

**Town of Chester  
Town Administrator Working Group Meeting  
Monday, April 29<sup>th</sup>, 2019  
Municipal Complex Meeting Room  
Approved Minutes**

**Present:**

Rhonda Lamphere  
Chuck Myette  
Nancy Myette  
Erin Newnan  
Jeremy Owens, Selectman (departed 8:24pm)  
Corinna Reishus  
Sheryl Rich  
and John Scruton, Barrington Town Administrator via telephone (from 7:22-8:07pm)

**Absent:**

Heather Bowen  
Andrew Hadik

**I. Open Meeting**

This sixth meeting of the Town of Chester Town Administrator (TA) Working Group commenced at 6:45pm.

**II. Summary of the TA Working Group's Efforts**

The TA warrant article was tabled at 2018 Town Meeting primarily due to a lack of information on the position. In keeping with the promise made to the town that more information would be provided on adding a TA, the TA working group was created. The group first met on August 6<sup>th</sup>, 2018, and four times thereafter. Andrew Hadik created an Excel spreadsheet and the group populated it with four areas of responsibility: Administration, Human Resources (HR), Financial Management, and Communications. Specific duties, supported entities, frequency, and current handler are detailed on the spreadsheet.

The group enlisted Barrington TA John Scruton as an advisor for this process. Mr. Scruton has decades experience in public administration and is helping Barrington phase into a new TA, as he is retiring next month.

Despite not having as great a participation rate as was hoped, the working group has been quite productive. Selectman Owens brought the group's progress to the BOS on at least two occasions, but little feedback or direction was received. Selectman Owens was recently interviewed by Chester Cable to help educate residents on the TA warrant article up for vote at Town Meeting on May 16<sup>th</sup>. The working group's minutes have been posted on the Town Administrator Working Group's page on ChesterNH.org. It is important to note that all meetings have been open to the public and advertised in various ways; and that all residents, town employees, and other interested parties have been urged to participate in this process.

**III. Conference Call with John Scruton, Barrington Town Administrator**

Mr. Scruton was called on the conference telephone to discuss the final details of the TA warrant article presentation. Some individuals present this evening have not attended prior working group meetings, so Mr. Scruton and the others brought them up to speed.

The following are highlights from the group's discussion with Mr. Scruton:

- While the BOS sets policies, a TA carries out policies.
- Regularly-changing BOS membership interrupts continuity and inhibits consistency. An effective TA prevents projects from falling by the wayside simply because someone is no longer on the BOS, for example.
- With a TA taking care of the day-to-day operations of the town, the Selectmen will be able to focus less on emergencies and more on priorities. They can be less tactical, and more strategic.
- A TA has the authority to act singly; while the BOS must carry out all business as a Board.
- In Barrington, there are no departmental BOS liaisons – the TA deals directly with departments, and only brings matters to the BOS that require their attention. Boards and committees, however, each have a BOS liaison or ex-officio member.
- A TA makes it a priority to stay current on things like important legislation and available grants and therefore reduces the town's liability and improves its funding mechanisms.
- An ideal TA should be a "big-picture thinker", excellent communicator, and adept at understanding group dynamics.
- The idea of adding a TA is not to micromanage departments, but rather to provide them support -- especially considering the inconsistencies associated with being assigned a BOS liaison.
- The addition of this position can benefit a town tremendously as long as the BOS truly *want* to work with a TA, and they are careful in their selection process.

#### IV. Warrant Article Handout & Presentation for Town Meeting

The group agreed that if the warrant article passes, they would like to offer Mr. Scruton the opportunity to help the town select and transition into a Town Administrator.

Ms. Lamphere provided a draft handout to the group consisting of a job description (overview) and the Excel spreadsheet (detailed). At first glance, Ms. Reishus felt that the lack of professional requirements would make it seem as if "anyone" could apply. Ms. Lamphere clarified that she initially left the educational / experience-based requirement off in heed of Mr. Scruton's earlier advice not to focus solely on these factors – greater value should be placed on an applicant's **character**, **chemistry**, and **competence**. After some discussion the group agreed to add the requirement for minimum of Bachelor's degree and ~4 years' experience in management / administration, or Master's degree and ~2 years' experience.

The group hoped to provide enough basic information in the handout; but not so much as to overwhelm voters. Selectman Owens' PowerPoint presentation will include opportunities for Q&A. All who have been involved with the TA working group are encouraged to contribute to the handout and/or PowerPoint presentation for Town Meeting. Working group members are also encouraged to be available to answer questions at Town Meeting.

#### V. Adjournment

The meeting concluded at 9:01pm.

Respectfully Submitted by Caroline R. Wilson, Recording Secretary