

Westborough Board of Selectmen

Town Manager Second Interview Minutes

March 31, 2009

6:30 p.m. – 8:08 p.m.

Members Present: Chairman Thompson, Vice Chairman Emery, Selectmen Goldblatt, Dodd and Jane´

Also, Present: Henry Danis, Town Manager; Maryanne Bilodeau, Assistant Town Manager; Town Counsel Gregory B. Franks

Pledge of Allegiance

Chairman Thompson reiterated the Town Manager Interview format that was discussed and voted at their meeting of March 10, 2009

Introductory:

Suzanne Kennedy, Town Administrator, Town of Medway

Ms. Kennedy thanked the Board for the second opportunity to be here and said that she has admired the Town Manager Search Process. She said that the interview process is probably the most challenging one she has ever participated in. Ms. Kennedy reiterated her qualifications and skills throughout her municipal career.

Board of Selectmen Questions:

The Board of Selectmen welcomed Ms. Kennedy and each of the Selectmen asked Ms. Kennedy the following questions:

Vice Chairman Emery asked Ms. Kennedy the following questions:

What areas would she start looking as the new Town Manager?

Ms. Kennedy said that she would concentrate in working with the Department Heads and the Board of Selectmen to make sure that the Town doesn't suffer a financial debacle, giving these uncertain economic times.

What are her career goals and how would a position in Westborough contribute to meeting those goals?

Ms. Kennedy said that she is anxious to work in an environment that is financially stable (as stable as it can be in this financial crisis) and to work on creating and or building projects as opposed to extricating people from problems.

Please elaborate a bit further about the M.O.R.E. Grant?

Ms. Kennedy said that she helped coordinate the M.O.R.E. grant and contribute all her achievements throughout her career to her staff and the Board of Selectmen. She said that she met with all relevant parties and discussed the options of filing the grant. Ms. Kennedy said that it was a wonderful effort from all to have received the grant.

Does she think there might be some Federal or State Grants that Westborough has not taking advantage of or have had the opportunity to apply for?

Ms. Kennedy said that her limited experience in locating some of these Federal or State grants has been to look at the web site www.Government.com. She said that for now she has not seen any grants made available because of the current economy.

Selectman Dodd asked Ms. Kennedy the following questions:

What kind of specifics has she taken in her prior positions in reducing health insurance and energy costs?

Ms. Kennedy said she worked with the Town of Medway's health care coordinator to reduce the health insurance and the medical supplement plan through the State's procurement process. She said that the Town has partnership with the Schools to obtain some cost energy savings through their energy saving programs.

What are some of the tactics that she has used with the School Department to avoid the "you verses us mentality" and to make sure that everyone is on the same page?

Ms. Kennedy said that she met with the School Superintendent and discussed their respect for each other's responsibilities, needs and ideas. She said that she believes that she has a very good relationship and intends to do the same with the new School Superintendent of Medway. She noted that she would like to continue that practice with the Town of Westborough's School Superintendent and feels that by having a good relationship helps everyone.

What are some of her experiences in protecting open space?

Ms. Kennedy said that she has had several experiences regarding the protection of open space and is very involved with the Town of Medway's Community Preservation Committee.

Selectman Jane' asked Ms. Kennedy the following questions:

How will her approach differ when she comes to the Town of Westborough (Westborough is financial stable community) verses what she have been used to in the Town of Medway (financial debacle)?

Ms. Kennedy said that her approach would not differ much from what she is used to. She said that if the Town of Medway was financially stable she would not have proceeded in doing what she did.

How does she work with her "team" on a day to day basis?

Ms. Kennedy said that working with her team varies and it depends on the situation and when and what needs direction. She said that the individuals she hires are very well knowledgeable in their area so they are free to conduct their jobs on a daily basis without coming to her constantly.

Stability has been important in the Town of Westborough, if you were selected as Town Manager how long would she consider staying in that role?

Ms. Kennedy said that since Westborough is not in a financial crisis mode she will have time to nurture and become more stable with the Department Heads and believes that having an open door policy is very important for everyone to become familiarized and confident in each other.

Selectman Goldblatt asked Ms. Kennedy the following questions:

Dove tailing on Selectman Jane's question, if you were hired as Town Manager how long would she consider staying in that role?

Ms. Kennedy said that she would like to be here for a long time.

If she got the job of Town Manager how would you spend your first couple of months?

Ms. Kennedy said that she would like to tour the facilities, meet the Department Heads to understand the day to day functions of how each department works and to meet and greet the Town Employees.

What is her relationship with the current School Superintendent?

Ms. Kennedy said she believes that she has a very good relationship with the current School Superintendent as she was with the former School Superintendent.

What would be her process with the Department Heads for Fiscal Year 2011 if the financial turmoil is worst then it is for this Fiscal Year 2010.

Ms. Kennedy said that she and the Finance Director Designee and the Town Accountant of the Town of Medway are working on creating a reserve fund for the Schools and Town to use if needed in the future and would like to work on that for Westborough. She also said that she would try to tweak the existing budgets.

Chairman Thompson asked Ms. Kennedy the following questions:

When she took the job in Medway, Nantucket and Maine did she walk in with a specific 30, 60 or 100 day plan with things to do?

Ms. Kennedy said that she did not.

What were the reasons that attracted her to Medway Massachusetts?

Ms. Kennedy said there were various personal and professional reasons.

When she took the job in Medway what questions did she ask regarding their finances?

Ms. Kennedy said that she asked to see the Town's financial records and was aware that the town had financial issues; however, she thought that it was more of a staff issue than anything else. Ms. Kennedy said that she was made aware of how severe the finances were when she received a couple of letters from the Department of Revenue stating the requirements to be done prior to the Town's tax rate being approved.

Would she give the Board two examples of her achievements in working with unions or entities toward a cooperative initiative?

Ms. Kennedy said that she worked in bringing the M.O.R. E. Grant and also worked with individuals from various departments and entities to bring economic development into Medway's industrial park.

Follow-Up Questions:

Selectman Jane' asked Ms. Kennedy the following Follow-up Questions:

If she were given an offer of a one or a three year contract as Town Manager how long would you stay?

Ms. Kennedy said that she would like to stay for as long as the Board will have her.

How much experience has she had dealing with unions?

Ms. Kennedy said that she has not had much experience in dealing with unions.

Vice Chairman Emery asked Ms. Kennedy the following Follow-up Questions:

Does she belong to any professional organizations?

Ms. Kennedy said that she is a member of the Massachusetts Municipal Managers Association (MMMA).

How does being a member of the MMMA benefit the Town?

Ms. Kennedy said that she acquires a wealth of information from this organization which has helped her in her professional career and strongly believes that it benefits both the Town Manager and the Town.

Selectman Dodd asked Ms. Kennedy the following Follow-up Questions:

How would she keep the Board and the public informed of the Town's budget that is presented by the Town Manager?

Ms. Kennedy said that she would be very open and have the Department Heads and the Board involved with the draft budget.

**The Board recessed at 7:30 p.m. and reconvened at 7:40 p.m.*

Public Questions:

Brigitte Casemyr, Finance Committee Member, asked Ms. Kennedy if she has had any experience or thoughts about looking into performance base pay raises for non-union and union employees.

Ms. Kennedy said that she has not done that in Medway but will not be opposed to researching the idea.

Len Mead, 130 Milk Street, asked Ms. Kennedy if she would have a guess as to how much higher taxes are in the state average verses in Westborough.

Ms. Kennedy said that she does not know.

Mr. Mead noted that Westborough's taxes are approaching 70% higher than the state's average and asked Ms. Kennedy if she knew why that was the case.

Ms. Kennedy said that she honestly did not know why that was the case in Westborough.

Mr. Mead asked Ms. Kennedy if she would take a pledge, as the Town Manager, not to put a Proposition 2½ Override before the residents of Westborough, if she were hired as Town Manager?

Ms. Kennedy said that she does not have authority to place that before the residents and that only the Board of Selectmen has the authority.

Joe Harrington, Town Moderator, asked Ms. Kennedy what is the nature and the sort of communication, if any, between her and Medway's Town Moderator prior to the warrant finalization and at the start of the Town Meeting.

Ms. Kennedy said that she drafts the warrant and then goes to Town Counsel. Then it gets forward to the Town Moderator. She said that the Town Moderator have always had a very good relationship and always welcomes the moderator's recommendations.

Email Questions:

Selectman Dodd asked Ms. Kennedy would there be any specific circumstances that she would recommend a budget that would not exceed a Proposition 2½ Override?

Ms. Kennedy said that she would not recommend an override in the Town of Medway.

Selectman Goldblatt asked Ms. Kennedy if she was hired as Town Manager would she move to Westborough.

Ms. Kennedy said that if the Board wanted her to move she would.

Chairman Thompson asked Ms. Kennedy what kind of process she uses to attract and select the best volunteer candidates to Town's committees.

Ms. Kennedy said that once a member resigns the vacancy gets advertised then the individual gets interviewed. After the interview a decision is made.

Vice Chairman Emery asked Ms. Kennedy how she would achieve publicly expressing the Town's openness and transparencies in regards to business and government.

Ms. Kennedy said that she would like, when she has the time, to coordinate a public Fiscal Summit with all of the Department Heads and School Superintendent to publicly discuss the Town's budget.

Selectman Jane' asked Ms. Kennedy what are the largest public construction projects she has overseen.

Ms. Kennedy said the largest project she has overseen has been in the amount of \$10 million and was not able to oversee in its entirety. She said that recently she has overseen Medway's transfer station in the amount of \$4 million.

Selectman Dodd asked Ms. Kennedy what kind plans she has to entice grown/business into the Town of Westborough.

Ms. Kennedy said that she would like to continue supporting the Economic Development Committee and also research other areas where the Town may advocate for new growth.

Follow-Up Questions:

Selectman Dodd asked Ms. Kennedy what drew her to Westborough.

Ms. Kennedy said that the recruiting communication was one reason why she was drawn to Westborough.

Chairman Thompson asked Ms. Kennedy, during her evaluations throughout her career, was there one thing said that surprised her.

Ms. Kennedy said that she did have one statement, from a former Selectman, and still does not understand his statement which was “delegates negotiations to others”. She believes that his statement was in reference to her informing the Board of Selectmen of the negotiations and requesting their opinions. Ms. Kennedy said that she felt that the Board has to know what kind of negotiations are being discussed and thought it very important to keep them informed and request that a decision be made by all, including herself.

Closing Remarks:

Ms. Kennedy reiterated her interest and feels very confident that her skill sets are a good fit for Westborough and thanked the Board for the interview.

Adjourn Open Session

Selectman Goldblatt moved to adjourn the Board of Selectmen meeting at 8:08 p.m. Selectman Dodd seconded. 5-0

Submitted by Nidia L. Ruberti

Chairman George Thompson

Vice Chairman Leigh Emery

Selectman Lydia Goldblatt

Selectman Timothy A. Dodd

Selectman Rod Jané