

TOWN OF FALMOUTH
SELECT BOARD
Open Meeting Minutes
WEDNESDAY, JANUARY 11, 2023 – 5:30 P.M. – 7:00 P.M.
LAWRENCE SCHOOL
AUDITORIUM
113 LAKEVIEW AVENUE, FALMOUTH, MA 02540
AND
FCTV CHANNEL 13

The Select Board may discuss and vote appropriate action on any item listed on this Agenda unless a different disposition is noted. At the discretion of the Chair, agenda items may be taken out of order.

Select Board:

Present: Nancy Taylor, Chair; Onjalé Scott Price, Vice-Chair; Samuel Patterson; Douglas Brown; Edwin (Scott) Zylinski, II

Absent: None

OPEN SESSION

Call to Order – By Chair Nancy Taylor at 5:30.

Pledge of Allegiance: Led by Select Board

Opening Remarks – Nancy Taylor, Chair

Chair Taylor opened the forum saying it was called by the Board in order to get input and feedback from community members on the characteristics they would look for in a new town manager. She briefly listed the types of comments that were allowable and types not allowable.

Community Input on Town Manager Selection

Ed DeWitt, Precinct 1 – Mr. DeWitt said that first and foremost, the Select Board needs to get together to determine how to supervise the town manager. He said the laissez-faire style of management did not work well with the previous town manager and referring to his work on the transportation committee, began to cite specific examples. Chair Taylor re-directed the comment to look more to the future rather than the past. Mr. DeWitt said the Select Board needed to do a google search to learn a candidate’s style of management to determine if it was a good fit for Falmouth. He said he wanted Falmouth to return to being pro-active rather than re-active, and again said that the Select Board needs to establish how it will interact with the new town manager. He also said that if the candidate is in-house, determine if the candidate is “an enabler” of the previous administration.

Ralph Herbst, Precinct 8 – Mr. Herbst cited his many years of service to Falmouth as a town meeting member, on the planning board, the CPC, and the transportation committee, as well as his experience as an airline pilot. He used a 1977 airline collision as an example of how interpersonal management style can lead to disaster, in that case, an arrogant pilot. Mr. Herbst asked the Select Board to look beyond education and work experience to explore what kind of person the candidate is, and to seek insight into this area by talking to those who have worked with the candidate. He referred to “crew resource management” as a methodology used in his work experience but thought it had overlap for town governance as well. He said it is important to use all resources to be successful. He gave materials to Doug Brown to share with the Board.

Dan Shearer, Precinct 6 – Mr. Shearer said that the town charter contains the details of what the Town needs in a town manager and said that “we want to get a very good man.” He asked that the Select Board remember what kind of community Falmouth is, highlighting the Town’s attributes as a tourist/beach town. He would like a person sensitive to the needs of the Town’s older residents, someone who lives in Town, and can think 10 years ahead. He briefly mentioned the importance of preserving Falmouth’s ability to attract good people to the community. He acknowledged the hard job the Select Board has ahead of it.

Marc Finneran, Grand Ave. – Mr. Finneran said that unlike what occurred by degrees over the past eleven years, the Select Board now needs to be “hands on” regarding all aspects of Town business. He said that the Town has good bond ratings, but the infrastructure of the Town is “falling apart.” He said the Town has “hemorrhaged” decent people and that proper hiring wasn’t done. He said there was not enough interaction between management and Town employees, and said again that the Select Board would need to be more hands on. He ended with the caution that whoever is hired, “watch him.”

Barbara Schneider, Precinct 4 – Referring to her education and experience with leadership and policy, as well as her experience on the search committee for the previous town manager, Dr. Schneider pointed out the importance of working together and being respectful of people and process. She urged the Select Board to establish common goals at the outset of the search process. She also underscored the importance of showing respect for the 285 volunteers who give their time and expertise to the Town. She said management should walk the halls of Town Hall every day to encourage two-way communication with employees, which, in turn, will build a sense of community, camaraderie, and a happy work environment.

Mary Harris – Ms. Harris enumerated a list of characteristics and/or requirements for a new town manager:

- Having a vision that aligns with the comprehensive long-range plan for the Town
- Has experience with towns similar in size and governance with Falmouth, and familiarity with laws and regulations that apply to MA towns’ municipal operations
- Possesses financial acumen and knowledge of the budget process, as well as a healthy respect for the bond rating
- Is an excellent communicator, persuasive speaker, and logical thinker with polished skills but not a “fast talker”
- Is straightforward, honest, kind, direct, intelligent, and has a sense of humor
- Uses an inspirational vs dictatorial style of management to build community

Annie Hart Cool, Precinct 6 – Ms. Cool said she agreed with much of what had been said so far and stressed the importance of the ability to work well with others. She added that the candidate should have a work history with a tourism town and an aging population. She highlighted the critical need for housing in Falmouth and that the town manager should be able to address that. She also said that the candidate should not have a history of “being booted out” from previous positions. (At this point, Chair Taylor noted the importance of the vetting process for candidates.)

Jeff Brody – Mr. Brody, raised the issue of costs related to litigation, and said the Town should try to avoid “going to court as much” by researching repeated patterns in candidates. He supported previous comments regarding respect, leadership, and the importance of a functioning Town Hall. He supported a collaborative approach and an inspirational leadership style. He would like the Select Board to instill a vision for a coastal community in the next town manager.

At this point, Doug Brown asked for comment about what the Select Board should do differently. A forum attendee asked the chair for an update on the process. Chair Taylor said that the firm of Groux-White Consulting has been hired to oversee the search/hiring process. The Board has appointed a screening committee, and the position has been posted. She said the consultant and screening committee will do their parts, and then the information will come to the Board. She said the process will take some time and that the Board wants to do it deliberately.

Ed DeWitt, Precinct 1 – Regarding the screening process, Mr. DeWitt said that minority candidates who are involved and screened out should be passed on to the Select Board. He said that there is evidence of discriminatory hiring practices in the country, and any minority candidate should get a second look.

Chinna Mapp – Ms. Mapp said that the Board should identify its “look fors, non-negotiables (things you absolutely require), nice to haves, and need to haves” to ensure getting their desired candidate. She said that the Board should pay attention to “situational awareness” during the process, realizing that no single candidate will have all desired characteristics, but that they must be able to assess all the characteristics in order to find the best fit for the Town.

Robert Mascali, Oxbow Rd. – Mr. Mascali thanked the Board for holding the listening session. He said he echoed Ms. Harris’s list of characteristics. He added that any candidate should support the concepts of “equity, diversification, and inclusion.” Regarding having to reside in Town, he said due to the high cost and/or lack of housing in Falmouth, residency should not be a must, but the candidate should be willing to be a part of the community and open to meeting with the community.

Judy Fenwick, Precinct 1 – Ms. Fenwick pointed out to the Board some features of the notice of vacancy that she felt deserved mention, features such as text that had been cut and pasted from the 1990 Home Rule Charter with no updates in qualifications, education, or experience. She noted what must have been an error in the salary range. Also, she was unable to obtain a position profile brochure that was supposed to be on the consulting firm’s website or obtainable by email. She asked the Board specifically what it was looking for from the forum, noting that the information was not going to appear in print anywhere. (At this point, Chair Taylor reiterated that the Board was seeking specific characteristics that community members would like to see in a town manager.) Ms. Fenwick went on to add characteristics that she called the four I’s – Imaginative, Innovative, seeking to Improve, and then to Implement what resulted from the first three.

At this point, brief Board comment included the need to adjust the technological features of the posted job application, and support for the “crew resource management” methodology offered by Mr. Herbst.

Donna Buckley, Precinct 6 – Ms. Buckley asked the Select Board to explain the thought process behind appointing members of a selection committee vs. soliciting letters of interest to see who would like to serve, and to clarify what would happen with the information gathered at the forum and how it would be dealt with. (In response, Chair Taylor said that while the Board did not solicit letters of interest, it did receive some. Through communication with the consultant, it was agreed that the screening committee would be comprised of 5 members, and that each Select Board member would be able to appoint 1 member. Regarding forum input, notes on the meeting would be available to the public and all materials would be considered by the consultant and screening committee.) Ms. Buckley then asked how some of the contradictory traits offered at the forum would be resolved during the selection process.

At this point, there was brief Board discussion about process. Scott Zylinski reiterated that there would likely not be a perfect candidate, but that the Board would get all the information, assess it for character and effectiveness, and do the best it could for the Town. He said that gathering public comment now adds important content to the Board’s decision-making process. Chair Taylor said that any conversation about a candidate would occur at a public meeting. Doug Brown then offered information on the charter and the limitations it imposes on matters such as employment considerations of the town manager. He said that sometimes the structure of town government can be cumbersome regarding what it allows or does not allow. Sam Patterson also said that limitations exists in all entities run by boards of directors, but in the end, the Select Board’s main responsibility is that the town manager reflects the character needed to run a successful and harmonious town. Onjalé Scott Price said that characteristics will be evaluated regarding which ones align with the charter and which don’t, and through that evaluation, the characteristics most appropriate for what the Town is looking for will be selected. Ms. Buckley said she appreciated the explanation and that she would look for as much public involvement as possible moving forward.

Ron Dyer, Precinct 8 – Mr. Dyer suggested that, as part of the hiring process, each Select Board member hold a one-on-one interview with each candidate, and then that the Board hold a group interview with each candidate separately. This way, each candidate can be evaluated on how he/she reacts both individually and collectively.

Jeff Brody – Mr. Brody asked if the town manager was evaluated by the Select Board. (Chair Taylor said yes, the Board does evaluate the manager, and submits evaluations. Review occurs at a public meeting.) Mr. Brody asked if there were enough checks and balances to achieve the goals for the Town. (Mr. Zylinski said that increasing the frequency of evaluation was possible. Perhaps bi-annually suggested Mr. Brown. Chair Taylor said that the Board has struggled with the evaluation tool’s parameters. Mr. Zylinski also said that interpretation of the town charter could be included in the evaluation.) Mr. Brody asked if the staff would be able to interview the candidates. (Chair Taylor said that would need to be checked on. She

said there should be a public “meet and greet,” and that collective narratives gathered from department heads, Select Board, and the public would be given to the candidates.)

Barbara Schneider, Precinct 4 – Dr. Schneider addressed the need to define what a goal is and then how to determine if it is met or not as a way to avoid evaluation conflicts that have arisen in the past. She said that goals should be on top of doing a correct job every day. (Mr. Patterson agreed, saying that goals could be thought of as opportunities for growth or improvement.)

Dan Shearer, Precinct 6 – Mr. Shearer reiterated the value of respecting the volunteers who work for the Town. He said a good town manager must be able to communicate with community members genuinely and openly. It’s a real community job, he said.

Robert Dugan, Precinct 2 – Mr. Dugan said he thought the residency requirement was very important and if possible, not waived. He said residency would make the town manager more accountable to the Town. He also said that closer oversight of department heads by the town manager was needed, and that the Select Board should have the same information as the town manager.

Closing Remarks

Brief Board discussion ended the forum, Chair Taylor said all comments were very helpful and the forum resulted in good ideas. She said the Board received some helpful suggestions regarding town manager oversight, evaluation, and frequency. Mr. Zylinski said that the Board must accept responsibility for the learning curve, failures, and insufficiencies of the town manager, and move forward from them. Mr. Brown suggested re-evaluating the Board’s list of priorities and goals, re-cap the high-lights, and give it to the candidates so they know what to expect. Chair Taylor said candidates should read the strategic plan.

Chair Taylor said written comments can be submitted to the Town at comments@falmouthma.gov up to January 30, 2023.

Judy Fenwick, Precinct 1 – Ms. Fenwick suggested that the Board review the section in the town charter related to the Select Board, namely, its various powers. Board members responded that they had become very familiar with the charter over the past six months.

Motion by Scott Zylinski: To adjourn at 6:44 Second: Sam Patterson Vote: Yes – 5 No - 0

Respectfully submitted,
Carole Sutherland, Recording Secretary