance in my career.

**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 (Billetter):** I believe I have the skills. I took a course in Servant Leadership, and one of the core techniques is to be a good listener. You may want to comment and give input, but part of a good leader is to give full presence and attention. The core essence is that leadership only works with mutual respect, so I strive for that. It is difficult to lead unless you use the "lead with" rather than the "power over" model. It is important to explain your situation and why it is important in order to get buy-in from the other party.

**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? Even if your opinion was not solicited?

**A3 (Billetter):** Absolutely. First, listen to any situation and give attention to the input from all parties. If a situation is illegal or unethical it doesn't matter, we are not able to do it.

**Q3-A (Blanchard):** Even if your opinion was not solicited?





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**A3-A (Billetter):** First I would bring it to a supervisor.

**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 (Billetter):** That is a brilliant idea to look at. It is fine for logistics in making agreements, and I have done some in the City of Pittsfield and surrounding areas. For example, using the weed eater for lakes; be creative and barter.

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

**A5 (Billetter):** I have written them. For storm water related to the new culvert under Waconah Park – it wasn't eligible because we did not have enough record of expenses in maintaining the facility. There are a number of grants for emergency services. For FEMA allocations you need to jump on those quickly. I have not written a lot, but understand the importance of identifying them.

**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 (Billetter):** It is extremely important to continue education. Life is a continual learning process. I take advantage of Bay State Roads programs and stay abreast of new technologies. I make many calls to contemporaries in other towns and committees and draw on the knowledge and experience of others.

**Q7 (Blanchard):** Do you plan on continued education to compensate for any shortcomings you may have with the position?

**A7 (Billetter):** Yes.

**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.



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**A8 (Billetter):** I would talk to each individual by themselves. It is important to never make a decision based on the input of only one party. A knee-jerk reaction is destined to be trouble. I would invite them to come together, sit down and see if they can work it out. Face to face communication takes away the sting of a problem.

**Q9 (Harrington):** Describe how you would go about choosing a candidate for a job in the DPW. What factors would you consider?

**A9 (Billetter):** Through my past experience I learned that one of the most critical things is having a positive attitude. That is absolutely the key.

**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 (Billetter):** One program I am proud of is the Asphalt Recycling Program. I saved a little over one million dollars. Basically, when you mill the road, instead of having the contractor take it away, we stockpile the material and use it for future projects. For low volume neighborhood roads it is a good product, at half the cost. I would pursue similar things for Town of Adams.

**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 (Billetter):** Before I worked in Pittsfield I worked in the private sector. I was drawn to the public sector to help people rather than making one or two people rich. Wherever I go, at the market I am approached. Any good project needs to benefit the majority, and that is tough sometimes. Politics and the loud minority get in the way. It is a shame if the loud minority drives budget decisions.

**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.

**A12 (Billetter):** I cannot speculate what is not operating with efficiency. If it's not broke, don't fix it. The program I would look at for the town is Asphalt Recycling, because it is cost saving and environmentally advantageous. I would look at the pavement, and the mid-range road network and infrastructure needs. Whatever is cost effective.





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

**A13 (Billetter):** Do not currently have any collective bargaining experience but I work with union employees. It is a challenge I am looking forward to.

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

**A14 (Billetter):** Each situation needs to be looked at individually, and it is not applicable to every circumstance. You don't want to use it as a speed control, as it would be an inefficient drive. It is cheaper than a signal, and easier to maintain.

***Extra questions posed by the Board of Selectmen:***

**Q (Duval):** Do you have any direct reports?

**A (Billetter):** Four; including an environmental engineer, a GIS and secretary

**Q (Novak):** Why did you pick the University you went to?

**A (Billetter):** My father went there and I assessed other schools close to home but felt home there. I am happy I made the decision.

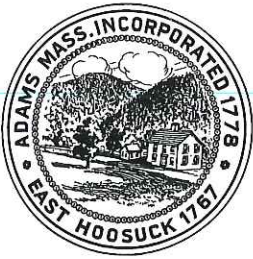
**Q (Novak):** Regarding Quality Assurance and Quality Control, what is "Cathodic Protection"?

**A (Billetter):** Cathodic protection is a method of protecting steel structures with cathodes and anodes; using dissimilar metals to deter corrosion. Used on high pressure gas mains and I have always wondered why they were not tried with water mains. This may be something to think about.

***Candidate Billetter Question for Board of Selectmen:*** What are your visions for the Town of Adams and what are you looking for in the Director of the DPW?

**A (Novak):** In a DPW Director I am looking for someone to push forward with new ideas and technology plus relate to the common person. Communication skills are important. Infrastructure is aging and coming back to bite us. We need a DPW Director with foresight.

**A (Blanchard):** We need ideas. We don't have all the ideas and rely on others to come up with ideas.



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**A (Duval):** The last DPW Director worked the position for over 40 years, and is a tough act to follow. A DPW Director should have good negotiation skills, be able to give their opinion, and have strong managerial skills.

**A (Snoonian):** Winter is unpredictable; the DPW Director is a Public Safety Guy in many ways. Both in and around town, issues pop up that become problems. Maintain parks and grounds for children, and keep the Golden Agers and kids happy and safe.

**A (Harrington):** Have an open mind about how things should go and be strong enough to manage the staff, time and resources to be efficient in getting the job done. This person is responsible for a lot of jobs and products.

**Chairman Harrington** advised that the Board would meet to deliberate one week from this Wednesday, on June 18<sup>th</sup>, to make a decision at that time.

**Member Novak and Chairman Harrington** stated they would make their own opinion and would not speak to the Board Members about the candidates until the meeting on June 18<sup>th</sup>.

***Motion to adjourn was made by Member Blanchard***

***Second by Member Snoonian***

***Unanimous vote***

***Motion passed***

***Meeting adjourned 7:32 pm.***

Respectfully submitted by  
Deborah J. Dunlap, Recording Secretary

*[Handwritten signatures in blue ink:]*  
[Signature 1]  
[Signature 2]  
[Signature 3]  
Joseph Novak  
[Signature 4]