

MINUTES

SPECIAL MEETING

BOARD OF SELECTMEN

September 30, 2013

Meeting called to order at 6:15 P.M.

Present Selectman Elizabeth Gorski, Selectman Joseph R. D'Amore and Chairman Donald N. Greaney

All stood for the Pledge of Allegiance

6:15 p.m. - Interview – Robert Lay – Fire Chief position

Chairman Greaney welcomed Robert Lay to the interview and thanked him for the time given to the earlier phone interview. Greaney explained that the Board received twelve applications for the position of Fire Chief; that one applicant withdrew; that all were telephoned and asked the same five questions. Chairman Greaney asked Selectman Gorski to ask Lay her first question.

Selectman Gorski stated they all know there is some dissention in the ranks and asked Lay what he would do to bridge the differences the members of the department all have with each other. What would he do better for the community and the department should he be selected as the next Fire Chief.

Lay responded: There are morale issues. Whether it is within one station or only one he suggested that when it happens it happens due to an event; that at the very highest level there is no clear expectation of what's going on; that it's left to individuals to know how they should conduct themselves and that once they do that someone else may not like it. Lay said the best approach is to bring everyone together; bring managers together and decide what they do to attain the desired state. Lay told the Board that good communication brings good expectations; that the whole group would be brought in and talked to; clear up the issues; that if you're a volunteer it's difficult to work with someone you don't like. Lay suggested the men don't spend enough time together, there are two buildings and two leaderships; that there should be zero tolerance for poor behavior. Lay also suggested that Officers don't manage enough. Lay said he believes when there is conflict a meeting should be scheduled in a week, sit down and cool off and discuss the conflict; that before you know it, it's history.

Selectman Gorski thanked Lay for his response and commented that she knows he cares about the town and that it's good to know that they have good leadership. Lay responded that he's had a lot of training, sherpa training last two years; that he has a personal coach to help him even today.

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Lay stated he has been in the same station forever; that they thank the men when they all come back to the station after a call; that former Chief Clement commented once about them thanking them all. Lay remarked that a prime motivator in the work place is being appreciated.

Selectman D'Amore told Lay that there is a history of in-fighting amongst the two stations and asked what his experience is in managing confrontation.

Lay responded that you facilitate; that you need to get to the root of the cause; that you need to get at the truth. Lay told the board he has a lot of experience dealing with two sides and gave examples of his experience in working with union vs. management; that you need to find what's in common, then find common goal. Lay told the Board that currently, probably only 18 of the 40 would show up now if there was a planned event with free food.

Chairman Greaney referred to the job description and asked Lay if he is able to make the requirement to be at the station Mondays for permit sign-offs for the public and training on Tuesdays, two hours each night. He also asked Lay if he understands the budget is the budget; that the Selectmen are looking to run the department with the same amount or less. Lay responded that yes, he is aware of the budget and the expectation to run the department on the same appropriation. He also told the Board that yes, he would be available both Monday and Tuesday evenings; that he has nothing to take him away; that he has always been involved in the training currently; that as one of the trainers he would not sit in the office. Lay told the Board that he has looked at the budget and that they have always been under budget not over.

Lay told the Board that he did write an Operations Plan but doesn't know if they would want to see it; that he has a rough one for the department. The Selectmen said they would like to see it and Lay gave each Selectman a copy, but did not give one for the record. Lay told the Selectmen that all his former experiences in his work field are scalable to the department; that he knows how to operate within a budget; that he has seen lots of waste over the years. He suggested if he freed up \$5,000 in waste he would want to spend it somewhere else.

Lay told the Board that if they make him Chief that they can fix the problems together; that there are a lot of things to be fixed and he would certainly keep the Board informed. Chairman Greaney told Lay that they got monthly reports from the Clerk on the calls that fire was answering; that since the Clerk left they haven't received them. Greaney also mentioned rumors of people putting in slips to get paid for getting fuel, etc. and that efficiencies need to be implemented. Lay responded that the trucks should be filled up before coming back to the station so that the trucks are ready for the next call; that they need to be prepared and ready at all times.

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Selectman D'Amore asked Lay how certain tasks would be delegated. Lay responded the men need to be trained and if he didn't feel he had someone to do a task due to not being trained he would do so himself; that over time you know who you can trust and who is able to get the tasks done for you.

Selectman Gorski asked whether all 40 firefighters participate in drills and training at least 75% of the time and whether some men just show up a few times a year. Are we always outfitting 40 people, which can be very costly. Lay responded that if he is appointed Chief and does the job right, he will have 40 people attending; that he would need to meet with the individuals who don't attend training; that he would meet with 40 firefighters the first day of his appointment and have a personal discussion about how he can get them back. Lay told the Board that they need a plan for fixing the radios. To his knowledge there isn't an inventory; that active guys go through the gear.

Gorski told Lay that one of the applicants spoke about standardized equipment and asked if the town needs all the trucks it has. Lay responded that there are standards for fighting fires; that a business like Chesterton would need the department to deliver so much water if a fire occurred there. Lay stated it needs to be asked whether they really need a ladder truck; that West Newbury and Georgetown both have ladder trucks; that there has been a lot of talk about regionalized services. Lay suggested that might affect the town's insurance ratings.

Chairman Greaney asked Lay if he sees a day where the town has one fire station. Lay stated he wasn't sure how you would do it; that you need what is right for the community and decide what's best for our town.

Selectman Gorski thanked Lay for his service and for interviewing with the Board this evening. Gorski said she feels the Board learned a lot. Lay responded that he has prepared himself for this opportunity throughout his career as a firefighter and encouraged the Board to call the people he listed in his application.

7:06 P.M. – Dan Stewart

Chairman Greaney welcomed Daniel Stewart to the interview and thanked him for the time he gave to the earlier telephone interview. Stewart responded by thanking Greaney and stated that he was honored that the Board would consider him for the part-time position.

Selectman Gorski told Stewart that the town has 40 call firefighters, two stations; that there have been some issues and asked Stewart how he would handle trying to make the relationship between stations better. Stewart responded that his entire career in fire services he was well aware of the conflicts; that this occurs everywhere. He told the Board that his approach to this type of diversity would be to use conciliation; that before he accepted the job he would want to meet with the people and explain his philosophy

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of using conciliation. Stewart stated he would work with the men and get input for preparing SOG's and SOP's. He told the Board that as his town grew the call members shrank; that in a call department you have a little more leeway to direct the work; that it's important to work with people and listen to people.

Selectman D'Amore asked how he would delegate important tasks. Stewart responded that many of the jobs of the fire chief are his responsibility; that having good people to delegate to comes through good training for the men; that he would count on people who have the experience, recognize people's skills and qualifications and those who have the love of the position you put them in.

Chairman Greaney told Stewart that the job description requires the Chief to be at the station Monday evenings from 7:00P.M. to 9:00 P.M. for signing off on residents permits and Tuesday evenings from 7:00P.M. to 9:00 P.M. for training; that he feels it's important that the Chief be part of the training. He asked Stewart if he is aware of the town's fire department budget guidelines and Stewart responded he is. Stewart told the Board that he has always been right on the budget he managed for fifteen years; that sometimes you make decisions that don't make people happy but as a department head you need to do so at times. He said the line items in the budget are what it has to be; that he always tried to use ulterior funding, to find people to help with extra funding. Stewart told the Board that he devoted a lot of time developing good relationships within the town he worked in.

Chairman Greaney asked if Stewart was good with the Monday, Tuesday evening hours required and 10 hours remaining to do procedures. He told Stewart he will be limited on where he can delegate because most are call firefighters. Stewart responded that he has no problem with the time required; that he is willing to give as much time as it takes. Greaney told Stewart that one of the budget killers are medical calls; that the town hasn't had many fire calls. Greaney related how the budget got out of control a few years back and said the new Chief will need to be involved in how we can better manage the budget without losing our call members. Stewart responded that people need to be kept involved.

Selectman Gorski spoke about standardized vehicles and told Stewart that they have a Capital Improvement Committee which all needs over \$10,000 must go before them; that she spoke with the Chairman of that committee and they feel the town can't afford the expensive trucks; that we should share with another community. Gorski told Stewart that they don't want people to be unsafe, but need everyone to be reasonable with their requests. Stewart responded that he does believe in sharing equipment; that he did so with Wilmington and Reading (a \$1.2 million tower unit); that the town needs to buy the right equipment for its community.

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Selectman D'Amore asked Stewart how he would recognize achievement in a leadership role. Stewart responded the first step is to praise in public and chastise behind closed doors. Stewart told the Board that people like to hear when they are doing a good job and he would make the Selectman aware so they would acknowledge the good performance.

Stewart told the Board that he has a pretty good fix on what the Board is looking for and asked how much the Board gets involved with the Fire Department; that he had a good relationship with his Board of Selectmen, Town Manager and other town departments. He commented that the Board seems to be receptive to ideas and budgetary restraints; that he has a pretty good perspective of what is needed; that he would try to bring the two stations together and prepare a good set of SOPs and SOGs for the men. Stewart told the board that he has proven himself as a Chief that he can do the job.

Chairman Greaney told Stewart the Board will be available for the Chief, when needed, every other Monday and that he would work with the Board's Assistant and Finance Director more often than not. Selectman D'Amore told Stewart that the Selectmen are good mediators and good at getting people together to meet. D'Amore thanked Stewart for his answers to the board's questions and the added information he provided. Stewart thanked the Board for allowing him to be considered and said again he is honored to be considered for the position of Fire Chief in Groveland.

Adjournment

There being no further business to come before the meeting, moved Greaney, seconded Gorski, and it was

VOTED: To adjourn.

Adjourned at 7:58 P.M.

Respectfully submitted,

Nancy Lewandowski
Administrative Assistant