

July 28, 2014

**BOARD OF SELECTMEN  
MINUTES  
JULY 28, 2014**

Present: Mary Blanchard, Chairman  
Priscilla Gimas  
Mary Dowling  
Mary Redetzke  
Craig Moran  
Shaun Suhoski, Town Administrator

The Chairman called the meeting to order at 6:30 p.m. following the Pledge of Allegiance.

**Interim Town Administrator Interviews**

James Purcell introduced himself to the Board. He said that currently he is a resident of Mendon, and was born and raised in Worcester. He has 39 years of experience as a public official in Massachusetts, including 30 years in a Chief Administrative Officer capacity. Since his 2011 appointment as an Associate of the Collins Center for Public Management at UMASS, Boston, he served as the Interim Chief Administrative Officer of the towns of North Andover, Sherborn, Ashland and Carver, Massachusetts. He noted that he is well organized, communicative, and a successful team builder.

J. Purcell said that he was the Town Manager of the Town of Norton, Massachusetts from 2003-2011; Town Administrator of the Town of Leicester from 1995-2003; and County Manager of the County of Worcester from 1986-1995.

C. Moran asked whether he would be able to keep the work schedule of 8:00 a.m. to 4:00 p.m. J. Purcell said that he would be available to work whatever hours are needed.

P. Gimas asked J. Purcell what he had done in any community for economic development. J. Purcell said that had had worked on a number of TIFs, getting the regulatory apparatus functioning in concert. He said that he is knowledgeable about infrastructure issues.

P. Gimas asked how he would handle a situation where he knows something is good for the community, but there is dissention from some of the departments. J. Purcell said that it would be important for him to attend key meetings, and when a trusting relationship has been established with department heads, he does not have to twist arms.

M. Redetzke asked about his management style. J. Purcell said that he gets involved, but does not micromanage. He promotes his subordinates and rules with a velvet glove.

M. Redetzke asked what the biggest obstacles would be for J. Purcell, as an Interim Town Administrator, in keeping things on track. J. Purcell said that there are few things that cannot be controlled, if a decision has to be made.

M. Redetzke asked what would be J. Purcell's method of prioritizing his work load to achieve goals. J. Purcell said that if he were to be named the Interim, he would maintain the status quo, and consult the Board about short term priorities. He would do the same with the departments. He has a template which he would give to each department regarding personnel issues; similarly, with projects, labor issues and litigation. He would make a work program out of what he would glean from meetings and departmental input.

M. Redetzke asked about the last time J. Purcell had to fire someone or coax someone out. J. Purcell said that he had let two people go, and put someone on probationary status. He said that by the time the employee had reached a fireable offense, he had resigned. He noted that he does not let things fester; he has conversations with employees. M. Redetzke asked what he would do in a situation where there had been past reprimands. J. Purcell said that he would look at that person's history.

M. Redetzke asked J. Purcell to talk about a management mistake that he has made in the past. J. Purcell said that the town he worked for was in a purchasing group for heating oil, including the city of Worcester. Leicester and other communities were in individual contracts. When there was a spike in oil prices, those who were not under a fixed price contract were informed by the oil company that they had to pay more, and there was no defensive strategy. After that, he paid more attention to timelines.

M. Dowling asked J. Purcell what role he thought an Interim Town Administrator should play in a municipality, and how it would differ from a permanent Town Administrator. J. Purcell said that an Interim has a unique role to play. His mission is to assist department heads to be successful, to serve as signatory authority, lend advice, and assist the Board to set compass points.

M. Dowling asked J. Purcell to state in what ways Sturbridge is similar and different from the towns he has served. J. Purcell said that similarities would include the financial policies, the bond ratings and pride in fiscal conservatism. What is different is the tourism aspect, the appearance and history of the Town of Sturbridge.

M. Dowling asked whether there was one thing in particular, one highlight of J. Purcell's career that he would like to share with the Board. J. Purcell said that when he had left the Town of Norton, the newspaper editorial about him and other testimonials were very moving. He said that there is not a singular accomplishment that he could name; it is a process.

M. Dowling asked J. Purcell whether he was in a position to stay beyond the required three months; possibly six months. J. Purcell said that he could.

M. Blanchard asked what he could see for major projects or issues moving forward that he could be dealing with. J. Purcell said that after reading the Town Administrator reports, minutes and other documents, it is clear that the issues will include the Sturbridge Tourist Association, energy supply contract, collective bargaining, capital improvement program, Champeaux Road Bridge replacement, and grant for the Wastewater Treatment Plant. He stressed the importance of obtaining state money, such as Chapter 90 funds and CDBG funds.

M. Blanchard asked what would be the key skills for an Interim. J. Purcell said experience, strength and integrity.

M. Blanchard asked if there were any particular aspects that appeal to J. Purcell in the Interim position. J. Purcell said that he has had three assignments that were between 24-28 hours/week, giving him free time to pursue other interests.

C. Moran asked J. Purcell if he had spoken with any of the Town staff. J. Purcell said that he had met Barbara Barry and Chief Ford, and they had sent reports to him.

J. Purcell asked the Board about their expectations. M. Blanchard said that the Board has not yet determined that.

J. Purcell informed the Board that he is available from August 12<sup>th</sup> on.

Richard Brown introduced himself to the Board. He said that his entire 38 year career has been in public service. He wants to work in government to make a difference. He started working at the county level in Jefferson County, Alabama; from there he went on to serve as City Manager in Petersburg, Virginia; City Manager in New London, Connecticut; City Manager in East Providence, Rhode Island; FEMA Disaster Assistance Employee; and Town Administrator in Freetown, Massachusetts.

M. Dowling asked R. Brown what role he thought an Interim Town Administrator should play, and what ways would it differ from a permanent Town Administrator. R. Brown said that he would play whatever role the Board of Selectmen wants him to play. He saw the role of Interim as that of a caretaker. He said that he would probably spend more time talking to the Board, as he is coming from outside of the community.

M. Dowling asked in what ways is Sturbridge similar or different from towns R. Brown has previously served. R. Brown said that Sturbridge is without urban problems such as street crime or division in the community. He said that he has been in communities that have been involved in tourism, such as Petersburg, VA, which is a Civil War historical site, and New London, CT, which has a waterfront park, and the tall ships, which brought in 800,000 to 1,000,000 people. He understands the need to serve the core

population, and how to make the community enticing to keep the community going economically.

M. Dowling asked R. Brown to relate one highlight he is proud of. R. Brown said that he couldn't think of any one particular thing that stands out, but noted that he left every community better off than when he started. When he goes back to the communities where he worked, people come up to him and are genuinely appreciative for the work he has done in those communities. When he was in Virginia, the tax rate was kept stable and service levels were maintained.

M. Dowling asked whether R. Brown would be in a position to stay for six months, if need be. R. Brown said that he could stay for six months.

M. Redetzke asked about R. Brown's management style. R. Brown said that his style has evolved over time, and he is most comfortable with encouraging staff to do the best job they can, and define the mission so that they can succeed. He said that his role is to help them to accomplish their goals.

M. Redetzke asked what would be the biggest obstacles to achieving his goals as an Interim Town Administrator. R. Brown said that the obstacle is how we define success and what those goals are. His view of success is not whether he can get it done in six months, but to help the incoming permanent Town Administrator to succeed. There would need to be communication regarding parameters and timeframes.

M. Redetzke asked about R. Brown's method of prioritizing to achieve goals. R. Brown said that he makes lists, and from there it is a matter of allocating resources to get the work accomplished. His work methodology is to accomplish the work and not let it linger.

M. Redetzke asked about the last time that R. Brown fired someone or coaxed someone out, and why. R. Brown said that he helped someone leave but it was not a disciplinary action; the department had been divided. He negotiated an early retirement, so the employee could leave with dignity.

M. Redetzke asked about catching problems in the departments. R. Brown said that it is necessary to talk to department heads and employees and find out what is going on, and recognize that information coming in may not be completely filtered.

M. Redetzke asked about R. Brown's stance on an employee with past reprimands. R. Brown said that it depends. If an employee has been disciplined for egregious acts, he would want to see what is in the file. He said that the information must be current and relevant. He would look at the totality of it. His goal when disciplining someone is to improve that person's performance.

M. Redetzke asked R. Brown to talk about a management mistake he had made in the past and what he would do differently. R. Brown said that that there was a disciplinary

action with a department head who was insubordinate. He had lost in an appeal to arbitration. The mistake was that they were missing a Personnel Director, and deadlines had been missed. Legal staff and department heads had been involved. If they had a Director handling the process, they would have prevailed.

P. Gimás asked R. Brown what he had done to help economic development. R. Brown said that in Petersburg, VA he was involved in the Main Street Program. He worked with Brown Leaf Tobacco and converted their building into office space, taking their old tobacco warehouses and turning them into places for start-up businesses. A parking area was created on the waterfront. In Rhode Island, an old waterfront area was turned into a mixed use development, including a non-profit nursing home.

P. Gimás asked R. Brown how he would handle a project where the people involved (Zoning, Conservation and Planning) didn't see eye to eye. R. Brown said that he would talk to them. If the community is interested in the project, and it is good for the community, it would be a matter of holding meetings with the people involved, find out what their concerns were and get them into line. He would get groups together beforehand, especially with a major project, and talk about the issues.

C. Moran asked R. Brown if he would have any problems with working 8:00 a.m. to 4:00 p.m., and attending evening meetings. R. Brown said he would have no problem with that, and would get a hotel room if necessary to get the work accomplished.

C. Moran asked R. Brown how he would handle situations with hiring and firing. R. Brown said that there should be a process where there is dialogue with the employee, and the employee understands what is expected of him. If an employee is insubordinate, he would reinforce the chain of command.

C. Moran asked how R. Brown would handle contract negotiations. R. Brown said that he has worked with some governing bodies that never wanted him to handle negotiations. He asked the Board what they would like in the way of management rights that need to be in the agreement.

M. Blanchard asked what R. Brown would consider a priority as far as projects in Town. R. Brown said that when he read the finance report, there was a concern about contracts, salary items and people who work for them. He said that he would like to find out more about that, as well as the tourism tax, whether it would be for road improvements, sidewalks, etc. When he looked at the numbers, he had a concern about education, and the money being expended, as it seems to be a generous amount of funding.

M. Blanchard asked what would be the key skills for an Interim Town Administrator. R. Brown said that the ability to be a calming influence, to listen and make decisions, and to serve as a bridge between who left and the person who will take the job full time.

M. Blanchard noted that the Charter states that the Town Administrator would negotiate contracts.

M. Blanchard asked R. Brown what aspects of the Interim position appeals to him. R. Brown said that he has never done an Interim position. A friend of his who worked in Rhode Island had suggested he try it.

C. Moran asked R. Brown if he had met with any Sturbridge department heads. R. Brown said he had not, as he did not think it was appropriate.

Barry Brenner introduced himself to the Board. He had retired from the position of Town Administrator of Northborough, Massachusetts, and had served as Town Manager of Seabrook, New Hampshire, Lebanon, New Hampshire, Salem, New Hampshire, Assistant City Manager of Concord, New Hampshire, and Windsor, Connecticut. More recently, he has been serving as a Municipal Consultant.

P. Gimás asked what B. Brenner had done in terms of economic development in the communities he served. B. Brenner said that in Northborough he had done quite a bit of work on economic development, as it had been a priority of the Board of Selectmen. They had an intermunicipal agreement with the City of Marlborough, and it was a challenge to do the economic development. He had been involved in the development of the loop project with 1,000,000 square feet of retail stores and apartments with approximately 1,000 housing units on the site. It was a significant development in the community.

P. Gimás asked B. Brenner how he would handle a project where the people involved (Zoning, Conservation and Planning) didn't see eye to eye. B. Brenner said that the Board of Selectmen would set the policy and direction for the community. If it is a question of a disagreement involving department heads, it would be within the purview of the Town Administrator to carry out the policy.

M. Redetzke asked about B. Brenner's management style. B. Brenner said that he has a participatory style.

M. Redetzke asked what would be the biggest obstacle to achieving goals as an Interim Town Administrator. B. Brenner said that it would be working within the timeframe to bring projects to the next step and setting the groundwork for what needs to be done.

M. Redetzke asked B. Brenner about his method of prioritizing. B. Brenner said that he would carry out the priorities of the Board of Selectmen.

M. Redetzke asked B. Brenner about the last time he had to fire someone and why. B. Brenner said that he had an employee who had tested positive for narcotics. This

employee had been reinstated by an independent arbitrator; he came back to work, then tested positive again. He took early retirement in lieu of termination.

M. Redetzke asked how B. Brenner would catch problems in departments early on. B. Brenner said that he likes to work with the departments and get their input, and get their recommendations, then bring the recommendations to the Board of Selectmen; then he would follow up to make sure things are being done to meet goals and objectives. He noted that the most important resource is the staff.

M. Redetzke asked B. Brenner what his stance would be regarding employees with past reprimands. B. Brenner said that he would approach everyone with a clean slate. If there is unsatisfactory performance or conduct, he would look back into the records to see if there are issues.

M. Redetzke asked B. Brenner to talk about a past mistake he had made and what he would do differently. B. Brenner said that he had worked in a community where there was a merit system, and everyone had received the same increase. There were some employees who felt that their supervisor was not being objective and had showed favoritism. He said that perhaps he should have taken more time to examine those issues.

C. Moran asked B. Brenner whether he would have any problem with the 8:00 a.m. to 4:00 p.m. schedule. B. Brenner said that he would stay in Sturbridge during the week, then return to New Hampshire on the weekend.

C. Moran asked B. Brenner how he would handle the situation where people in the rank and file are going to the Town Administrator with their problems, rather than trying to solve problems within their own departments. B. Brenner said that it is important to follow the chain of command. If there is a disagreement between a department head and an employee, assistance may be needed. He would sit down with the parties involved and explain how things should be handled.

C. Moran asked B. Brenner if he gets involved in contract negotiations. B. Brenner said that the city council sets the policy regarding negotiations. He would sit down with the Board of Selectmen to set goals before going into negotiations.

C. Moran asked whether B. Brenner would have a problem attending meetings of the Board of Selectmen. B. Brenner said that he would have no problem with that.

M. Dowling asked what role an Interim Town Administrator should play, and how it would differ from the role of Town Administrator. B. Brenner said that it would not differ. He said that he would make sure that everything got done in the best way possible, and would provide continuity.

M. Dowling asked in what ways is Sturbridge similar and what ways is it different from other towns B. Brenner has worked in. B. Brenner said that similarities would include a Town Meeting form of government and statutory framework.

M. Dowling asked B. Brenner if he would be able to stay for six months if needed. B. Brenner said that he could.

M. Dowling asked B. Brenner if he had discussed Sturbridge's issues with any department heads or employees. B. Brenner said that he had not. In preparation for his interview, he had done research on the Town's website, looked at the Town Charter and watched some of the Board of Selectmen meetings.

M. Dowling asked B. Brenner to share one highlight in his career with the Board. B. Brenner said that he has seen people in municipal government grow and come up through the ranks, which has given him satisfaction.

M. Blanchard asked whether B. Brenner would be restricted on the amount of money he could make as an Interim. B. Brenner said that there is a limit on money, and it would depend upon duration.

M. Blanchard asked about the way that B. Brenner would prioritize projects and issues. B. Brenner said that he would sit down with the boards and departments, and ask the Board to define his goals and priorities.

M. Blanchard asked B. Brenner what he considered to be the top skills for an Interim Town Administrator. B. Brenner said that an Interim Town Administrator should have a strong budgetary financial background and experience with union negotiations, and be familiar with areas basic to operations.

M. Blanchard asked what appealed to B. Brenner about the Interim position. B. Brenner said that he would enjoy helping the community to get through that temporary period, and leaving the community in a better place than when he came in.

C. Moran asked B. Brenner if he was the subject of any actions against any towns he had worked for. B. Brenner said that he was not. He noted that in Seabrook he had been put on paid administrative leave, and it was very protracted. There was no cause to terminate him. He had retired voluntarily from Northborough.

It was the consensus of the Board to vote on whether or not to interview each of the remaining candidates.

### **John Wesolowski**

**Vote: M. Blanchard: No**

**P. Gimmas: No**

**C. Moran: No**



M. Redetzke: No  
M. Dowling: No

**Harry Staven**

Vote: P. Gimas: No  
M. Redetzke: No  
M. Blanchard: No  
C. Moran: No  
M. Dowling: No

**Thaddeus Jankowski, Jr.**

Vote: M. Redetzke: No  
M. Blanchard: No  
P. Gimas: No  
C. Moran: No  
M. Dowling: Maybe

**Suzanne Kennedy**

Vote: M. Dowling: Yes  
M. Redetzke: Yes  
P. Gimas: Yes  
C. Moran: Yes  
M. Blanchard: Yes

**John Sanguinet**

Vote: M. Redetzke: No  
M. Dowling: No  
P. Gimas: No  
C. Moran: Yes  
M. Blanchard: No

**Roy Melnick**

Vote: M. Blanchard: No  
M. Redetzke: No  
P. Gimas: No  
M. Dowling: No  
C. Moran: No

**Timothy McDonald**

Vote: M. Dowling: Abstained, as she had not reviewed it.

**M. Blanchard: No**  
**P. Gimas: No**  
**M. Redetzke: No**  
**C. Moran: No**

**Michael Gallerani**

**Vote: P. Gimas: No**  
**C. Moran: No**  
**M. Blanchard: No**  
**M. Redetzke: No**  
**M. Dowling: Abstained**

It was the consensus of the Board to schedule an interview with Suzanne Kennedy at 6:40 p.m. on August 4, 2014.

M. Dowling noted that the previous Interim Town Administrator, Michael Racicot, had applied again and was voted on with a split vote. She asked the Board for their reasons for not recommending him for an interview. M. Blanchard said that she had had a good working relationship with Michael Racicot, as did other department heads; however, one person did not, and would have difficulty if he was brought back as the Interim. M. Redetzke said that she had had difficulty in talking with Michael Racicot about financial issues, and felt that he had not been forthcoming.

**Town Administrator Search Committee**

M. Blanchard noted that most of the people who had applied to serve on the committee are known to the Selectmen. She asked the Selectmen if they would like to interview these people, or go straight to nominating them. M. Dowling preferred interviewing first; however, it was the consensus of the rest of the Board to go straight to nominating. The Board will appoint the Town Administrator Search Committee on August 4, 2014.

**MOTION: To nominate Mary Blanchard as the Selectman designee to the Town Administrator Search Committee, by P. Gimas.**  
**2<sup>nd</sup>: C. Moran**  
**Vote: All in favor.**

**Disclosure by Special Municipal Employee – Craig Moran**

S. Suhoski informed the Board that he had received a disclosure filed by Selectman Craig Moran relative to a financial interest associated with his firm's towing operations for the Town. M. Blanchard read it into the record.

**MOTION: To adjourn, by P. Gimas.**  
**2<sup>nd</sup>: M. Redetzke**  
**Vote: All in favor.**

July 28, 2014

The meeting was adjourned at 9:30 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Judy Knowles

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BOS Clerk

Date