

**BOARD OF SELECTMEN
MINUTES OF MEETING
JANUARY 11, 2022**

Members of the public were not able to physically attend this meeting due to the closing of Town Hall. The meeting was broadcast live on Comcast channel 12 and could also be viewed via live stream at WHCA.tv. It was subsequently broadcast on YouTube.com

In attendance were Chairman F. Kowalski; Vice Chairman Daniel L. Salvucci; Clerk Brian J. Bezanson; Member Randolph G. LaMattina; Member Justin R. Evans; and Town Administrator Lincoln Heineman.

Chairman Kowalski asked everyone in attendance to stand and recite the Pledge of Allegiance. This was followed by a moment of silence dedicated to Robert “Bob” Harris, retired Whitman Fire Lieutenant who passed away on January 9th.

Chairman Kowalski announced the meeting is being recorded and broadcast live on Comcast channel 12 and via live stream at WHCA.tv.

Mr. Salvucci **MOVED** to approve bill and payroll warrants. **Second** Mr. Bezanson, **so voted 5-0.**

Mr. Salvucci **MOVED** to accept correspondence in the Read File. **Second** Mr. Bezanson, **so voted 5-0.**

SCHEDULED EVENTS

Conduct Interviews for the Position of Assistant Town Administrator

6:00 P.M.: Jake Dodge

Mr. Dodge introduced himself and outlined his credentials.

Some of the questions asked of Mr. Dodge by the members of the Board consisted of:

- Why is this job interesting to you right now, why this job and why Whitman?
- What do you see as a challenge in recruiting the next generation of municipal employees?
- Define a successful relationship between the Board of Selectmen and the Assistant Town Administrator.
- Talk about something you consider to be a municipal best practice today.
- What specific strengths would you bring to the Assistant Town Administrator role and where do you see a challenge in the learning curve?
- Talk about the relationship between management and leadership.
- What expertise do you have in transitioning from law enforcement to this role?
- If chosen, will you be looking to step into the role of Town Administrator in the future?
- How confident are you with union negotiations and the management/union relationship?

The Board concluded the interview with Mr. Dodge at 6:27 p.m.

Mr. LaMattina asked Mr. Heineman to provide a copy of the job description prior to the next interview.

6:45 P.M.: James Kelley

Mr. Kelley introduced himself to the Board and outlined his credentials.

Some of the questions asked of Mr. Kelley by the members of the Board consisted of:

- Why is this job interesting to you right now, why this job and why Whitman?
- What do you see as a challenge in recruiting the next generation of municipal employees?
- Define a successful relationship between the Board of Selectmen and the Assistant Town Administrator.
- What challenge do you anticipate in the transition to the role of Whitman Assistant Town Administrator?
- With all of your experience, what makes you the best candidate for this position?
- Do you consider yourself a people person?
- Where do you see yourself in 3 to 5 years and would you be willing to move into the role of Town Administrator if the situation presented itself?
- In your opinion, what is the biggest challenge between municipal government and unions?
- What is your proudest moment in your career?
- Talk about the relationship between management and leadership.

The Board concluded the interview with Mr. Kelley at 7:13 p.m.

At 7:13 p.m. Mr. Evans **MOVED** for a 15 minute recess. **Second** Mr. Bezanson, **so voted 5-0.**

7:30 P.M.: Rogeria Medeiros-Kowalczykowski

Mrs. Medeiros-Kowalczykowski introduced herself to the Board and outlined her credentials.

Some of the questions asked of Mrs. Medeiros-Kowalczykowski by the members of the Board consisted of:

- Why is this job interesting to you right now, why this job and why Whitman?
- What do you see as a challenge in recruiting the next generation of municipal employees?
- Define a successful relationship between the Board of Selectmen and the Assistant Town Administrator.
- Talk about something you consider to be a municipal best practice today.
- What excited you about Whitman; what would be your number one strength you would bring to us; and where would you see that a challenge may lie?
- Do you consider yourself a people person?
- Where do you see yourself in 3 to 5 years and would you be willing to move into the role of Town administrator if the situation presented itself?
- Would you be willing to take on a project where an old elementary school could be re-purposed?
- Have you ever been involved in union negotiations?
- What is the one thing in your career you are most proud of?

- Talk about the relationship between leadership and management.

The Board concluded the interview with Mrs. Medeiros-Kowalczykowski at 7:46 p.m.

Chairman Kowalski asked Mr. Heineman which candidate he would recommend to fill the position. Mr. Heineman stated that while all three were strong candidates and each have their own strengths, Rogeria Medeiros-Kowalczykowski's skillset matches the job description. In addition, three of the five references she provided were people she has worked for.

Mr. LaMattina stated that he used the job description as a checklist and two candidates met all of the qualifications on the list. Coming in to this meeting and based on the resumes, he had one candidate in mind but now feels Mr. Kelley could certainly fill some of the void. He was impressed with the way Mr. Kelley presented himself and feels he should be considered.

Mr. Evans agreed, noting Mr. Kelley could probably mentor Mr. Heineman on some things. He went on to say that Mr. Dodge would require training and Mrs. Medeiros-Kowalczykowski checks all the boxes.

Mr. Salvucci agreed Mr. Kelley has plenty of experience and is good with numbers and getting things done. However, he is seeking a long term employee. Mrs. Medeiros-Kowalczykowski seems like she would be a good employee but he does not know if she works well with others. Mr. Dodge has less experience in municipal work but he is a young go-getter that seems to get along with people and is willing to learn what's needed to perform the job, noting he had enough experience to be brought forward as one of the finalists.

Chairman Kowalski agreed with Mr. LaMattina, Mr. Evans and Mr. Salvucci.

Mr. Bezanson agreed with Mr. Heineman's recommendation.

Mr. LaMattina recalled the recent search for a new town accountant where he was involved in the interview process and ultimately, the former Town Administrator's opinion was considered due to the fact that both he and the former Assistant Town Administrator would be working closely with the person hired to fill the position.

Mr. LaMattina **MOVED** to offer the position of Assistant Town Administrator to Rogeria Medeiros-Kowalczykowski. **Second** Mr. Bezanson.

Chairman Kowalski suggested the motion and second be withdrawn and each member nominate the person they would like to offer the position to. **The motion and second were withdrawn by Mr. LaMattina and Mr. Bezanson.**

Chairman Kowalski stated that all three candidates would make an excellent Assistant Town Administrator. Mr. Dodge has the willingness to learn and would be a wise hire if we are looking for someone long term. Mr. Kelley could be a big help with administration and town planning; and noted that one of his references stated that he has more energy than he appears to have. Chairman Kowalski went on to say that he was very impressed with Mr. Kelley's interview tonight as well as Mrs. Medeiros-Kowalczykowski's more than 30 years of experience in Stoughton. He then asked for a roll call vote where each member of the Board was asked to state the name of the person they would like to see fill the position of Assistant Town Administrator. **Roll call vote revealed the following:** Mr. Evans: Rogeria Medeiros-Kowalczykowski; Mr. Bezanson: Rogeria Medeiros-Kowalczykowski; Mr. Salvucci: Jake Dodge; Chairman Kowalski: James Kelley; and Mr. LaMattina: Rogeria Medeiros-Kowalczykowski. **So voted 3-1-1 in favor of Rogeria Medeiros-Kowalczykowski.**

Mr. LaMattina **MOVED** to support the appointment Rogeria Medeiros-Kowalczykowski to the position of Assistant Town Administrator and to extend an offer of employment subject to

successful negotiation of an employment agreement and any further background checks deemed necessary. **Second** Mr. Bezanson. **So voted 5-0.**

OLD BUSINESS

Update: COVID-19

Mr. Heineman advised the Board of four recommendations from the Board of Health in connection with COVID-19 and asked for a vote on each recommendation.

Mr. Evans **MOVED** that all town-owned buildings remain open to the public by appointment only and to approve the recommendation of the Board of Health to require masks in all town buildings, including individual workspaces, until the next Board of Health meeting on January 25, 2022. **Second** Mr. Bezanson for discussion.

Mr. Bezanson stated that he is not in favor of keeping the buildings closed, noting that other towns are open and our schools are open as well. Mr. Evans amended the motion and **MOVED** to approve the recommendation of the Board of Health to require masks in all town buildings, including individual workspaces, until the next Board of Health meeting on January 25, 2022. **Second** Mr. Bezanson, **so voted 5-0.**

Mr. LaMattina **MOVED** to reject the recommendation of the Board of Health that all boards, commissions and committees be offered 2 options for all meetings, one being that all meetings are either in person and televised from the Selectmen's Meeting Room or two, to hold a Zoom meeting available to the public that will later be televised by WHCA, with the first meeting to be determined by the chair of boards, commissions or committees. Subsequent meetings will be determined at the discretion of the boards, commissions or committees as to which option they would like to take going forward. The Selectmen's meeting room will be on a first come first served basis with priority going to the Board of Selectmen. This recommendation to be revisited at the next Board of Health meeting on January 25, 2022. **Second** Mr. Bezanson for discussion. Mr. LaMattina stated that he feels this is a drastic overreach by the Board of Health as this is a policy decision that is not within their purview. He then amended his previous motion and **MOVED** to pass over the recommendation of the Board of Health that all boards, commissions and committees be offered 2 options for all meetings, one being that all meetings are either in person and televised from the Selectmen's Meeting Room or two, to hold a Zoom meeting available to the public that will later be televised by WHCA, with the first meeting to be determined by the chair of boards, commissions or committees. Subsequent meetings will be determined at the discretion of the boards, commissions or committees as to which option they would like to take going forward. The Selectmen's meeting room will be on a first come first served basis with priority going to the Board of Selectmen. This recommendation to be revisited at the next Board of Health meeting on January 25, 2022. **Second** Mr. Evans, **so voted 5-0.**

Mr. Evans **MOVED** to accept the recommendation of the Board of Health to require all town employees to be fully vaccinated with a 6-week lead time in which to comply, with compliance defined by getting first, second or booster vaccine, based on what is needed to be considered fully vaccinated, with exemptions allowed for religious or medical reasons; for the Board of Selectmen to discuss and determine if those with approved exemptions will be required to test weekly at their own expense; and to determine exemptions and the requirements for said exemptions, i.e. submittal of a signed doctors note for a medical exemption and submittal of an affidavit signed under pains and penalties of perjury stating such reasons for exemption for a

religious exemption. **Second** Mr. Bezanson for discussion. Mr. Bezanson stated that he is against this. Mr. Salvucci agreed. Mr. LaMattina feels this is a policy decision and it does not sit well with him that the Board of Health is recommending this. He also feels getting vaccinated is a personal choice. Mr. Salvucci agreed. Mr. LaMattina acknowledged the benefit of being vaccinated, but suggested providing an incentive to get employees vaccinated however, he was not prepared to discuss possible incentives at this time. Chairman Kowalski called for a vote in connection with the motion on the floor. **So voted 2-3** (Mr. Salvucci, Mr. Bezanson and Mr. LaMattina voted against). The motion failed.

Council on Aging Director Mary Holland was present to discuss the fourth recommendation of the Board of Health. She discussed the impact of social isolation on senior citizens due to the closing of the building; and explained the reason behind her request to open up the building to pods of 10 seniors at a time. Mr. Evans **MOVED** to approve the recommendation of the Board of Health to allow the Council on Aging to permit entrance for individual pods of up to 10 senior citizens at a time, with said pods being allowed to enter the building and participate in activities as seen fit by the COA Director. Pods of 10 are not to include existing staff; all areas are to be cleaned in between each pod visit or activity; and activities must maintain social distancing and mask requirements at all times. In addition, this recommendation will be revisited at the next Board of Health meeting on January 25, 2022. **Second** Mr. Bezanson for discussion. Discussion ensued regarding the percentage rate of vaccinated seniors; whether or not other towns have closed their buildings to the public; and employee and citizen complaints regarding the closing of Whitman town-owned buildings. Chairman Kowalski expressed concern with the request of the COA Director to open her building for this purpose, but indicated she would have his vote. He then called for a vote in connection with the motion on the floor. **So voted 5-0.**

Next, the Board discussed re-opening town-owned buildings. Mr. LaMattina feels the Board made the right decision to close the buildings but he agrees with everything Mrs. Holland said. Chairman Kowalski noted the mask mandate was approved so it might be appropriate to re-open the buildings. Mr. Evans, Mr. Bezanson and Mr. Salvucci agreed. Mr. LaMattina **MOVED** to re-open all town-owned buildings to the public during regular business hours beginning Thursday, January 13, 2022, at 8:00 a.m. **Second** Mr. Salvucci, **so voted 5-0.** It was noted that this vote will allow the Council on Aging to re-open fully despite the previous vote of the Board in connection with the recommendation of the Board of Health.

At 8:53 p.m. Mr. Salvucci **MOVED** to adjourn the meeting. **Second** Mr. Bezanson, **so voted 5-0.**

Brian J. Bezanson, Clerk