

**Town of Chester
Town Administrator Working Group Meeting
Tuesday, September 4th, 2018
Planning Office
Approved Minutes**

Present:

Heather Bowen
Andrew Hadik
Rhonda Lamphere
Jeremy Owens, Selectman

Absent:

Erin Newnan

Others Present:

Penny Williams, Tri-Town Times (departed 6:45pm)

I. Open Meeting

This third meeting of the Town of Chester Town Administrator (TA) Working Group commenced at approximately 6:03pm.

Although unable to attend this evening, Ms. Newnan emailed the Group some suggestions last week.

II. Continued Discussion: Areas of Need

Mr. Hadik distributed copies of the latest version of the draft job description spreadsheet, simplified and divided into four categories: Administration, Human Resources, Financial Management, and Communications. "Supervision of employee On-boarding & Off-boarding" (suggested by Ms. Newnan), "Review of all Welfare requests before they are approved", and "Review all Town Policies Annually" (suggested by Ms. Lamphere) were added.

The TA's potential role in the annual audit was discussed; Ms. Lamphere thought the TA should certainly have an interactive presence when the auditors are onsite. Finance Director Smith has been invited to attend the next meeting and will be able to expand upon this portion of the Job Description at that time.

Ms. Lamphere explained that the Town currently has no Investment Policy. As of only a few years ago, the Town did not have a Cash Policy; Finance Director Smith has since created one.

Although the Bookkeeper currently processes HR paperwork, Selectman Owens felt there was a lack of proactive HR. Ms. Lamphere agreed, adding that a TA could bring resources to employees that no one currently has time to research.

Selectman Owens noted that, in the recent past, communications have been patchy. Mr. Hadik felt that a communications policy needs to be implemented. Ms. Newnan suggested earlier adding Communications Officer (including special training) to the list; designating the TA as the frontline point of contact for the Media and the Public. This would ensure consistency and reduce liability. In general, the Town should also adopt a Social Media policy.

Ms. Bowen asked about Town Facilities management; currently all scheduling is done by the Recreation Director. Whether the TA should manage non-Recreational use of facilities was discussed; it was agreed that one person should do all scheduling. However, a TA could prioritize and manage projects at Town Facilities (maintenance or otherwise).

Ms. Bowen asked if the Town takes inventory of its assets. According to Mr. Hadik, a “rolling stock” inventory was done last year; only items such as cars or tractors were counted. Some have seen barcode stickers on various items (i.e. cabinets) but no one was aware of any ongoing inventory protocol.

Ms. Bowen asked the Group their thoughts on the TA providing training and support to newly-appointed Selectmen; it was agreed that this would be very beneficial. Selectman Owens felt the TA could give “the lay of the land” and Ms. Lamphere hoped the TA could instruct and advise on protocols and procedures. Mr. Hadik added that certain dam projects (Wason Pond, Edwards Mill) took an excessive amount of time to come to fruition due to repeatedly being put off or falling between the cracks. The TA could keep important topics “alive” on the BOS’ agenda and ensure that things (such as the employee-public safety barriers brought up repeatedly by the Joint Loss Management Committee) are addressed efficiently; reducing liability.

Ms. Lamphere noted that (although having improved somewhat in the past few years) the matter of employee evaluations / merit raises has been terribly inconsistent and must be addressed. Selectman Owens agreed, adding that a TA could warn the BOS if they are in danger of underfunding, for example.

Ms. Bowen asked if monthly revenue and expenditure reports were distributed to departments; currently Finance Director Smith does this. However, Selectman Owens noted that the Selectmen almost never discuss these reports as a group.

Ms. Bowen wondered if the Town utilizes free legal advice services from NH Municipal Association (NHMA); the Town is an NHMA member and utilizes these services whenever possible.

Ms. Bowen asked if the Town has a 5- or 6-year plan. Mr. Hadik explained that the Town has a CIP, which is 6-year spending plan, in conjunction with a Master Plan which changes much less often.

III. Role Justification

Residents will have many questions about every aspect of the TA proposal; the Group must be prepared to offer thoughtful and articulate responses. If the answer to “who is doing these things now?” is any employee or department, residents may ask why a full-time TA is necessary; it may be argued that a part-time TA would be sufficient.

Mr. Hadik suggested that roughly one-third of the responsibilities and duties listed are currently being done by various employees; another third have been done in the past but have largely fallen off the radar; and the last third are not being addressed.

IV. Goals for Next Meeting

The Group hopes to finalize its draft job description for submittal to the BOS by mid-month. The Group intends to highlight “who is doing (task) now / what task(s) used to get done that aren’t anymore / what tasks are not getting done at all”. Selectman Owens’ intent is for the Group to feel comfortable presenting how its conclusions have been reached, who has been involved, etc.

Also included will be an initial recommendation of a realistic price point plus benefits; along with professional qualifications and educational requirements. Ms. Lamphere will research NH communities of similar population to determine which Towns' Administrators have a degree in Public Administration. Ms. Lamphere will also report back with salary information she previously gathered. Mr. Hadik suggested looking into the annual salary survey published by NHMA, which the Town has used as a guideline for hiring in the past.

Ms. Bowen suggested, "And other duties as assigned" be added to the job description. Ms. Bowen will send Mr. Hadik her suggestions and questions so that he may incorporate them accordingly.

V. Approval of Minutes: August 20th, 2018

Ms. Lamphere suggested the following changes be made to the TA Working Group draft minutes:

- Lines 26 & 32: add "(Town and School)" before "budget"; omit "operating"
- Line 34: indicate that the Finance Director works remotely in addition to working ~12 weekly office hours
- Line 61: change "Selectman lineup" to "BOS membership"

Ms. Lamphere moved to accept the minutes of the TA Working Group meeting of August 20th, 2018 as amended; Mr. Hadik seconded the motion. The vote was four in favor with Ms. Newnan absent; so moved.

VI. Adjournment

The next scheduled meeting of the Town Administrator Working Group is Monday, September 17th, 2018 at 6:00pm in Municipal Complex Meeting Room. Everyone is encouraged to attend and participate.

The meeting was adjourned at approximately 7:05pm.

Respectfully Submitted,

Caroline R. Wilson, Recording Secretary