

BOARD OF SELECTMEN / SEWER COMMISSIONERS MEETING

Tuesday June 25, 2019 – 6:00 PM – Richmond Town Hall, 1529 State Rd.

(Town Administrator Candidates Interviews)

PRESENT: Mr. Roger Manzolini, Chair; Mr. Neal Pilson, Selectmen; Mr. Alan Hanson, Selectmen; Mr. Robert Markel, Interim Town Administrator;

ABSENT:

GUEST: Ms. Danielle Fillio, Candidate for Town Admin.; Mr. Peter Beckwith, Highway Superintendent; Ms. Claudia Ryan; Ms. Angela Garrity; Ms. Stephanie Belling; Mr. Bill Martin; Mr. Clarence Fanto, Editor, Berkshire Eagle; Mr. Ken Kelly, Pres. Richmond Pond Assn.; Mr. Tom Grizey, Wiring Inspector, Mr. Bob Gniadek, Chair of the Finance Cte.

The meeting was called to order by Mr. Manzolini at 6:00 PM.

Mr. Manzolini introduced the people seated at the table and thanked the townspeople in the audience for attending.

Ms. Danielle Fillio was the first candidate and Mr. Manzolini suggested that the interview process be conducted as an open and free discussion between Ms. Fillio and the members of the Board.

Mr. Manzolini began with asking Ms. Fillio what she knew of the Town of Richmond. She outlined the basic information she had about the town and noted that she had contacted Mr. Mark Pruhenski, the former Town Administrator for Richmond, before her first set of interviews in order to get an idea of the type of town Richmond is. Her experience has been that towns with schools tend to be more community-based, a belief that is grounded in her childhood in Lee. Lee has two schools and her recollection is of a lot of community involvement and a lot of input from the townspeople – the kind of situation she is looking for.

Mr. Manzolini outlined some of the unique aspects of Richmond's culture, with emphasis on the overall cooperative nature of the way Richmond conducts its affairs and how change is accommodated.

Mr. Pilson asked Ms. Fillio to explain the reasons behind her desire to move from her position in Stockbridge to Richmond. Ms. Fillio said she enjoyed being a Town Administrator; she found it exciting to hear all the various points of view about how to make things work. She enjoys working with individuals and the major incentive for her to leave Stockbridge is her perception of the drastic change in the environment in that town. She is seeking a position that will afford her a calmer environment, with a level of respect that will avoid chaos. Mr. Pilson asked for Ms. Fillio's opinion of the decision-making process in Stockbridge. He is seeking a Town Administrator who will exercise a certain amount

of independence and authority rather than being inclined to bring every matter to the Board for approvals.

Ms. Fillio responded that there were some things that she did on her own, seeking consensus with the Board for the matter in principal. She noted that she had only the decision-making authority granted to her by the Board, which would change as the make up of the Board changed. At one time, she was able to complete projects working with the Chair; lately, the process has changed so that every step must be approved by every individual member of the Board, necessitating a great deal of back-and-forth.

Mr. Manzolini advised Ms. Fillio of the unusual stability of the Richmond Board. As an indication of the cohesiveness of this Board, Mr. Pilson noted that in the last three years the Board has never voted two-to-one on any matter. He said that the Board is looking for an independent Town Administrator who will make the necessary day-to-day decisions, but that the Board accepts the ultimate responsibility for all decisions. Larger issues will be handled by the Board, except for those large enough to impact the whole community, which the Board asks the community to decide by voting at a Town Meeting. Mr. Manzolini explained that the Town functions with an Annual Operations Calendar-a "to-do" list - and it will expect the Town Administrator to create a similar "to-do" list as issues arise and to keep the Board apprised of what the list is – they will help to prioritize that list.

Mr. Hanson asked Ms. Fillio how, as the public face of the Town, she would react to an irate resident. Ms. Fillio responded that she would listen to what the person has to say, try to see what it is that is causing the upset and then explain, to the best of her ability, why the decision was made and how the town can work with them to resolve the issue. In the past, Ms. Fillio noted she has been able to de-escalate her fair share of situations like that.

Mr. Pilson asked Ms. Fillio to describe her leadership style with respect to managing the staff at Town Hall, which he considers a very important function. He felt it is important that the T.A. have a good working relationship with each of the staff members. The staff in Stockbridge all reported directly to Ms. Fillio and she handled all personnel matters that arose including having some experience with annual evaluations until that process was discontinued.

Mr. Pilson next noted that the Town Administrator also works closely with the various town boards and committees other than the Selectboard; posting notices, obtaining agendas from the Chairs in a timely manner for posting, etc.

Two other groups that the T.A. will be dealing with include the Townspeople as discussed above and interfacing with contractors. Ms. Fillio described herself as familiar with that kind of interaction and provided some specific instances of her involvement with contracts and vendors. She was also the Human Resources Officer and dealt with insurance issues such as personal injury or other insurance claims. She deals with any harassment claims.

Mr. Pilson raised the issue of projects pending in the Town such as the new Town Library/Community Space and possibly Town Hall. The bid processing and the evaluation of applicants for the position of Project Manager is being handled by the Interim Town Administrator, Mr. Robert Markel. After that,

the design function and bidding out for the architect, engineering and construction will have to be undertaken. Ms. Fillio noted that she has experience working in those areas such as a recent project to create a large highway garage; and she has had the experience of going through the process of bonding twice.

Mr. Manzolini asked how Ms. Fillio's co-workers would describe her. The response was, professional and accessible. Asking the same question of Ms. Fillio's friends, how would they respond? The response included energetic, outgoing, nice, polite able to get along with a lot of people.

Mr. Pilson went over the details of meeting routines for the Selectboard, Town Meetings and others where the T.A. would be expected to be available. Ms. Fillio lives nearby in Lee, so meetings are not a problem.

Mr. Pilson noted that there is a cable franchise coming up for renewal in the next 18 months. A Cable Advisory Committee has been established to work on obtaining a new deal for the town. Mr. Pilson asked if Ms. Fillio was familiar with the Stockbridge cable franchise agreement. She said only marginally but would be prepared to make herself familiar with Richmond's current agreement and with the recommendations of the Committee about working out a new agreement. Ms. Fillio has read through the minutes having to do with Balderdash Cellars Winery seeking a Special Permit. Mr. Pilson's question concerned Ms. Fillio's familiarity with the Farm Function bylaws. Ms. Fillio was not familiar with the Farm Function laws however she has had extensive experience with regular liquor licenses. The issue of the new marijuana laws came up. Ms. Fillio explained that Stockbridge has a bylaw on marijuana, but that they have limited its sale to the business district and the manufacturing district. Richmond has a small commercial district which has been identified as the place where any medical and/or retail dispensary would have to go and where any growing function would have to be located.

Mr. Manzolini asked about Ms. Fillio's communication skills, which she said she would characterize as an 8 on a scale of 1-10. She does sometimes struggle with being clear in her written reports due to her belief that people know more than they do about the subject. In terms of computer skills, Ms. Fillio is proficient in Word, Excel and Outlook.

Mr. Hanson noted that the period leading up to a Town Meeting and the process of preparing the Town Warrant can become very intense and time-consuming. He asked for Ms. Fillio's feelings about that. She replied that she is very comfortable with that work, which she currently does in Stockbridge. She does the warrant articles and drafts the motions and lately has also created a Budget Explanation Sheet for the first time for Stockbridge and posted it on the website prior to the Town Meeting. The purpose of the question was that Mr. Hanson wanted Ms. Fillio to understand that, as she will be working with a much smaller staff, that would put a lot more pressure on her during those very busy times.

Mr. Pilson noted the strong involvement the T.A. has with the town's website. Ms. Fillio has accessed the website and noted her appreciation of it. Mr. Pilson advised Ms. Fillio about the marketing effort the Town undertook a year ago, including hiring a part-time Marketing Director from Berkshire Regional Planning, actively trying to sell the town to new residents, particularly young families. The

website is one of the Town's marketing tools and the Board would expect the T.A. to be looking at the website on a regular basis to determine what needs to be upgraded or changed and what information should be posted on the website. Mr. Fillio said she thought she would be very comfortable managing the website and the weekly e-newsletter.

Mr. Manzolini broached the subject of Ms. Fillio's ability and willingness to move chairs and tables to set up for meetings, etc. She declared herself both able and willing to do that and has done it often in Stockbridge.

Mr. Hanson wanted to assure Ms. Fillio that she would have the backing and support of the members of the Board of Selectmen to help her with anything she feels unable or unwilling to handle on her own; she need not feel as if she is on her own.

Mr. Manzolini asked what Ms. Fillio's professional plans for the future were. She said she would like to be in this job long-term and has no plans to seek another position. She had intended to remain in Stockbridge long-term until the drastic changes in environment there made it necessary to move on.

Ms. Fillio said she was comfortable with the salary as posted. Mr. Pilson described for Ms. Fillio the Long-Range Sustainability Group that has been meeting for the past 6 years, and which was the body making the determination that the school would be a fixed function of the Town and that there would be no discussion about closing or limiting the school. The Town may be looking at updating a Master Plan that goes back 20-25 years. Ms. Fillio said that Stockbridge also looked into updating their Master Plan but decided that it would be too expensive and instead developed a "Visioning Committee." They hired an outside company to poll the residents to determine what were the biggest needs. The subsequent Visioning Report created an Economic Development Plan and a Zoning Review Committee tasked with reviewing the zoning bylaws with an outside consultant to bring everything up to date. Ms. Fillio said that she does work with the Stockbridge Attorney occasionally and is familiar with that process.

Mr. Manzolini asked Ms. Fillio why she wanted this job. She replied that she truly enjoys being a Town Administrator and is not happy where she currently is employed. She would like to continue to be a town administrator somewhere where she could be happy in the job.

In response to the question, "Why do you think we should hire you?" Ms. Fillio said that with her experience and her knowledge and her personality she would fit in with Richmond and be able to work with the employees once she has had an opportunity to learn how things are done here.

Mr. Pilson asked Ms. Fillio if she had any questions for the Board. She had none. Mr. Pilson advised that the decision would likely not be made that day and that there were recommendations to be followed up, but that the decision would be made shortly. Mr. Pilson asked how much time Ms. Fillio would need to extricate herself from Stockbridge. She said her contract reads three months, but she felt certain that she could take advantage of a clause that permits a shorter period on mutual agreement to negotiate a shorter waiting time.

Ms. Fillio left the meeting at that time.

The second candidate, Ms. Angeline Ellison, who was scheduled to be interviewed at this meeting did not appear before the Board at the scheduled time. Mr. Pilson moved that the meeting be adjourned until the next candidate arrives. Mr. Manzolini seconded the motion with the proviso that the adjournment would last until 7:30. The motion was carried by unanimous consent.

Mr. Markel contacted the second candidate to determine why she did not appear, and it seems that she was unaware that she was scheduled for an interview at this time, despite several voicemail messages left by Mr. Markel earlier in the week.

Mr. Manzolini moved that the meeting resume at 6:55 PM. The motion was seconded by Mr. Pilson and carried by unanimous vote.

Mr. Manzolini explained that it appears that Ms. Ellison had not heard the voicemail messages advising her that she was scheduled for interview at tonight's meeting. Mr. Hanson suggested that she be offered the opportunity to attend the regularly scheduled Selectmen's meeting the next day for an interview.

Mr. Markel outlined the process by which he advised the three candidates which had been submitted to the Board for interview that they were scheduled. Mr. Pilson noted that he is not ready to make any final decisions until he has contacted at least some of the references provided by the candidates and he felt no need to rush the process.

It was decided that the decision to move Ms. Ellison's interview to the scheduled meeting tomorrow night could be an unanticipated additional item for the agenda. Mr. Markel will contact Ms. Ellison to ask her to attend the meeting tomorrow.

There being no further business before the Board, Mr. Pilson moved that the meeting be adjourned. It was seconded by Mr. Pilson and accepted by unanimous consent.

The meeting was adjourned at 7:05 PM

Signed:

Mr. Roger Manzolini

Chair