**Board of Selectmen**

**Meeting Minutes**

**September 13, 2017**

**Rutland Public Library**

**6:00 P.M.**

**Present:** Leroy Clark, Stephanie Bacon, Wayne Walker, Sheila Dibb, Michael Pantos

**Others:** Margaret Nartowicz, Town Administrator and Abby Benoit, Administrative Secretary

Mr. Clark opened the meeting at 6:00 p.m.

Mr. Pantos read the guidelines of the interview

**6:00 P.M., Nicholas Monaco**

**Question #1 - 4**

Sergeant Monaco introduced himself to the Board and discussed the questions that were asked.

**Question #5**

Sergeant Monaco stated that his proudest moment was becoming Sergeant, he came from a community that was not as close, he is proud that the community has put faith in him. As a Sergeant he recently received his first grant for crosswalks. He will continue to apply for additional grants.

Sergeant Monaco does not have any regrets.

**Question #6**

Police Departments are traditionally military based, it is 2017 and this does work, leaders need to be coaches and try to teach people to do the right thing and the right way. This will build a positive relationship with community.

**Question #7**

The number one priority of the police department is to maintain public trust and being transparent. It is important that the community has faith in the department.

**Question #8**

Does not currently have experience.

**Question #9**

Sergeant Monaco believes the transition from Sergeant to Chief would be smooth if he were offered the position. He has made a transition previously and believes he can do it again and does not see an internal position to be problematic. The department knows him and trusts that he will do the right thing. He recently had to write up an employee, he did not like doing it but is ready to make changes and take on the role.

**Question #10**

Sergeant Monaco discussed his management of the department Facebook page which he uses frequently. He uses it to provide notice of road closings, accidents, etc. Code Red is effective in getting in touch with people for situations like a missing person. Sergeant Monaco would also like to hold monthly public meetings, public would be welcome to come to the department to discuss community concerns.

**Question #11**

Sergeant Monaco answered that it is glass walls, he described a situation in Spencer and stated that it is important to get as much information as possible to the public, you need to be open and honest. It is achieved by putting information out before it is asked for and sharing what you can with the public.

**Question #12**

Sergeant Monaco discussed the department’s connection with the seniors through the senior luncheons. He also discussed the softball game scheduled between the Police Department and Devereux School, he hopes it will create a positive relationship with the kids and the department.

**Question #13**

He expressed his dedication and care for the town. If he is offered the position he intends on being here for the next 18-20 years. He cares about the community and respects everyone in the department and wants to lead them into the future.

The Board asked if the candidate has any questions.

Sergeant Monaco thanked the Board, he stated that it has been an honor to sit in front of the Board for the interview process.

**Follow up questions**

**Tell us about Rutland from the Police Department perspective.**

From a Police Officer perspective, most calls are domestic or drunk driving. Rutland is experiencing the opiate crisis. In the past year there has been more opiate related incidents than over the past 10 years. Sergeant Monaco is a supporter of officers carrying Narcan, it is a public health issue, and the department is here to save lives. There are several traffic issues in Town, he would like to work with DPW and Mass DOT to get signage up to better standards.

**Mr. Pantos asked what we need to do to get Narcan for the officers to carry.**

He answered that if the officers were to carry Narcan a policy would need to be in place and the Union would likely want to negotiate. Currently the Narcan is only on the ambulance

**How do you maintain public trust, what does the public think of the department?**

He believes the public trusts the department, there may be rumors and misunderstandings, but he would like to open communication with the public.

Sergeant Monaco spoke more about the department’s policy and procedures. He has been involved with temporary directives and direct orders. The current handbook needs to be updates, some of the information is over 10 years old. It needs to be tailored to make sure it is the best practice. He discussed a software used by the Dispatch department and would like to introduce it to the Police Department.

**Is it possible to be too close as the chief?**

He does not think of it as a problem, believes it is an advantage. People stop and talk to him and he would like to be the modern day Ralph Anderson, where everyone knows who you are.

Ms. Bacon asked if he has had any involvement in department budgeting?

He has put himself through a government budgeting course and has drafted spreadsheets for the department to familiarize himself with the process

**The Board asked if there was any questions.**

He does not have any questions he enjoys working with everyone. He would have liked to communicate more with the Board in the past, but believes in chain of command and was not is place. If offered the position he would make it his place.

Mr. Pantos moved to recess. Ms. Dibb 2nd. Vote unanimous.

The Board recessed at 6:29 P.M.

Mr. Clark announced that the Board is back in open session at 6:45 p.m.

**Michael Blanchard, 6:45 P.M**.

Mr. Pantos read the guidelines of the interview.

**Question #1**

Michael Blanchard introduced himself as a resident of Sturbridge, he is married with 2 children. He enjoys the outdoors. In his professional life he is currently the Chief of Police in the Town of Brookfield and has been there for 7 years. He started his career in Rutland in the 1999 as a part time officer. Prior to that he was a corrections officer and worked for youth services. After his start in law enforcement he was promoted and worked for Sturbridge where he was promoted to Sergeant.

**Question #2**

He was not sure about weaknesses, but thought it would be similar to other towns with budgeting issues. When he worked in Rutland he enjoyed the community, it is family oriented and the families are involved in everything. He discussed the local government and the composition of the schools, the roadways, it is a bedroom community and it is what makes it unique.

**Question #3**

He really enjoys helping people, as a police officer you have the opportunity in many aspects. Not all work is criminal and the job is always changing, each call is different. He tells officers that you impact people in different ways and in different situations.

**Question #4**

It all has to do with willingness to work with other people, you need to understand what the other departments are doing. In his current role he understands the needs of other departments. They work together with regards to budgeting, open lines of communication are important.

Chief Blanchard discussed the school, he currently has a good relationship with school and has formed a relationship with them. He has also has been trained as an ALICE instructor and has brought that to the school district.

**Question #5**

He is most proud of his role as a police chief, when he stepped into the role he had to build a new department. He has been successful in doing so and has built a good relationship with the community. His only regret is starting his career late. In his current department the staffing is the Chief, Sergeant, 3 full time officers, 8 part time officers and an administrative assistant. When he started it was only the part time staff.

**Question #6**

He described his management style as consultive as the department head he relies on his subordinates and their input, he likes to include them and their suggestions how to do certain things. His expectation is that the department is fully supportive, even if they are not in agreement, he is fully involved in the community along with the rest of the department, and he relies on the department for their assistance and involves them in decision making. What is the number one priority of any police department and why?

**Question #7**

The priority of the department is to protect and serve, it is gaining the public’s trust, and they need to know that they can approach the department in a time of need.

**Question #8**

He is constantly reviewing policies and procedures, they need to be reviewed regularly. He explained that he has implemented procedures as the Chief in Brookfield. There are policies and procedures existing in other towns that can be adopted by the department. You do not need to reinvent each policy, just make changes so it is fitting to your department.

**Question #9**

Chief Blanchard explained that his transition into his current position was difficult because there was no staff. He built relationships with surrounding towns and received guidance from them. The largest difference between his current position and prior position was the funding. In Sturbridge, the department was large and equipment could be replaced. He has had to adjust and get used to the funding in a smaller town.

**Question #10**

Chief Blanchard stated that social media has become part of the culture, his current department does have a Facebook account. He expressed the importance of the police department being up to date with social media, it is the fastest and most direct way to get in touch with residents. It needs to be utilized and it needs to be utilized often. Code red is important for situations of a missing child.

**Question #11**

Chief Blanchard stated that he can only speak on a police department level, you need to let the public know what the mission is. If resident has complaints you need to take them seriously, investigate and follow up. He explained that you need to be open an upfront on what you are doing and be accountable for your actions.

**Question #12**

He discussed being fully involved in the community, people know who I am and are not afraid to come speak to me. He spoke about the Family Fun Day, he has sat in the dunk booth for the past 7 years. He stated that when people see you out of uniform they get to know you and trust you, by being involved in the community.

**Question #13**

Chief Blanchard stated that there are three really good candidates, and that he does not know if he is correct in saying that he is better with anyone. He is able to get along with and work with different types of people, you need someone who is able to work with anyone else, with personal skills.

Mr. Pantos asked Chief Blanchard why he chose Rutland.

He explained that this is where he started his career and he enjoyed the community and the people he worked with. He has been the Chief of Police in Brookfield, but is looking for more of a challenge. The department, size of the Town and budget is double of the size of the town he is currently working in.

**Follow up questions:**

**You remember it as a family oriented community? What has changed?**

Chief Blanchard stated that it is a lot bigger, there are more roads, a lot more houses and there seems to be more businesses. It has grown and it will continue to grow.

**ALICE protocol? How do you feel about it?**

Chief Blanchard fully supports the ALICE protocol, it is human nature and reaction. It teaches you to get out, hide and fight if you have to. Studies have been completed that show more people will survive if they get out, he fully believes in it and thinks it is a good program and everyone should be trained.

**The Board asked about his transition to his current department.**

Chief Blanchard explained that there was no full time staff, only part time, he transitioned without any full time support.

**Have you had to reinvent the wheel for policy and procedure?**

He has not had to make dramatic changes, just tweaks to fit his department.

**How do you communicate with residents?**

He gets out and talks to residents, they all know his door is open and can come in and talk during office hours.

Sheila asked about August 29th and information that was posted on social media. He stated that there was not another party.

**Do you have experience with the budget process and how will it differ here from Brookfield?**

He stated that he has prepared 6-7 budgets and does not believe it will be different in Rutland. He continue to do the same things, will talk to the selectmen and other departments and see what funds are available. He does not ask for anything he does not need.

Chief Blanchard thanked the Board for their time and opportunity.

Mr. Pantos moved to recess at 7:20 p.m., Ms. Dibb 2nd. Vote unanimous.

Mr. Clark announced the return of recess at 7:30 p.m.

**Mark Soloio, 7:30**

Mr. Pantos read the interview guidelines.

**Question #1**

Mr. Saloio introduced himself, he has been an officer for 23 years, he lives in Brimfield, he is married, has a Bachelor’s Degree in Sociology, a Master’s with a concentration in homeland security. He has done and been assigned to every possible assignment including patrol, detective, Federal, State and local task forces and has done multiple involved investigations. He has also worked with the FBI, had the role as Detective, Sergeant, and Operations Lieutenant and is currently the Administrative Lieutenant. He oversees the budget of 2.8 million dollars, 16 vehicles, communications center, and accreditation. He also is involved with the MA State Police and State Accreditation Commission.

He discussed his community involvement and he places community policing as the highest on the pole for daily responsibilities, this is the reason why he applied to Rutland. There is quick growth and plans for continued grown, which will come with challenges. Growth will impact everyone and all departments. He also applied for personal and professional growth. He has exceeded expectations, works hard and forms partnerships to make sure he gets it right and expects the same from everyone else.

**Question #2**

Mr. Soloio discussed the 4th of July Celebrations in Rutland. The Town has grown and will continue to grow, he also understands that there are budgeting problems specifically with the school district. He has also gone through budget cuts and is very confident that he can do well with whatever appropriations. He would not ask for anything they did not need, and will give 3-5 years of data and rationale of why it is needed. We are all about customer service, the majority of what we do as police are service oriented tasks. Community partnership is important.

**Question #3**

Mr. Soloio discussed Community partnership and thinking globally. You need to give the residents the benefit of doubt. The better understanding that you have with the residents, the better the tools you have. It is important to instill that nonprofessional conduct is not tolerated and it is important to understand that taxes are paying the department budget.

**Question #4**

Some is built over time, very rarely do you click instantly. He provided an example of appropriating finances with other departments and the partnership with other departments.

**Question #5**

As a patrolmen you have to be your own person and hold your value. He discussed an incident that involved a missing fire arm and he wished that he had handled it differently. He is most proud of the accreditation program that he is involved with. He has never overspent budget lines and never had to go back to request additional money. He also discussed a survey that he created within the department and town, for department feedback from residents.

**Question #6**

As a supervisor he remembers his frustration as a patrolmen was communication. When you speak to people very direct they will listen. It is important to give people the mindset for why and to think globally. Communication is also important.

**Question #7**

He discussed partnership with the community being a priority, this has to be the number one because he cannot think of an investigation that was not solved without the assistance of the public.

**Question #8**

He explained that he has quite a bit of experience, he is part of the accreditation program and has reviewed other department’s policies and procedures. The agencies policies are reviewed every 3 years, they should be looked at as a tool. He also has experience writing policy.

**Question #9**

He views it as an opportunity, you need to look and see what you can do better. The biggest challenge is being thoughtful in your decisions and take your time to make the right decisions. He foresees the biggest challenge not being able to bump up problems to someone with higher authority, in his current position he is able to escalate concerns or problems to his current Chief.

**Question #10**

You can utilize the Code Red system to update neighborhoods of power outages, accident, or life flight landings. He discussed an annual round table exercise that he has been part of that focuses on strategizing for fictitious situations.

**Question #11**

He discussed the customer service aspect of the position, the government works for the people. It is the resident’s police department and it is owed to the citizens to be transparent. Taxpayer’s money is being spent every day.

**Question #12**

He has created a partnership with the high school for RAD classes. Students have had the choice to take gym or RAD training. The Senior Center is another example, they hold community meetings to spread the work about break INS. There are also annual community dinners, a SALT officer, an annual gun buyback program, and a citizen and student academy.

**Question #13**

He stated that he believes that he is the best candidate, all of the candidates are great people, but he has had the opportunity to receive professional training. He has been very fortunate and is very well prepared to assume leadership. With respect to the people that would work for him, two people should know every job and a succession plan should be in place.

He would like to improve the department and provide tools to the department, the more contact employees are professionally, the better the service they will provide.

Mr. Soloio asked for a rough timeline of the hiring process as he understands it is an advertisement.

Ms. Nartowicz stated that a decision needs to be made someone soon. The interim Chief will be with the department through October 14th and it will be ideal to have overlap.

Mr. Soloio stated that the reason why he did not apply during the first advertisement was that he was in the application process with another community at the time.

Ms. Dibb asked if there is anything that he sees will need immediate change.

He provided the example of accreditation

Have Sturbridge’s policies been used in other Towns?

He said they had but it is not unique to Sturbridge, there are 170 agencies that all have state of the art best practices. He would recuse himself from the commission if offered the job because Rutland has not been accredited.

Community policing was reference, what does Rutland need?

In Rutland he would start to organize a citizen’s academy and establishing a dialogue with the school and administration. He would also want to initiate a community survey, many people tell you what they think you want to hear, with the survey they can write whatever they feel.

What were you last few contacts with residents as a police officer?

He stated he has carried the same relationships from patrolmen up to his current position.

The interviews ended at 8:35 p.m.

Ms. Nartowicz stated that the Board may discuss the professional merits of the candidates and make determination of the next steps.

Mr. Pantos would like to read through documentation and think about it before appointment. He believes all 3 are very good candidates and they all presented themselves very well.

The Board members agreed that they could narrow down the candidates to tow.

There was discussion of future growth for Sergeant Monaco if the Mr. Soloio were appointed.

There was also discussion about a transition from an administrator role to a small town working chief. Mr. Walker stated that it is important to determine what kind of chief you want, someone who is well versed in administration or someone all around.

The Board agreed that the final candidates would be narrowed down to Sergeant Monaco or Lieutenant Soloio.

Ms. Dibb moved to notify Chief Blanchard for his application, but the Board would not be perusing his application further. Mr. Pantos 2nd. Vote unanimous.

The board agreed that they would like to move forward with appointment with full support. Ms. Nartowicz asked that the Board reflect on what they want to see in the department.

Seth Knipe recommended that Chief Livingston provide input on the department.

The board discussed meeting Monday, September 18th at 5 pm, Chief Livingston will be invited to the meeting.

Mr. Pantos moved to adjourn. Ms. Bacon 2nd. Vote unanimous.

The meeting adjourned at 8:56 p.m.

Respectfully Submitted,

Abby Benoit

Administrative Secretary

Board of Selectmen

Approved \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_