

## **BOARD OF SELECTMEN / SEWER COMMISSIONERS MEETING**

**Tuesday July 2, 2019 – 6:00 PM – Richmond Town Hall, 1529 State Road**

**PRESENT:** Mr. Roger Manzolini, Chair; Mr. Neal Pilson, Selectman; Mr. Alan Hanson, Selectman;

**ABSENT:** Mr. Robert Markel, Interim Town Administrator

**GUESTS:** Ms. Angeline Ellison, Town Administrator Candidate; Mr. Clarence Fanto, The Berkshire Eagle; Mr. Peter Beckwith, Highway Superintendent

Mr. Manzolini called the meeting to order at 6:00 PM

**Interview for Town Administrator – Angeline Ellison:** Ms. Ellison thanked the Board for the opportunity to interview at this time after the miscommunication with the Interim Town Administrator.

Mr. Manzolini asked Ms. Ellison what she has learned about the Town of Richmond. She explained that she has done considerable research on the Town to familiarize herself with how it functions to the extent that was possible. The culture of a community and the dynamics of the people will have to be learned first-hand.

Mr. Pilson noted that Richmond has a very highly regarded K-8 school that is part of the Town's budget and not contracted out. Richmond is unique in its ability to add to its school population with residents and not having to rely on choice to fill the school.

In response to Mr. Pilson's question, Ms. Ellison noted that the commute from Sturbridge is one hour and seventeen minutes (about 67 miles). She felt that the commute is not an issue for her and that the position, the fit, getting to be part of a community are what is important. She said that when she worked in Boston, she completed a one-way commute of two hours for five years and had no problem.

Mr. Manzolini asked what Ms. Ellison is seeking from a position. She is looking for a long-term position; she had previously worked at Blandford, a comparably small community in a part-time position, but when she had to have a position that would afford her a full-time salary, she took the job in Uxbridge. She went from a town of about 1,500 to 14,000 with issues of turnover of staff because the Board of Selectmen were in opposition to the provisions of their recently adopted charter which called for a strong Town Manager position. Ms. Ellison was the fourth Town Manager in the previous 5-1/2 years. She is seeking a similar situation to Blandford, where she can feel that her preferred hands-on approach is routine. She sensed that Richmond is just that kind of community.

Mr. Hanson asked about Ms. Ellison's ability to deal with an angry resident. Ms. Ellison said she would listen to the complaint so that the person understands that they are being heard. Then

she would sympathize with what they are saying, regardless of whether she completely agrees with their position. Once the situation de-escalates, and she has a clear understanding of the resolution that person is seeking, she will outline the options available to address the situation and offer to follow-up and respond to the person. When Ms. Ellison worked in higher education, mediation and conflict resolution were issues she dealt with extensively.

Mr. Pilson asked what led Ms. Ellison to move from education to town administration. Ms. Ellison responded that her undergraduate and graduate work was in Political Science and American Studies. Her initial intention was to go into government and law but actually took the path of higher education where she was successful with student affairs and student development. She left to raise her children as the two-hour each way commute was cutting too deeply into that process.

Mr. Pilson asked if Ms. Ellison is familiar with the workings of a small town, given the small staff available for the tremendous amount of work that a Town Administrator needs to do. She had no problem with that aspect of the job. Mr. Pilson spoke to the major projects that are coming up; the new library/community space and possibly a new town hall, and the extensive paperwork involved. Ms. Ellison had some experience with several such projects during her time in Uxbridge and is NCPPO certified, which means that she has completed all the phases of municipal procurement, which she explained at length.

Mr. Hanson asked if Ms. Ellison was comfortable, acting as the “face” of the town, with making day-to-day decisions on her own and then advising the Selectmen. Ms. Ellison replied that although she has no problem with making decisions, while she is new to a town, she would bounce a lot of issues back-and-forth with the Selectmen to determine where they want her to go. On on-going projects that need an immediate decision, she would contact the Selectmen to advise them of the decision that was made and seek their approval.

Mr. Manzolini asked if Ms. Ellison has ever done an annual review process with personnel. She believes that you should not do reviews only at the end of the year but should have a progressive process. If there is a problem, it should be addressed as it goes along, rather than coming as a surprise at the end of the year. She has supervised and managed people since she began working full time, so those conversations are not an issue for her.

Mr. Manzolini asked whether Ms. Ellison has ever had to face a situation in which the person she was working for was doing something wrong. Her answer was in two parts: first – no she has not been in that situation. However, her professional obligation, her ethics training and her certification as NCPPO and as a member of the Massachusetts Municipal Association, created an ethical obligation to deal with corrupt situations. She described a situation in a former position where there was a suspicion of embezzlement which eventually resulted in involving the Attorney General.

Mr. Manzolini asked whether, having worked in a small town, she was familiar with having to take on responsibilities that in a larger town might have specific staff in place to handle. She

was Chief Procurement Officer and did all the Human Resources personnel work in both Blandford and Uxbridge. Mr. Manzolini asked how Ms. Ellison resolved a situation in which she had conflicting priorities. She would base the priority on safety and what would have the worst implications if it was not resolved. The issue with the biggest or most negative impact would get the most attention. Ms. Ellison was attempting to create a team mentality and instituted a monthly meeting with the Department Heads and on a weekly basis developed a Leadership Team comprised of the Fire Dept., Police Dept., DPW, Management and Economic Development. The weekly meetings were intended to have them all work together to respond to the ongoing issues and work out solutions.

Mr. Manzolini asked Ms. Ellison to indicate how she believes her co-workers would describe her in a few words. She replied, "determined, gets the job done." He then asked the same question relative to her friends' description of her. She replied, "tenacious and would give you the shirt off her back and would help anybody that needed help."

Mr. Pilson asked if Ms. Ellison has worked with the budgeting process. Although we have a Town Treasurer, often the Town Administrator works very closely with the Treasurer and the Accountant on that process. One of her constituencies is the Town Hall staff and he asked whether her policy was to keep an open or closed door. She replied that her door is always open, and she believes in an open-door policy. Relative to budgeting, she had worked on trying to streamline the budget process in Blandford and was glad to know that Richmond has a Budget Advisory Committee. She would recommend that a Budget Advisory Committee have one member of the Selectboard, one from the Finance Committee, the Treasurer/Collector and the Town Administrator that would collectively come up with the budget process and present it to the Board of Selectmen. In Uxbridge the Town Manager presented the budget, but she relied on the Treasurer/Collector and Town Accountant to work closely with her as she did not have a background in Finance.

Mr. Manzolini asked Ms. Ellison to describe her computer skills. She replied that they are good and that it would only take her a few hours with any new software that she would be unfamiliar with to develop a working understanding and, although her expertise with Excel is only at the basic level, she has resources she can use to gain a more thorough knowledge.

Creation of Warrant Articles – she would need to know what format Richmond uses. Mr. Pilson remarked that he is always concerned about the amount of time the Town Administrator must spend attending the bi-monthly Selectboard meetings and keeping up with what is going on at the numerous other town committees and boards. Richmond involves its residents to an unusual degree in the workings of the town. Ms. Ellison replied that she would expect to attend every board and committee meeting in the first couple of months on the job both to introduce herself to the members and to determine what they will need from her to complete their work.

Mr. Pilson asked for Ms. Ellison's version of the situation in Uxbridge in relation to herself. She noted that she has learned a lot from that experience, including insight into who she is as a

manager. Expectations were in conflict; she had a clear expectation of moving in a certain direction and the Board was split in two different directions, which resulted in her receiving mixed messages about moving forward. After the last election, the side that won was the one in opposition to her and that meant that she was no longer able to be effective in the role and a mutual agreement was made for her to part ways with Oxbridge.

Mr. Manzolini asked whether the salary being offered was acceptable and she said that it was perfectly acceptable for the position for Richmond, but she mentioned that she had been interested in the advertised possibility of a shared administration position. Mr. Pilson explained the history of the shared administration idea and the probable future for that initiative, which will probably remain on the shelf for the next several years.

Mr. Pilson asked if Ms. Ellison had any questions for the Board and she indicated that her question about the joint position had been answered. She did ask what the Board's priorities would be if she is selected. Mr. Hanson said he would ask for a smoothly running town. Mr. Manzolini brought up the important projects like the new library/community center or possible library/town hall/community center that is currently underway. There was a discussion between Ms. Ellison and the Board members about the process in place now and what needs to be done moving forward. Mr. Pilson raised the issue of the new Winery in town, which is seeking multi year approvals for a variety of functions at the location. There were issues to be considered, so the Board opted for a series of one-day special permits, which will soon run out. Eventually, they will probably qualify for a Farm Function Special Permit, which is multiple events over one or two or three years. Ms. Ellison noted that she has read the Town's bylaws. Mr. Pilson described many of the aspects of how Richmond functions that may be unique to this town, including an explanation of the unique situation of the Richmond Pond community. He also explained how stable the Board of Selectmen was and how the Town has tended to come together to pass bylaws almost unanimously, which makes Richmond quite a manageable town and free of many of the issues that other towns struggle with.

Ms. Ellison asked for clarification of her impression that Richmond was limiting business and growth and how the Town balances out the tax base. Mr. Manzolini said that there is an unstated policy to not be anti-business or anti-development or growth, but to accommodate that which naturally occurs. Mr. Pilson said that this is a community with a shopping area in West Stockbridge, just down route 41, Pittsfield is just ten minutes away with supermarkets and movie houses and Chinese Restaurants and Lenox is just over the mountain with multiple restaurants and a very well-developed business area. Between Williamstown and Stockbridge, there are many cultural activities – none of which is more than 45 minutes away and is in close proximity to International Airports in Albany and Hartford. With no public transportation and no sewer system the Town simply cannot accommodate large numbers of people with a shopping center.

Ms. Ellison said that her children attend school in Sturbridge. After they graduate, she intends to move to Richmond if she is offered the position. That will be in three years.

Mr. Pilson raised the question of what the timetable for a decision would be and what Ms. Ellison's availability would be. She would be available in August except for the week of the 12<sup>th</sup> through the 16<sup>th</sup>.

Mr. Pilson asked for references and was advised that Richmond's Search Committee had requested email references that were available. Mr. Pilson will request copies from the Committee.

**Discussion of Candidate Qualifications:** Mr. Manzolini voiced his concern with some aspects of Ms. Ellison's interview and his belief that Ms. Danielle Fillio seemed to be well-qualified for the position, with outstanding recommendations from everyone he has talked to and in letters received from the town. Mr. Hanson noted that Ms. Ellison was extremely professional and familiar with the requirements of the position, but he was concerned about her strong interest in the shared administrative position because of the higher salary. He doubted she would be in the position long-term, which is what they are looking for. Mr. Pilson said that he is very comfortable with the choice of Ms. Danielle Fillio. She has an experienced background and knowledge of small-town western Massachusetts communities, living in Lee and working in Stockbridge.

Mr. Manzolini suggested that they act quickly as there was some question of her having another offer. He had asked Ms. Fillio what her long-term plan was, and she was very definite that the position in Richmond is it.

The interview having been concluded the Board thanked Ms. Ellison for her interest in Richmond and for attending the interview. Ms. Ellison thanked the Board for their time and for giving her the opportunity to discuss the Town Administrator position with them. Ms. Ellison then left the meeting.

**Vote to Offer a Contract:** Mr. Manzolini moved that the Board offer the position of Richmond Town Administrator to Ms. Danielle Fillio. Mr. Hanson seconded the motion, which was passed by unanimous vote.

In the absence of the Interim Town Administrator, Mr. Manzolini will call Ms. Fillio to advise her of her appointment. Mr. Pilson will call Ms. Angeline Ellison the next day to advise her that a decision has been made and the Board has gone with a different candidate.

Mr. Manzolini made the call to Ms. Fillio and placed her on speaker phone to advise her that Richmond was offering her the position. She was very pleased with the news and accepted with enthusiasm.

**Selectmen's Matters;** Mr. Pilson asked Mr. Beckwith about the issue of the excavator to be shared with West Stockbridge. All that was needed was the signature of the Board Chair on the contract, which has been agreed to by West Stockbridge and vetted by Town Council. After the Board signs the agreement, West Stockbridge will put it on their meeting agenda for signature

and once that is accomplished the excavator can be ordered. After ordering, it will be about a month or so before we will be able to take delivery.

Mr. Manzolini moved that the Board approve and sign the Agreement. The motion was seconded by Mr. Pilson and was adopted by unanimous vote. The Agreement was duly signed by all three Board members.

Mr. Manzolini moved that the Board authorize Mr. Peter Beckwith to implement the Agreement and be the authorized representative of the agreement. Mr. Pilson seconded the motion, which was carried by unanimous consent. Mr. Beckwith signed the contract as the Town's representative.

Mr. Hanson raised the issue of Hilltop Orchards' neighbor who sent an email expressing their displeasure at the events taking place on the property. Mr. Manzolini said that the neighbor seems to have no specific complaint other than that the Orchard exists alongside their property. They have indicated that they plan to report them through some oversight organization, which is their right.

There was a discussion among the Selectmen as to whether the complaints are legitimate or not. A previous complaint from this neighbor was referred to the Zoning Enforcement Officer who reported that the noise in question was not coming from Hilltop Orchards but was from a neighbor on the opposite side of the complainant's property. Mr. Pilson advised that he has since received another email from the complainant, which he suggested should also be referred to the Zoning Enforcement Officer. The Board members all agreed to follow that same procedure. Mr. Hanson will contact Mr. Paul Greene, the Zoning Enforcement Officer.

**One-Day Liquor License for July 12<sup>th</sup> for the Boys and Girls Club of the Berkshires/Camp**

**Russell:** Mr. Manzolini moved to approve the one-day liquor license for the Boys and girls Club for July 12<sup>th</sup>. He was seconded by Mr. Alan Hanson and the motion was adopted by unanimous consent.

Mr. Pilson asked Ms. Claudia Ryan, Town Administrative Assistant, to advise the Boys and Girls Club that the Board has approved their one-day liquor license and to ask where the paperwork originates.

**Next BOS Meeting Date: Monday July 15, 2019:** All parties agreed.

There being no further business before the Board, Mr. Manzolini moved that the meeting be adjourned. He was seconded by Mr. Pilson and the motion carried by unanimous consent.

Signed:

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Mr. Roger Manzolini

Chair