

APPROVED

BOARD OF SELECTMEN / HIGHWAY DEPARTMENT INTERVIEWS

Wednesday September 14, 2018 – 9:00 AM – Richmond Town Hall, 1529 State Road

PRESENT: Mr. Alan Hanson, Selectman; Mr. Roger Manzolini, Selectman

ABSENT:

GUEST: Mr. Brian Hoskeer, Candidate; Mr. Ed Flynn, Candidate; Mr. Austin Liebenow, Candidate; Mr. Alex VanSant, Candidate

Mr. Hanson began the interview process with Mr. Hoskeer by going over the ten prepared questions received from Mr. Peter Beckwith, Highway Superintendent.

1. What type of additional training do you believe you will need to be successful in this position?

Ans: Mr. Hoskeer replied that in his present position he has not had the opportunity to run the grader and he would like to learn to do that. He is certified on boom mowers, front loaders, back-hoes, excavators, and mowers of all kinds. He has HazMat endorsement but would like to be trained in fire safety.

Mr. Hanson noted that Mr. Hoskeer had pretty much all the licensing he would need.

2. Could you describe your professional driving experience?

Ans: Mr. Hoskeer has driven for AmeriGas for two years delivering propane. He has been driving a six-wheeler dump truck for the Town of Sheffield for the last year and one-half without incident. He did relate a potential accident that he was able to avert on an ice-covered loose-gravel driveway while driving a propane truck. He noted that there are no accidents or tickets on his personal driver's license.

3. Do you prefer to work independently or as part of a team and why?

Ans: Mr. Hoskeer responded that he believes himself to be able to work well in both situations. As long as all team members are on the same page, everything will go smoothly, and he has also often worked on his own and doesn't mind that at all.

Mr. Manzolini asked Mr. Hoskeer how he would respond to a situation where he has been sent out to do a specific job, but on the way spots something else needing to be taken care of. Mr. Hoskeer responded that if he sees a tree lying across the road, he's going to get that tree out of the road. If he sees dirt coming off a driveway that's impacting the road, depending on what he's driving, he will attempt to scrape that off the road. Those are two small, but potentially dangerous, situations that he would feel responsible for addressing. If the issue involved a more major repair, he would advise the Supervisor and follow whatever direction he was given at that time.

In response to a question from Mr. Manzolini, Mr. Hoskeer said he absolutely describes himself as a “people person” and was trained in defusing potentially difficult situations when he worked at the Eagleton School. Eagleton was a school for boys with mental, physical and emotional disabilities and behavioral issues. Mr. Hoskeer explained that an important element in dealing with those boys meant relating to and understanding them, which some other staff members preferred not to do but would resort to physical restraint. That was one of the reasons Eagleton has been closed. Mr. Hoskeer said that his job at Eagleton was the best job he ever had – he loved working with the boys. Mr. Manzolini noted that Mr. Hoskeer obviously has some excellent inter-personal skills. He asked Mr. Hoskeer to describe his reaction to being upbraided by a resident for some damage he may have done to their lawn in the course of his work. Mr. Hoskeer said that first he would apologize and explain that it was an accident. If the resident won’t accept the apology or listen to him, Mr. Hoskeer would refer the person to the Superintendent.

Mr. Hanson asked how Mr. Hoskeer would describe his interactions with other employees; whether he has ever had a major conflict with a co-worker and whether he was able to shake it off or does he carry a grudge. Mr. Hoskeer said he never carries a grudge, he considers himself a happy individual. He related an incident at Eagleton where he got between a staff member who was threatening to punch a student and that student. The staff member wanted to continue the fight with Mr. Hoskeer, but he just walked away with the student and forgot about it, which is what he always does.

Mr. Manzolini asked if there were certain types of jobs Mr. Hoskeer enjoyed and some that he would rather not do. He responded that he is willing to try everything. He grew up as a farmer and he is willing to learn whatever he needs to know to get the job done and, as a result, he has developed a lot of mechanical expertise and is ready to do whatever the job requires and to do it with a smile.

Mr. Hoskeer was asked if he had any additional special skills such as carpentry, welding, painting, etc. that the town might call on at some time. In response Mr. Hoskeer advised the Board that he built his own house from the ground up, he took a welding class at Taconic High School after graduation in order to have that necessary skill for the farm. The only thing he recommended not asking him to do was to install a door – he has never been able to master the secret to that.

Mr. Hanson asked why Mr. Hoskeer wanted this job and the answer was that Mr. Hoskeer lived in Richmond for eleven years until he and his father lost their position as caretakers of the farm and he has missed it since. His daughter went to the Richmond School and he feels a connection with the town. When asked whether he is aware that the starting pay for this position is likely to be less than he is currently earning in Sheffield, Mr. Hoskeer replied that having to pay union dues in Sheffield brought the

two amounts closer – Richmond is a non-union shop and health insurance and retirement benefits are good.

Mr. Hoskeer asked whether the Board members knew anything about the equipment the Highway Department uses. They responded that the equipment is in good shape. The current operator of the grader has been doing that since high school and will probably be retiring soon. Mr. Hoskeer said that would be someone who could teach him the operation of the grader. Mr. Manzolini advised Mr. Hoskeer that his immediate responsibility would most likely be snow-plowing of a 15-20-mile route that would include dirt or gravel roads. Mr. Hoskeer said that his current snow-plowing route in Sheffield is 30-40-miles. Mr. Manzolini noticed that Mr. Hoskeer has HazMat tanker endorsement and he asked him to describe that. Mr. Hoskeer reiterated that he had at one time driven a liquid propane tanker for AmeriGas, which has qualified him to drive any kind of liquid in a truck (oil, propane, any hazardous material).

Mr. Hanson asked Mr. Hoskeer whether he has had any EMT training. He noted that he had been trained in CPR for his job at the Eagleton School, he has been trained in First Aid and is a DOT Certified Flagger. Mr. Hoskeer noted that, having grown up with a grandfather who was a firefighter in Great Barrington, he learned early on not to ever panic and he does not.

Interview of Mr. Ed Flynn – 9:45 AM: Mr. Manzolini began with the list of questions:

1. If hired, what type of additional training do you think you will need to be successful in this position?

Ans: Mr. Flynn responded that he has been doing this work for seven years, during which time he has run a wing plow, payloader, backhoe, street sweeper, stumping and, at this time of year, he would go to the maintenance garage and help to get the equipment ready, fix whatever needs to be fixed, get the plows on the trucks, etc. He considered himself mechanically adept and as a hobby he restores old cars. Back in the 1980's he was an automotive mechanic for Berkshire Tire. Mr. Flynn noted that he is a quick learner and gives 100% to whatever he is doing. He has a Class A driver's license, a hoist license, and is licensed on front loader, back hoe, rear mower and telescopic boom.

Mr. Manzolini asked about Mr. Flynn's driving experience – his personal record is excellent. He had one incident while plowing during that big blizzard. The truck went sideways but he was able to bring it back and stop. He had it back out far enough that the wing caught the telephone pole, but that was the only incident he's had in seven years.

Mr. Manzolini asked how Mr. Flynn gets along with people. He explained that he is currently in a hostile environment caused by the boss. The staff has tried talking to him and have even consulted Human Resources, but nothing has changed. Mr. Flynn tries to maintain a pleasant relationship with the boss by doing whatever is asked of him without question or complaint, but he is still not being treated fairly.

Mr. Hanson asked about relationships with fellow employees and team members. Mr. Flynn said he has no problem with anybody – you treat him right, he'll treat you right. Mr. Manzolini asked whether Mr. Flynn prefers to work independently or in a team. Mr. Flynn is comfortable working either way, he can work by himself or team up with others and pull his weight. He outlined some of his work history and how he arrived at his present position.

Mr. Manzolini went over the expectation for this position; that when it becomes necessary to plow, workers will be called in on a stand-by basis. Mr. Flynn had no problem with that arrangement and is quite familiar with working that way. Mr. Hanson asked whether Mr. Flynn had any special talents such as welding, automobile mechanics, etc. He responded that he is just now teaching himself welding by putting quarter panels on his personal plow truck with a spot-welder. He would also be comfortable helping with carpentry and painting if the town needed that.

Mr. Hanson asked whether by any chance Mr. Flynn had any EMT experience. That was one area that Mr. Flynn has not had any experience with, but he would not mind being trained in CPR and such other skills. Mr. Hanson asked how Mr. Flynn would describe his reaction to an emergency. Mr. Flynn said he might start out a little panicky but expected he would immediately see what needed to be done and get to doing it. If someone was hurt, he would call for help and try to keep the injured party calm until help arrived.

Mr. Manzolini asked Mr. Flynn to describe the last time he was in a physical altercation with someone. He recalled an incident involving the boss he described earlier about a month ago but reiterated that he has no problem getting along with the crew. When asked if there were certain kinds of work he prefers not to do, Mr. Flynn said he hasn't come across any such thing yet. "If it needs to be fixed, just fix it." He once restored a 1964 Pontiac Catalina, and he is currently working on redoing his plow truck and works on his wife's car as well.

Mr. Flynn asked what benefits were being offered, to which Mr. Hanson responded that Richmond is a member of the Berkshire County Retirement Association for pensions and the health-insurance payment is at 75%-25%. Richmond's benefit

package is comparable to most towns in Berkshire County. The pay scale being offered will be between \$21,000 and \$22,000, which will represent an increase, especially since there will be no union dues to pay.

Mr. Manzolini asked about Mr. Flynn's interaction with the public in the course of his work. Mr. Flynn responded that he treats the public "with kid gloves," trying to answer any questions they may have and, despite being assaulted on occasion by a resident with a complaint, will always deal with the situation politely and helpfully.

Mr. Manzolini described the snow plowing route that the job entails, which includes 15 to 20 miles of which perhaps two-thirds are dirt or gravel roads. Mr. Flynn assured the Board members that if they want to have him learn how to use the grader, he would be happy to learn that. There was a discussion of some of the details of the job, how things work in the Department and what the town is looking for in terms of the final makeup of the crew.

Interview of Mr. Austin Liebenow: Mr. Hanson began with a question about the status of Mr. Liebenow's licenses. He was advised that he is awaiting the renewal of his DOT hoisting license. He explained that there was an error on the part of the DOT when he sent in his renewal request, indicating that he had submitted an incomplete application, which was not the case. Eventually, the error was resolved, although the record available on line still shows that his licenses are not valid. Mr. Liebenow was able to provide proof that the application he originally submitted was done correctly and advised the Board that if they look further they will find he is listed as "active."

Mr. Manzolini asked Mr. Liebenow what additional training he might need to be successful in this position. Mr. Liebenow expressed his confidence that he could be very successful with the experience he currently has: six years working for the City of Pittsfield where he was so efficient in completing assignments that he was moved up to the position of temporary foreman. He noted that after a time, the DPW in Pittsfield began to fall apart and that was one of the reasons he left that position and went to the Town of Lee but was unable to live on that salary.

Mr. Manzolini asked what Mr. Liebenow's primary motivation was for wanting this job. He responded that he works on a seasonal basis and this is a year-round position, which he would very much prefer. Mr. Hanson asked what kinds of equipment Mr. Liebenow has experience with such as a grader. He has operated a grader for the City of Pittsfield, bulldozers, loaders, excavators, back hoes and pavers. Mr. Manzolini asked for a description of Mr. Liebenow's professional driving experience. Mr. Liebenow started driving in 2003 hauling equipment for Dodge Construction such as excavators and doing site work or hauling materials with a dump truck and a construction trailer. He worked for Frank Rice for a while, flatbed

trucking, he drove ten-wheelers for Mike Kelly and has maintained a safe driving record through all that experience.

Mr. Manzolini asked Mr. Liebenow to list the different driving licenses he has: He has a 1C for booms, a 2A for excavators, back hoes, etc. and 4E and 4G which are the specialty mowers and the catch-basin cleaner, as well as a Class A driver's license.

In response to the question of whether he prefers to work independently or with a team, Mr. Liebenow said he prefers to work as part of a team, but has no trouble working independently. He explained that he currently works with a four-man team that is composed of much younger men who, due to his greater age and experience, tend to look to him for guidance in some instances. Mr. Manzolini explained that the Richmond Highway Department team is made up of four workers: a working Supervisor and a three-man staff. That generally, they do not work together on a project, but tend to split up to cover two or more separate projects. Some jobs are by their nature individual work such as snow-removal.

The conversation turned to commute times and the idea of being on call to come in at 2:00 AM for some emergency. Mr. Liebenow said he has been on call for years and is quite used to it. The estimated commute time from his home in Dalton would be about 25 minutes or so. Mr. Liebenow is not a DOT Certified Flagger but has had CPR training in the past and has had some First Aid training, but he does not hold those certificates at this time.

Mr. Hanson asked Mr. Liebenow to describe his way of dealing with difficult people. He noted that the first thing to remember is to stay calm and be aware that as Highway Department employees they represent the Town. It is important to maintain a professional attitude and advise the Superintendent about the incident.

Mr. Liebenow is certified on gas line installations but can only weld plastic. He would not mind learning how to weld. He has been on graders, dozers, back hoes, loaders, dump trucks and a vac truck instead of a tanker. He has experience on mowers like the over-the-guardrail mower. Mr. Liebenow is also mechanically inclined and can do repairs and maintenance on trucks such as replacing bearings, plows, hoses, etc. but he does not service brakes. Mr. Liebenow said he likes to stay busy and have the time go by without watching the clock.

On the subject of snow-plowing on gravel roads, Mr. Liebenow acknowledged that he has not done many of them in the past and found them difficult going, but if this job included a route containing half gravel roads he would simply have to adapt to that. He's willing to do whatever the job entails and intends to do it well.

Mr. Manzolini asked Mr. Liebenow about the last time he was in a physical altercation with someone. Mr. Liebenow responded it would have been in high school he doesn't do physical altercations.

When asked whether there were certain types of repair work he enjoyed and others that he would just as soon avoid, Mr. Liebenow said he has offered a hand to someone trying to get leaf springs up on a ten-wheeler; when someone needs a hand, they need a hand. Asked to describe an incident Mr. Liebenow might have been involved in with a town resident about which he may have some regrets. He did not feel he needed to regret any such interactions – he felt one just needed to have the right answers and remain calm.

Mr. Liebenow has excellent carpentry skills – he felt confident he could build a building or paint or do heights in a bucket truck. He can work with wood siding but has had no experience with plastic siding. If he had someone to work with that knew what they were doing, he would have no trouble working with them and learning a new skill.

Mr. Manzolini went over the pay scale and benefits package and probation period. Mr. Hanson offered to find out whether Mr. Liebenow would be allowed to buy back into the Berkshire County Retirement program.

Interview of Mr. Alex VanSant: Mr. Hanson began with the question about needing additional skills to be successful in this position. Mr. VanSant replied that he will need an Operator's License – he has had experience operating machinery but has not been licensed. He has three years of experience on skid loaders, tractors, front-end loaders, excavators (from 7,000 lb. to 20,000 lb.) working for Webster Landscaping Company in Sheffield for whom he did drainage, driveway work, brush mowing and lawns. With John Field he did work with trees, removing stumps and digging holes for trees but has not had grader experience. He obtained his Class A driver's license while working for Webster so that he could drive their ten-wheeler and haul machinery for them. He has also driven a bucket truck and larger chip trucks for John Field. He is interested in becoming licensed for all those vehicles and has looked into obtaining a 2A1C, which he intends to do when he has the time to attend the required classes. He is also aware that for this job he would need a 4G Mowing License, which he has researched. He was confident it would not take long for him to satisfy the requirements and obtain those licenses.

Mr. Hanson asked about Mr. VanSant's work ethic. Mr. VanSant responded that he takes a great deal of pride in his work and he has always worked towards completing a job on time and under budget to make the client happy. With the landscaping and

tree work he has seldom had a lot of under eight-hour days and most days go by quickly so that he is surprised at the end of the day.

Mr. Manzolini asked whether Mr. VanSant prefers to work independently or in a team. He replied that he much prefers to work with people but had no problem plowing for John Field Tree Service in Sandisfield last winter, which is a one-man job. Mr. Manzolini described the route he would be responsible for plowing in this job, which was no problem as he has had experience plowing gravel roads.

Mr. Hanson asked Mr. VanSant to describe his normal working relationship with team members. Mr. VanSant described himself as very easy-going, non-confrontational and humorous. If everyone gets along, the day goes by faster, the work goes more smoothly and more pleasantly. Mr. VanSant stated that he is looking for a long-term relationship. He just graduated from college last year and is getting ready to settle down and sees this job as a long-term situation.

In answer to the question, "Why do you want this job?" Mr. VanSant replied that he has been in the Berkshires for about 18 years and he really loves the area and sees this job as an opportunity to serve and work in the community as well as a means of financial support. When asked about commuting time to Richmond from home, he noted the drive time is about 15 to 20 minutes. He would have no problem with being called in to work at 2:00 AM and would be completely available for on-call situations.

Mr. Manzolini asked when Mr. VanSant was last in a physical altercation with someone. He responded that he hasn't ever been in a situation where physical blows could have resulted. He has had a few verbal exchanges in the past, but he will always try to defuse any such situation before it gets out of hand.

Mr. Manzolini asked what experience Mr. VanSant has had with building. He has done lots of stone walls and patios, drainage, driveway drainage and he is working on restoring a 1964 Chevy and he likes to tinker with old lawn mowers and engines. He took four years of Mechanics in high school and changes his own oil, services his own brakes and engine belts; whatever he can do he will. Because of a relationship he has built since high school, he has access to a lift so that he can get under the body of the vehicle. That is a sample of the good relationships he is capable of building and maintaining with people over time. In college he took courses in small engine repair through Briggs and Stratton. He did not, however, receive a certificate from them as he was unsure which certificates would transfer from New York to Massachusetts. He does, however, have the accreditations.

Mr. Manzolini asked if there were certain kinds of repairs that Mr. VanSant enjoyed, and he was told that he finds working on engines and vehicles generally relaxing. Mr. Manzolini noted that the engines and vehicles Mr. VanSant would be working on in this job would be less relaxing as they would be much bigger, heavier machinery. Mr. VanSant knows welding as he has welded lawn mower decks, exhaust systems, etc. but nothing beyond that. His opinion of his welding skill is that he is adequate as he doesn't have as much experience as he would like. He has done arc welding adequately, though he will usually grind the bead down to smooth it out to finish. He has fair carpentry skills and has painted his house both inside and out and has experience with both laying wood floors and refinishing them.

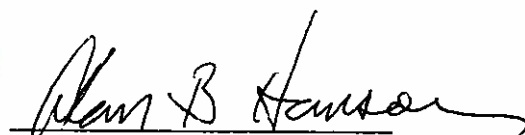
Asked to summarize his skill in dealing with irate people, Mr. VanSant said he likes to defuse the situation as much as possible, so he will keep himself calm and take a step back if necessary. In college he was in RA and received a lot of training dealing with people who were out of control or under the influence of alcohol or drugs.

Mr. Manzolini went over the hours, the need to be available on-call and a description of the snow-plowing route this position would be responsible for, the need sometimes to take on more work if circumstances dictate and his availability for on-call. Mr. VanSant had no problem with any of those details.

Mr. Hanson asked if Mr. VanSant felt he was able to accept positive criticism of his performance. He replied that he prefers to get feedback from which he can learn and improve. Mr. Hanson outlined the pay rate and benefits package for Mr. VanSant and explained the position the Board is in having to choose one out of four highly qualified candidates. He also noted that it is anticipated that one of the current members of the Highway Department staff will be retiring next spring and the Town will be seeking to hire someone to replace him, which will provide an additional opportunity. Mr. Manzolini asked what impact it would have on Mr. VanSant if he was or was not chosen for this position. He responded that it would not make a significant change if he were not chosen as he is currently employed in a good job, but he would like to get into working for a town and having the opportunity to serve the community. He believes that getting this job would provide him with a more rewarding position, serving a community rather than a for-profit organization.

Signed:


Mr. Roger Manzolini


Mr. Alan Hanson