

MINUTES
SPECIAL MEETING
BOARD OF SELECTMEN
FEBRUARY 12, 2014

Present Selectmen Elizabeth Gorski, Joseph D'Amore and Chairman Donald Greaney.

Meeting was called to order at 6:00 P.M. at Town Hall. The purpose of the meeting was to interview three applicants for the Finance Director position.

6:00 P.M. – Eileen DeVeau – currently works for Town of West Newbury as Accountant – involved with Pentucket Regional School District budget, knows it inside out. Does not write grants but assisted the Finance Director by gathering information needed to write several reimbursement grants. Chairman Greaney asked if Ms. DeVeau would be willing to look into grant writing to see if she could help with what our departments may need and she responded she would not have a problem trying that.

Greaney asked Eileen if she had direct responsibility with setting West Newbury's tax rates and annual budgeting. Eileen responded that she gathered the information for the Finance Director at budget time, not direct responsibility. When asked why she wants to move to a Director position, Eileen responded that she likes accounting but feels she is ready to move to the Treasurer side and feels she would be successful and that it would be more satisfying for her. Chairman Greaney asked whether she saw herself doing this for the rest of her career and Eileen responded she does.

Selectman D'Amore told Eileen that the town's current Finance Director is leaving a big foot print and will be hard to fill. He asked how she would approach the job knowing she doesn't have experience. Ms. DeVeau responded that she has a cheat sheet for some tasks; would interact with department heads and see where they stand; would continue with annual training and get certified and see how things were done.

Selectman Gorski asked what she considered herself to be proficient in and Ms. DeVeau responded that she is proficient in accounting software. Gorski asked if she'd be able to assist Groveland employees if they have problems with the computer system. Ms. DeVeau suggested she would need to seek help from someone; that West Newbury uses someone from Kensington. Gorski told DeVeau that she has excellent references and that she was please that DeVeau had applied and thanked her for coming in to meet with the Board this evening.

Chairman Greaney asked whether DeVeau had questions for the Board and she responded that she was clear on the job description. Greaney spoke briefly about the town's CPA funds and how they've had bad experiences with those receiving the funds for projects; that the Board would expect their Finance Director to be on top of the projects and the applications for the funds rather than a soccer coach. Greaney also mentioned the town currently in the process of purchasing several parcels of land and one needing borrowing to purchase. Greaney told DeVeau that the current Finance Director will be available for interim help for the successful candidate. He also mentioned that the Finance Director negotiates the town's trash contracts and invests the town's funds. Selectman Gorski told DeVeau that our employees are a small group of people and that we ask a lot of our employees and things seem to get done. DeVeau

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asked if the town borrows for its CPA projects and Greaney replied we have not; that maybe if an affordable housing project applied for funds they would need to do so. DeVeau told the Board that some things will be new to her and take more time but she feels confident she can do the job.

6:30 P.M. – Ronald Mendes – currently works as Business Manager for DPW in Newton, MA. Is responsible for DPW equipment replacement, budgets and capital plan, bidding contracts and overseeing that appropriations are spent properly. Mendes told the Board that he manages customer service team; that most questions are about trash, potholes and street lights. Mendes also restructuring water/sewer rates.

Mendes told the Board that he worked as Treasurer/Collector in Wilmington and Newton, MA; that his certifications ran out and would have to be renewed; that he was teaching courses, and could be recertified within a year but rules are changing. Chairman Greaney asked if Mendes has experience with computer systems and could help town employees when problems occur. Mendes stated that he does have experience and is familiar with Vadar, the system the town uses. He stated he is not an IT professional but knows how to get things done. Greaney mentioned that the Finance Director has two employees and all other departments are mostly one person offices.

Mendes told the Board he is familiar with regional school districts; that he is familiar with Minuteman and Lincoln/Sudbury districts. Greaney asked Mendes what size budgets he has worked with and he responded that Wilmington's budget was \$20 million and Newton's was \$60 million. Selectman D'Amore commented on Mendes having a legal background and asked how that knowledge of law helps with his position. Mendes told the Board that his wife is a practicing attorney; that he went to law school because he had a strong financial background and felt it would be a great way to enhance his skill set; that he practiced for a few years and that it's a great background and being able to practice law. He became a lawyer to further his career in municipal government.

Greaney explained that the town is currently selling sand and gravel from the Pines Recreation site next to the Municipal Complex and has currently raised about \$600,000; that fields, tennis courts, a new boat ramp, bathrooms and a concession stand will be erected, and electrical, drainage system and road paving will be done and the Road Commissioner will be overseeing the project. That all improvements to the area will be paid for from monies raised from the sale of materials. Greaney asked Mendes about his experience with bidding and his understanding of the Procurement Law which Mendes stated he is familiar with procurement requirements and has done contract bidding in the past. Mendes told the Board that in the beginning there would be a lot of listening to see how the position works and within six months or so will have a good feel of how the town operates and may start to tweek things to make things more efficient. Mendes said he would have conversations with department heads and Gorski responded that people are always reluctant to change. Mendes told the Board when he started in Wilmington he had to reconcile years of statements because they did not know how much money they had.

The Board thanked the Board for meeting with them and told him if he thinks of any questions later he can call or email the Board's Assistant.

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7:00 P.M. – Karen Repucci – Works as Town Accountant, reconciles with Town Treasurer, records revenues and works with Treasurer on reporting debt. Chairman Greaney asked Ms. Repucci what her experience is with bidding contracts under the Procurement Law and Karen responded that she does not do the bidding; that Topsfield has a separate Procurement Officer; that she sees the contracts once they have been awarded and has them on file. Repucci told the Board that she worked closely with the School Committee to keep the budget increase at 2%. Karen stated that she's an expert with Excel and did some training of her staff. She also reported that she has worked with departments helping when grants need to be renewed and coordinates with the different departments; that she also assists departments with five year capital planning. She shared with the Board several charts and spread sheets she designed for capital improvement projects.

Selectman Gorski asked Ms. Repucci if she has any knowledge of computer servers and or IT experience so she can assist other employees when computer issues arise. Karen responded that she was in charge of a system at a furniture store she worked at but no IT experience; that most towns have a separate IT person. Repucci told the Board she uses the Munis system.

Selectman D'Amore told Karen that the present Finance Director grew into the position and leaves a very big footprint; that the Board does not expect anyone to fill his footprint but asked if she feels she too will grow into the position. Repucci responded that she is looking to grow and D'Amore asked how would she envision her first day, week, month with the town. Karen responded that she would need to get a handle on the budget, see if there are areas to improve on, make sure spending and revenues are on track; that that is most important, then look at capital projects and each department. Repucci told the Board that she is a fast learner and would look forward to helping each department. Karen told the Board that she is familiar with all of the Accountant's duties but feels she is ready and able to do the Treasurer side as required by our Finance Director position.

Chairman Greaney thanked Karen for meeting with them and asked her to call or email if she thinks of any questions.

Moved Gorski, seconded D'Amore, and it was

VOTED: To adjourn.
Adjourned at 7:36 P.M.

Respectfully submitted,

Nancy Lewandowski, Administrative Assistant