

Saugus Board of Selectmen
March 28, 2012

*****MEETING MINUTES*****

Saugus Board of Selectmen
March 28, 2012, 9:00 AM
Town Hall Auditorium
298 Central Street

1.) Town Manager interviews

9:00 AM Mark Andrews

9:45 AM Michael Szlosek

10:30 AM Scott Crabtree

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The Saugus Board of Selectmen met on March 28, 2012 at 9:00 AM in the Town Hall Auditorium, 298 Central Street. Present: Selectmen Stephen Castinetti, Stephen Horlick, Julie Mitchell, Debra Panetta and the Chairman Michael Serino.

The Chair called the meeting to order and explained the first scheduled interview, the applicant withdrew after the meeting was posted and upon advise of Town Counsel the Board has called the meeting to order and will recess to the next interview scheduled at 9:45am. The Chair took the opportunity to explain the process to date and said on January 3rd the Board voted to appoint a Temporary Town Manager and scheduled two public forums held on January 25th & February 4th to get input from the citizens, and the Board voted on February 16th to advertise the position of Town Manager with a deadline of March 12th which was moved to March 19th and said it was advertised in the Boston Globe and ran 27 days on the MMA website and said the Board did meet on March 19th to go over the applications and there were 31 applications and the Board picked three finalists with a five to 0 vote and the next day (March 20th) the names were released to the press and the Board agreed to interview today starting at 9am and said the process was agreed to by unanimous vote.

Mr. Castinetti moved recess to 9:45am. Chair seconds. Vote: 5-0.

Meeting recessed at 9:06am.

The Chair called the meeting back to order at 9:45am.

9:45 AM Michael Szlosek, Ludlow, MA

The Chairman read applicant's background.

Mr. Castinetti asked his leadership style, philosophy and results. Mr. Szlosek said he has a collaborative leadership style with a hands-off approach of management. Mr. Castinetti asked about results. Mr. Szlosek said he has had good results and left them in better shape and said there were difficult economic times, but maintained services and completed a revitalized down town over a 4 year phased project.

Ms. Mitchell asked what his thoughts were on a capital improvement plan and if it would include schools. Mr. Szlosek said schools are part of the Town and said he has seen plans developed but unfunded and the best results come from segregating funds for capital needs either dedicating a percentage of new revenue or existing. The Chair asked if he implemented a capital program. Mr. Szlosek said cuts in revenue and that was the first line hit, but in Uxbridge he did get money dedicated to the capital account and went from 0-\$100,000 and that was the best he could do with the economy and it takes a while to build.

Mr. Horlick said there's concern with public safety and asked how he would maintain or increase service. Mr. Szlosek said he looked at the general budget and it looks like the number should be adequate to fund public safety. Mr. Horlick asked his thoughts on leasing police cruisers. Mr. Szlosek said he looked at a leasing program in Ludlow and it didn't make sense and said he would need to look at proposal. Mr. Horlick said some departments lease equipment like photocopiers and said there is some value to it. Mr. Szlosek said if the numbers work you should take advantage of it and said he always looks for savings and said in Ludlow it made sense to lease construction equipment and said he would need to look at what would work here.

Ms. Panetta asked him to tell the Board about himself and asked what he's been doing since he left Uxbridge in 2011. Mr. Szlosek said he has been job hunting and has been a finalist in a number of places and he is practicing law and is involved in government as a member on boards, but is not employed other than his law practice. Ms. Panetta asked he introduce himself. Mr. Szlosek said he is married, has a daughter and has always been involved in government, received his law degree in 1992, and has an MBA in finance.

The Chair said his resume indicates he worked with MSBA for a new high school and said the Town is in process of renovating the middle school and asked if the project he was involved with came in on budget. Mr. Szlosek said it was a long process and controversial and explained the project was defeated and there was a campaign to bring it back. The Chair asked about project cost. Mr. Szlosek said \$50million and explained the renovation vs. new and he prepared the cost analysis for taxpayers and there was a vote to proceed with a new high school and said the original cost was \$50 million for a 600 student school but since, there have been cost overruns and as he was leaving office, there was an effort to go forward with request for additional \$5 million.

Mr. Castinetti asked that he explain his strengths and what he most needs to improve. Mr. Szlosek said his strengths are financial and he prepares a good budget, finding efficiencies and on legal issues, negotiations with unions and his day to day knowledge of running a Town, he is a certified procurement officer and his weakness is he is very low key and would prefer not to give speeches and would rather pass it to the Selectmen.

Ms. Mitchell said he lives in Ludlow, a couple of hours away and asked if he would relocate. Mr. Szlosek said yes and has already looked.

Mr. Horlick said he said he led an effort to revitalize down town area and said Saugus has some areas not developed and asked if he would try to. Mr. Szlosek said the state is pushing 2 areas, biotech and green energy and he would pursue both and explained in Uxbridge they had land so he doesn't know if solar would work here, but biotech he would look into because of the good access because he creates jobs.

Ms. Panetta said he stated his number one strength was budget and asked what the largest budget he managed and what efficiencies savings he found or new sources of revenue. Mr. Szlosek said Ludlow was the largest budget at \$56 million and Uxbridge was \$34 million and said it is difficult to find new sources of revenue but both Towns he was aggressive in realizing insurance savings and in both communities he maintained services by doing an analysis different changes can save money and negotiating changes can increase savings. Ms. Panetta asked about his budget process. Mr. Szlosek said start early, project revenues and get a preliminary budget by calendar years end with hearings in January and said his budgets are pretty thick and very detailed and he works with departments on their needs and said he has found some take the lazy way with everyone getting a 2% increase, but he likes to work with what they really need.

The Chair said the Town doesn't have a grant writer or Town planner and asked his thoughts on that. Mr. Szlosek said it doesn't need to be a full time position and said he did some grant writing and if no one is dedicated to do it, then it doesn't get done and said most Towns have a planner and said his community didn't, but they had a planning board with a very capable secretary and said in Uxbridge the planner left and the position wasn't filled.

Mr. Castinetti asked why the Board should choose him. Mr. Szlosek said his experience which is what they need now with the Town undergoing an audit and they need someone that can make changes and said the Town has a strong bond rating but some issues may put that in jeopardy.

Ms. Mitchell asked him to touch on something not touched on and asked he share with them. Mr. Szlosek said he led the effort to revitalize the down town and that takes a lot to get down, he had a vision and he can bring his vision to Saugus.

Mr. Horlick asked how he would keep the Board abreast of financial and other issues. Mr. Szlosek said he would produce a monthly report and said his monthly reports have always been given at Selectmen meetings and said he has given Selectmen access to financial so they

can view it in real time. Mr. Horlick asked how he would relay information to the Board. Mr. Szlosek said part of the job is to make the Board look good and he would never give information to the press without giving it prior to the Board.

The Chair asked his opinion on Board Members talking to dept. heads. Mr. Szlosek said it only becomes troublesome when promises are made and would ask they not do that or do anything that undermines the authority of the manager. The Chair asked about getting information from them. Mr. Szlosek said he has no problem with that.

Ms. Panetta asked in his work career what the most contentious issue was and steps he took to resolve it. Mr. Szlosek said the new school in Uxbridge he was not in the middle of it but an ongoing political issue and said he stayed neutral and said there were also issues with employees he addressed.

The Chair said over the last several years there has been a decline in revenue and said his resume noted he maintained services and asked he give example. Mr. Szlosek said in Uxbridge he had the ability to reorganize departments and cross train employees.

The Board thanked him.

Mr. Castinetti moved recess. Chair seconds. Vote: 5-0.

Meeting recessed at 10:31 AM.

The Chair called the meeting back to order at 10:45 AM.

10:30 AM Scott Crabtree

The Chair read applicant's background. Mr. Crabtree read a prepared statement and thanked the Board.

Mr. Castinetti asked his leadership style, philosophy and results. Mr. Crabtree said he has been a leader starting with union rep with Saugus Police and has negotiated and has dealt with crisis situations and has worked as an accountant and prior to that clerked for a judge and managed attorneys and staff and said he sat on the Board and was elected Chairman and worked with different personalities and competing interests and said he is a practicing attorney and deals with client issues and knows how to evaluate, strategize and deal with issues. Mr. Castinetti asked about his leadership style and philosophy. Mr. Crabtree said he has interpersonal skills and is collaborative and hands-on and said he respects input.

Ms. Mitchell asked what his thoughts were on a capital improvement plan and if it would include schools. Mr. Crabtree said in the past he advocated for a CIP for equipment and buildings and now by charter we are required to have one and said his motto is "make a plan, work a plan".

Mr. Horlick asked how he would work with our State Delegates. Mr. Crabtree said he has been in communication with our State Delegates and it is respectful and said we need to look at ways to capitalize on new funding and need clear direction on what Saugus wants be it grants, etc. and would help clarify and send a clear message and said he would invest in a grant writer and feels it would pay.

Ms. Panetta asked about his background in budgeting. Mr. Crabtree said he received his degree at BU and as a police officer he followed the budget process for 10 years and then he clerked for a judge and then he did general accounting and is now a practicing attorney and said his experience on the Board of Selectmen he has been through 2 ½ budget processes and try to set direction and prioritize and he discovered the budget wasn't accurate and his goal is to have more accuracy and more detail and said it's important to have variance reports.

The Chair asked what he thought about having a grant writer. Mr. Crabtree said it's worth it.

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Mr. Castinetti asked his greatest strength and what he focuses on improving. Mr. Crabtree said his weakness is his enthusiasm and sometimes over explains things and his strengths are his interpersonal skills and his legal knowledge.

Ms. Mitchell asked what positives he would bring if chosen. Mr. Crabtree said the Town Manager's office needs to be respectful and collaborative and promote Saugus in a positive way.

Mr. Horlick asked his thoughts on maintaining public safety. Mr. Crabtree said being a former police officer public safety is an important element in the community so he would do a cost analysis on it. Mr. Horlick said in the past the police ran programs and asked what he would do to bring them back. Mr. Crabtree said the only big issue is overtime being spent vs. hiring and can develop a long term plan to bring programs back and said a lot has to do with manpower.

Ms. Panetta asked in his work career what was the most difficult or controversial issue and what steps did he take to resolve it. Mr. Crabtree change in careers was not an easy decision and said dealing with ethical issues with clients.

Mr. Castinetti moved recess. Chair seconds. Vote: 5-0.

Meeting recessed at 11:25 AM.

The Chair called the meeting back to order at 11:30 AM.

The Chair said with investigations ongoing asked how he would restore public trust. Mr. Crabtree said to move forward legally and have more transparency and to look at a new accounting system and put new systems in place.

Mr. Castinetti said they have already exceeded the time allotted so he will forgo his question.

Ms. Mitchell said he answered most of her questions and asked if there's anything he wants to share with the Board. Mr. Crabtree said he wants to set a clear direction for the Town and work collaboratively.

Mr. Horlick said the Town is not a friendly place to work and asked how he would set employees at ease. Mr. Crabtree said he has a background in labor negotiations and is an attorney and has a background working with employers and employees and unions and said he has an open door policy and doesn't take things personal. The Chair said the situation with police & fire having binding arbitration and other unions, don't there's some animosity. Mr. Crabtree said they need to look at and treat all the same.

Ms. Panetta asked his experience managing employees and asked what qualifications he looks for when hiring employees. Mr. Crabtree said he hasn't managed a vast amount of people but supervised court staff and his office staff and when hiring he looks for pride and passion and would look for those to train and promote.

The Chair asked his thoughts on Board Members requesting information from departments. Mr. Crabtree said he has no problem and feels the Selectmen should have access to information but feels they should be on the same page.

The Chair said this is the end of the questioning and thanked the public for attending and asked Board Members on how they want to proceed. Mr. Castinetti said they received a lot of information and it would behoove them to take time to digest it all. Mr. Horlick said they can continue the meeting. Board discussed dates and times.

Mr. Horlick moved to continue the meeting to Friday, March 30 at 3pm. Chair seconds. Vote: 5-0.

Ms. Panetta moved to recess the meeting to Friday at 3pm. Chair seconds. Vote: 5-0.

Meeting recessed at 11:50am.