

BOARD OF SELECTMEN EXECUTIVE SESSION

Friday November 16, 2018 – 3:00 PM – Richmond Town Hall, 1529 State Road

APPROVED

PRESENT: Mr. Neal Pilson, Chair; Mr. Roger Manzolini, Selectman; Mr. Alan Hanson, Selectman; Mr. Mark Pruhenski, Town Administrator

ABSENT:

GUEST:

Mr. Pilson began the proceeds by moving that the public meeting be closed and that the Board go into Executive Session. His motion was seconded and passed by unanimous roll call vote as follows: Mr. Hanson, Aye, Mr. Manzolini, Aye, Mr. Pilson, Aye.

Mr. Pilson noted that the purpose of this meeting was to discuss contract negotiations with Mr. Mark Pruhenski, whose contract extends until June 30, 2019. At this time, the Board will be discussing the performance evaluations for Mr. Pruhenski that each Board member completed individually, and a subsequent conversation will be held concerning Mr. Pruhenski's salary for the contract year beginning July 1, 2019.

Each of the Board members has completed an evaluation form and Mr. Pilson was tasked with consolidating them into a single evaluation, which he reported was a remarkably easy job to accomplish. The Board members were in unanimous accord that Mr. Pruhenski's grade for each item on the evaluation form was a 5.

Mr. Manzolini said that it was very easy to provide positive comments for each of the items, along with the top numerical grade. Mr. Pilson said he was enormously pleased by the work Mr. Pruhenski has been doing, the leadership that he has demonstrated and, overall, he would give Mr. Pruhenski the highest grade in terms of his work this year.

Mr. Manzolini noted that those feelings were shared by all the Board members and that he was especially pleased with the fact that the Town now has an Operational Calendar, which Mr. Pruhenski has generated and maintained, and that Mr. Pruhenski has followed the request of the Board to put in place a process to evaluate the town's employees. He noted that, despite his repeated requests to previous Town Administrators every year in the past to create such a system, Mr. Pruhenski is the first one to make it happen and he has Mr. Manzolini's sincere gratitude. He also noted his pleasure with the initiative Mr. Pruhenski has taken with providing closure on the Green Energy designation for the Town and following through, particularly with bringing solar energy into the Town. In general he praised Mr. Pruhenski's ability to get things done and especially his having created an efficient, collegial working environment for the Town's staff, which has been recognized not only by the Board, but by the Town's residents, and by visitors as well. He acknowledged that Mr. Pruhenski was making the job of the Board of Selectman's job easy.

Mr. Hanson said that Mr. Manzolini's comments would be a hard act to follow and that there are no more bases left to touch. He did add, however, that he has noted the difference in the level of administrative professionalism since Mr. Pruhenski's arrival in the position. In Mr. Hanson's 20 plus years on the Board of Selectmen, Mr. Pruhenski is the best Town Administrator he has ever worked with.

Mr. Pilson said that, since he came on the Board only since Mr. Pruhenski was Town Administrator, he had higher expectations for the level of professionalism and expertise to be expected from the position, based on his experience working in major corporations. He had measured Mr. Pruhenski's performance against that and found that he had exceeded expectations in every area.

At this point, Mr. Pilson turned the conversation to reviewing the individual comments as to the Town Administrator's strengths: Timely responses to requests made by both the Selectmen and the towns people; knowledge of the job requirements is extraordinary and, where he does not know the answer, he acknowledges that fact and then proceeds to find the answer.

Mr. Pilson noted that Mr. Pruhenski regularly holds staff meetings and completed staff evaluations in a timely manner. Mr. Pilson reviewed those evaluations and found them to be compete and well thought-out.

In response to the question what area of performance would be most critical for improvement Mr. Pilson noted the following:

Sometimes the Selectmen need to ask for Mr. Pruhenski's opinion. The Board members would like Mr. Pruhenski to volunteer not only his opinion, but whatever guidance he may be able to offer in terms of decision-making. The idea was that the Board would rather Mr. Pruhenski felt he was working with the Board in their decision-making process, rather than working for them and awaiting the outcome of discussions.

The Board would like Mr. Pruhenski to identify and anticipate issues that may have to be dealt with at Select board meetings. They would like Mr. Pruhenski to anticipate issues that may come up in meetings that the Board may not be aware of in advance. Mr. Hanson noted that in the case of "hot button" issues in the Town, people involved will call their friends and ask them to attend an upcoming meeting to raise the issue at that time. That's hard to anticipate and Mr. Hanson would expect that Mr. Pruhenski and the Board both will inevitably be caught off guard from time to time.

Under constructive suggestions for the Town Administrator: it was suggested that he consider that members of the Select board could get involved in some aspects of the Town Administrator's work if he needs help.

Dealing with resident complaints and complaints from other staff members, Mr. Pilson said that Mr. Pruhenski has the complete confidence of the Board.

Other Comments: The Board is extraordinarily pleased with Mr. Pruhenski's performance and continuing outstanding leadership of Town Departments and staff. Mr. Manzolini added that these positive evaluations are not only those of the Board but that they are the towns peoples' as well. Mr. Pilson suggested that the very positive letter from Mr. Holly Stover, commending Mr. Pruhenski's performance as Town Administrator should be put into his personnel file.

Mr. Pruhenski noted that he very much appreciated the positive feedback from the Board and that he enjoyed meeting with them to find out what their expectations are.

With no further comments on the Evaluation portion of the meeting, Mr. Pilson suggested that they move to a conversation about the compensation arrangements for the FY20 contract. Mr. Pilson had asked Mr. Pruhenski to provide whatever information he could gather about the rate of compensation paid by comparably sized towns to their Town Administrators. With that information, the Board could confer on the record, but in private (Mr. Pruhenski would step outside for that discussion).

Mr. Pruhenski contacted West Stockbridge, Stockbridge, Hinsdale, Lanesborough, Sandisfield and Becket. Mr. Mark Webber, the Town Administrator for West Stockbridge makes \$63,000. Per year for a four-day workweek (he spends his fifth day in Cheshire).

Stockbridge has a \$110,000 budgeted for their Town Administrator, but their current Town Report notes \$97,000 for a 40-hour workweek.

Hinsdale has a new Town Administrator who they are paying \$64,000 for a five-day workweek.

Lanesborough is in the \$80,000 - \$85,000 range. They advertised at \$80,000 but settled at \$85,000.

Becket was at \$72,000 back in October. They have since indicated through their Interim Town Manager at the most recent monthly Managers' Meeting, that they are going to increase their salary budget to \$85,000 for the Town Manager.

Sandisfield has a new Town Administrator. They settled on \$73,000 for the last fiscal year.

Mr. Pruhenski's current salary through the end of his third contract year (ending June 30, 2019) is \$76,400.

Mr. Hanson asked why Stockbridge's Town Manager salary is so much higher than the surrounding towns. Mr. Pilson noted that Stockbridge has some issues that add to the stress level of their Administrator's job. They also have a relatively large commercial district and a very highly visible profile, an impressive Town Hall complex and a large pool of town employees, all combining to create a bigger, more complex responsibility for their Administrator that justifies a higher salary.

There was a discussion with Mr. Pruhenski as to what range of salary he was looking for and some of the factors that might impact the burden upon Richmond's Town Administrator to be considered in determining what a fair increase might be.

At this point, Mr. Pruhenski was asked to excuse himself so that the Board could discuss the issue, in Executive Session.

Mr. Hanson began the discussion by suggesting that they look at a range within the low \$80,000s and then include a mid-contract bonus of some sort. Mr. Pilson suggested a flat number averaged over three years – given that Becket is offering \$85,000.

Mr. Manzolini suggested was that the first-year salary be \$82,000 the second year \$83,500 and the third year of the contract \$85,000. Mr. Pilson thought \$85,000 should be the mid-year level (\$83,000 - \$85,000 - \$87,000). Putting Mr. Pruhenski's salary well above anyone else at Town Hall establishes the value the Board places on him. That suggestion was approved by Mr. Manzolini and Mr. Hanson.

Mr. Manzolini called Mr. Pruhenski back into the meeting to advise him of their proposal. Mr. Pruhenski responded that he was very pleased by that decision and that he would draft an addendum to the contract outlining that agreement and present it to the Board for signature at their meeting on November 28th.

There being no further business before the Board in Executive Session, Mr. Manzolini moved that the Executive Session be closed. The motion was seconded and passed by roll-call vote as follows: Mr. Manzolini, Aye, Mr. Pilson, Aye, Mr. Hanson, Aye.

The Executive Session was closed.

Mr. Manzolini then moved to adjourn the meeting, seconded by Mr. Hanson. The motion was adopted by unanimous consent.

The meeting was adjourned at 3:50 PM.

Signed:

Mr. Neal Pilson, Chair


