

**TOWN OF GREAT BARRINGTON  
SPECIAL SELECTMEN'S MEETING  
MINUTES  
MONDAY, MARCH 11, 2013  
2:15 P.M. – TOWN HALL**

**PRESENT:** STEPHEN BANNON  
ANDREW BLECHMAN  
ALANA CHERNILA  
DEB PHILLIPS  
SEAN STANTON

**2:15 PM – PUBLIC SESSION – BOARD ROOM**

**1. CALL TO ORDER**

Sean Stanton called the meeting to order at 2:15 P.M.

**2. PREPARATIONS FOR TOWN MANAGER'S INTERVIEWS**

**3. TOWN MANAGER INTERVIEWS:**

**Ronald San Angelo**

The Selectboard gave the applicant an 'In-box' activity to prioritize and discuss.

Ron gave his answers. His top priorities would be school, gun safety, and the secretary issue.

He said that public safety is his number one priority. He would then focus on public perception issues; the Town Manager should promote the town and put it in the best possible light. Ron added that economic development is important but not pressing. He would work with the Town Planner about the interest in the Mills. He said that the town doesn't want to miss any opportunities and it should be made as easy as possible to help buyers to come in and purchase.

Ron prioritized the remaining items from the 'in-box' activity.

Deb Phillips asked:

We would like to hear briefly about yourself, particularly what it is about your experience and approach that qualifies you for this position.

Follow up: What aspect of Town management intrigues you the most?

What aspect would you find most challenging?

Ron responded that he has worked with young children; creating programs to keep them safe and out of trouble.

He added that recycling was a big issue that he worked on as a Selectman.

As a State Representative, he focused on the funding of the school district, building the reputation of the fire station, and grant work. Ron said that he has worked with an \$11 million budget and is very familiar with State Law.

Steve Bannon asked:

In your time in public service, can you tell us about a big idea you have had, what was your strategy to move the idea along and was it ultimately successful?

Ron replied that there was a town looking to re-develop and he had to 'sell' the community on the idea. He had to clean up brown fields and in the end, the idea passed overwhelmingly with the citizens in the town.

Alana Chernila asked:

Describe a situation where you realized you had done something wrong. What was your process, both internally and professionally, to address this?

What did you learn and how has it changed the way you work?

Ron responded that there was a zoning enforcement officer who had no social skills. Although he believed in him because he was a good guy, he should have taken action. Ron said that he sent the officer to training but the new Town Manager that came in had the same problems with the employee. He felt that he should have let him go.

Andrew Blechman asked:

We are fortunate to have skilled Department Heads who would be working for you. How would colleagues characterize your management style? What would they say you have done well? Where would they suggest you might need improvement?

Follow up: "How do you currently develop employees and encourage them to learn. What successes have you had? What failures have you had?"

Ron responded that he is a great communicator. He meets with individuals and focus groups, he is well organized, he works with people as a team, has an open door policy, is determined and once he makes a decision, he moves forward with it.

Sean Stanton asked:

How would your colleagues characterize your style working with community boards?

Please describe an experience you have had working with a citizen committee and how you see the Town Manager's proper role?

Ron responded that he will attend all community boards and introduce himself. He would make sure to establish a foundation with them. Ron said that the Town Manager role is always about leadership. He would ask what the goals and objectives are of the Selectboard and citizens and then create a plan to achieve it.

Alana Chernila asked:

Promoting a sustainable community, in economic development, energy, agriculture, and site disposition & redevelopment are key areas our new master plan is addressing. Can you describe what this means to you and how you would see your role as Town Manager in moving towards this?

Ron responded that it is important to preserve the farming community. He is happy that there is a Master Plan. Ron said that it is critical to keep the historic nature of the town. He said that they should work with existing businesses first before going outside. Ron suggested looking at what can be done to get the Mills up and running.

Deb Phillips asked:

Given that, as in all towns, finances are tight and the bulk of our income is from the property tax, what would be your approach to provide a high quality of service within a reasonable tax rate? Do you see particular challenges or opportunities in Great Barrington's fiscal situation? Please elaborate.

Ron answered that it would be important to determine what the tax rate would be that citizens can afford with the greatest level of service. He suggested the improvement of technology with an improved website; especially for tourists. Ron said that he is familiar with State grants and would meet with Smitty about what money is available.

Alana Chernila asked:

Our citizens expect their public officials to be available and accessible to them. How would your colleagues describe your interactions with citizens and what concrete actions have you taken in your previous jobs to improve direct services and communication to citizens.

Ron responded that his door is always open. He said that he likes holding public meetings and talking to citizens. He said that he is a huge believer in open government. He said, "you can't learn about what is going on if you sit in the office."

Steve Bannon asked:

Great Barrington has virtually all of its educational services provided by the Regional School District, an independent municipal entity. Can you describe the relationship you would like to develop with the school superintendent and how you would plan to work with the school superintendent and school committee?

Ron responded that he doesn't feel that they are independent; they only have a sole line item. He believes that they should work together, utilize resources together; which will build trust. Ron also believes that it is important to meet with the children; they are a part of town.

Andrew Blechman asked:

Great Barrington is proud of its history. Our residents and visitors alike appreciate the richness of the town's historic architecture and their value in shaping our identity and contributing to our economy. What is your experience and position on historic preservation and can you cite specific examples of your involvement with this approach to the built environment?

Ron responded that there was an architectural review board at his past community to ensure that all 'looks' match and maintains the integrity of the town. Ron said that small items (such as benches, lights etc.) mean a lot to the architecture of the town.

Sean Stanton asked:

What economic opportunities do you see in Great Barrington?

Ron responded that there are areas of downtown that need work. There are empty buildings and there shouldn't be any. Ron said that there could be parking improvements. He spoke about the Mills and the possibility of refurbishing them or doing something with the property.

Ron said that there should be a list of brown fields and a plan to deal with them, possibly with grant money.

Ron spoke about the fairgrounds and what the new owners plan is going to be. He suggested working with them to create something that the town is proud of.

Ron spoke of the importance of the relationships with the current business owners.

He finished with the idea of creating programs to draw people downtown.

What would you see as a significant personal or professional achievement over the next 5-10 years

Do you have any questions for us?

Ron said that he would like to be introduced to business owners in order to build a foundation quickly. He would like to build trust immediately. Ron asked that he and the Selectboard meet to talk about goals and objectives, what their priorities are and the history of past decisions.

There were 2 audience questions – John Breasted and Eileen Mooney

John Breasted asked what the applicants experience with the Town Meeting form of government is and how will he educate residents about the legislative body of government.

Ron responded that he has been through the same process, although it had a different name. The only major difference is that voting didn't take place the same night as the meeting.

Ron said that he likes the openness of this form of government.

He said that anything to attract citizens is crucial as it is important to have their support.

Eileen Mooney asked:

The present Town Manager had trouble adjusting to a small town. Why do you want to lead a small town?

Ron responded that he likes the smaller town feel and sense of belonging. He said that issues in a big town and a small town don't differ that much.

### **Jennifer Tabakin**

The Selectboard gave the applicant an 'In-box' activity to prioritize and discuss.

The applicant prioritized the items stating that public safety is of utmost importance.

Jennifer added that she has a lot of systems to help in prioritizing and following up.

Deb Phillips asked:

We would like to hear briefly about yourself, particularly what it is about your experience and approach that qualifies you for this position.

Follow up: what aspect of Town management intrigues you the most?

What aspect would you find most challenging?

Jennifer responded that Great Barrington has an amazing vision but not a lot of money. She said that this would have to be strategized and hard decisions would have to be made.

Jennifer said that she is a problem-solver; she has good judgment and takes on challenges.

Jennifer spoke about her past employment.

Steve Bannon asked:

In your time in public service, can you tell us about a big idea you have had, what was your strategy to move the idea along and was it ultimately successful?

Jennifer responded that she was given an environmental impact statement for a project in the Bronx. There was a lot of controversy around it. She reshaped, organized and established a new way of looking at a cluster of projects. Jennifer said that she is a creative thinker.

Alana Chernila asked:

Describe a situation where you realized you had done something wrong. What was your process, both internally and professionally, to address this?

What did you learn and how has it changed the way you work?

Jennifer responded that she hired the wrong person, which impacted morale. She said this could have been avoided if she had taken a stronger stance on who was hired.

Andrew Blechman asked:

We are fortunate to have skilled Department Heads who would be working for you. How would colleagues characterize your management style? What would they say you have done well? Where would they suggest you might need improvement?

Jennifer responded that she is a quick learner. She sets goals and objectives and moves projects forward.

She uses a cooperative and collaborative style.

Jennifer said that working together is the best training.

Sean Stanton asked:

How would your colleagues characterize your style working with community boards?

Please describe an experience you have had working with a citizen committee and how you see the Town Manager's proper role.

Jennifer said that she has worked with a community board in the past, which requires outreach. She said that formal partnerships are important and she works well with advocates; she has worked on legislation in Washington regarding women's issues.

Alana Chernila asked:

Promoting a sustainable community, in economic development, energy, agriculture, and site disposition & redevelopment are key areas our new master plan is addressing. Can you describe what this means to you and how you would see your role as Town Manager in moving towards this?

Jennifer responded that she is supportive of sustainability and thinks it goes hand-in-hand with economic development. She said that Great Barrington could utilize many of the 'green initiatives.'

Deb Phillips asked:

Given that as in all towns, finances are tight and the bulk of our income is from the property tax, what would be your approach to provide a high quality of service within a reasonable tax rate? Do you see particular challenges or opportunities in Great Barrington's fiscal situation? Please elaborate.

Jennifer said that the town has a huge amount of resources and assets. The budget is well organized and the bond rating is good. She said that taxes need to be kept low so it is important to look at more efficiency in government. Jennifer suggested a zero balance budget and then build it up. More federal funding should be

found. She suggested creating more special events to foster revenue for the town. Jennifer said that a BID district would be important to look at again.

Alana Chernila asked:

Our citizens expect their public officials to be available and accessible to them. How would your colleagues describe your interactions with citizens and what concrete actions have you taken in your previous jobs to improve direct services and communication to citizens.

Jennifer said that her style is 'accessible'. She hopes to live in the town to see those who she works with every day.

Steve Bannon asked:

Great Barrington has virtually all of its educational services provided by the Regional School District, an independent municipal entity. Can you describe the relationship you would like to develop with the school superintendent and how you would plan to work with the school superintendent and school committee.

Jennifer responded that it may be a separate entity but the town provides the bulk of the funding. She suggested that they look at the regional component; are all towns equitable regarding cost.

Andrew Blechman asked:

Great Barrington is proud of its history. Our residents and visitors alike appreciate the richness of the town's historic architecture and their value in shaping our identity and contributing to our economy. What is your experience and position on historic preservation and can you cite specific examples of your involvement with this approach to the built environment?

Jennifer said that she has worked on renovation projects of historical sites, so she has experience with this. She said keeping the legitimacy of historical assets is important. Jennifer said that this should balance with ADA and energy efficiency. She suggested doing more in the area of history in order to target tourism.

Sean Stanton asked:

What economic opportunities do you see in Great Barrington?

Jennifer responded that it is important to keep small businesses balanced so not to become so 'touristy.' She said that broadband is great; it will open up the opportunity for incubators to use this service.

Jennifer said that more can be done in the food distribution area. She suggested a larger farmers market and a flea market with local entrepreneurs.

Sean Stanton asked:

What would you see as a significant personal or professional achievement over the next 5-10 years?

Do you have any questions for us?

Jennifer responded that she has implemented big projects, has built parks, has environmental skills and has valuable expertise on managing city government.

Jennifer asked the Selectboard what they think is an effective way to work with the Town Manager, Department Heads and keep a balance with community relations?

Sean Stanton replied that the Selectboard tries to abide by policy governance. He said that communication is huge. The Selectboard cares a lot about the community and will do what they think is right for them.

Alana Chernila responded that it is important to be sensitive to the fact that the Selectboard is made up of elected officials who create policy and rely on the Town Manager as counsel. Alana said that their decision is only as good as the advice they get.

There were 2 audience questions – John Breasted and Eileen Mooney

John Breasted asked what the applicants experience with the Town Meeting form of government is and how will she educate residents about the legislative body of government.

Jennifer responded that she is inspired by all aspects of the Town Meeting type of government. She suggested that a fresh look at it may inspire others. Jennifer said that the budget needs to be presented in a clear way.

Eileen Mooney asked:

The present Town Manager had trouble adjusting to a small town. Why do you want to lead a small town? Jennifer said that this is a place that her family loves. She is connected to the area and is here often, so there may not be much of an adjustment.

#### **4. DELIBERATIONS TO SELECT THE NEW TOWN MANAGER**

Sean Stanton read through the index cards written by the public and the department heads.

There was discussion amongst the Selectboard regarding each applicant.

**MOTION:** Andrew Blechman to offer Jennifer Tabakin the opportunity to be Great Barrington's next Town Manager

**SECOND:** Deb Phillips

**VOTE: 5-0**

**MOTION:** Steve Bannon to recess until 7:00 PM

**SECOND:** Deb Phillips

**VOTE: 5-0**

#### **5. 7:00 PUBLIC HEARINGS**

- A. CONTINUATION to MARCH 13, 2013, 7:00 PM, PUBLIC HEARING FOR VERIZON NEW ENGLAND, INC., PO BOX 152206, IRVING, TX TO EXPAND ITS PARKING AREA IN THE WATER QUALITY PROTECTION OVERLAY DISTRICT AT 9 SCHOOL STREET, GREAT BARRINGTON, MA IN ACCORDANCE WITH SECTIONS 9.2 AND 10.4 OF THE GREAT BARRINGTON ZONING BYLAW. (VOTE)**

**MOTION:** Deb Phillips to open the public hearing

**SECOND:** Steve Bannon

**VOTE: 5-0**

**Roll Call Vote:**

Steve Bannon – yes

Andrew Blechman – yes

Alana Chernila – yes

Deb Phillips – yes

Sean Stanton – yes

Sean Stanton read the public hearing description

**MOTION:** Deb Phillips to continue the hearing until the meeting on Wednesday, March 13.

**SECOND:** Steve Bannon

**VOTE: 5-0**

#### **12. ADJOURNMENT:**

On a motion by Steve Bannon, seconded by Alana Chernila, the Board adjourned its meeting at 7:13 P.M.

Respectfully submitted,



Cara Becker

Recording Secretary