

Succession Planning Committee

Meeting Minutes

Wednesday, November 18, 2020, 6:30 P.M.

Virtual Meeting via Zoom

The Meeting was called to order at 6:33 P.M.

Members present: Dan Hagan, Chair, Bernie Gigliotti, Mac Godley, John Kiker, David Lahm, Parker Lord, Steven Mattson, Claire Sauer, David Tiffany, and Susan Tyler. There were approximately twenty-five members of the public.

Hagan addressed the members of the public attending the meeting. He said that the meeting was open to the public but was not a public meeting. This means the public may attend but may not participate in the meeting. He informed them that they would be kept muted throughout the meeting and they were free to contact any Committee member after the meeting to discuss items of interest.

The Meeting Minutes for September 21 were amended as follows: 1) John Kiker's name was added to the vote to eliminate Option #1 and the vote to eliminate Option 2. In both cases, the addition of his name did not alter the results of the vote. 2) Tyler and Sauer requested the discussion on the need for additional professional help in the Town be included in the Minutes. There was a majority consensus that more help is needed. Hagan spoke in favor of the status quo stating that no additional help is needed at this time. Lahm made a motion, seconded by Gigliotti, to approve the amended Minutes for September 16, 2020. The motion passed unanimously.

The Meeting Minutes for October 21 were amended as follows: the Meeting location was corrected to the Town Hall Meeting Room not a virtual Meeting as stated in the Minutes. Sauer made a motion, seconded by Gigliotti, to approve the amended Minutes for October 21, 2020. The motion passed unanimously.

Hagan addressed the Committee regarding a discussion about the Succession Planning Committee that occurred at the Selectmen Meeting on Monday, November 16, 2020. Hagan read from the Selectmen Meeting Minutes:

"The board discussed the progress of the Succession Planning Committee that they formed on March 20, 2020. The board had believed that a discussion of preparing the future leadership of town government was a prime responsibility of the Board of Selectmen and other town leaders. The advisory committee was formed to address the

19 positions nearing or exceeding retirement age and ways to manage these upcoming transitions.

The consensus of the board was that the committee has focused exclusively on governance and has made little progress in meeting the overall charge. Misinformation has been spread in town and may result in the inability of the commission to bring forward any recommendations supported by a large majority of its members.

The board then discussed disbanding the committee in recognition that the results may not fulfill the original charge and to reduce the level of concern being felt in town based upon misinformation spread. The board voted to give the First Selectman the authority to disband the Succession Planning Committee at any time following an assessment of the progress made at the next committee meeting in addressing the charge.”

Hagan said he was shocked and disappointed that no one from the Succession Planning Committee was invited to the Selectmen’s Meeting to defend the Committee’s action and that the three selectmen, paid employees of the town, were so critical of volunteers. Hagan said he now understood why the town is have trouble getting volunteers to participate based on how the seven volunteers (Gigliotti, Godley, Lahm, Sauer, Tiffany, and Tyler) have been treated. Hagan will attend the November 30, 2020, Selectmen Meeting to set the record straight on the Committee. Hagan said the statement in the Minutes regarding misinformation completely mischaracterizes the action of himself and all Committee members. He wanted to let the Committee members know about the three selectmen’s impressions of our Committee.

Lahm made a motion, seconded by Tiffany, to eliminate the Town Manager position from consideration. It was identified that the motion did not comply with Robert’s Rules of Order, so Lahm withdrew his motion.

Kiker and Lahm led the interview of the First Selectman. Several questions and discussions followed regarding the roles, responsibilities, and required skill sets for a First Selectman. Kiker asked about the biggest threat to the Town if the First Selectman does not have needed skill sets. Mattson spoke about things not getting done and missed opportunities like bridge inspections and bank account conversions. Lahm asked about Mattson’s experience in the Town. Mattson said he thought the town leadership needs to live in and love the town but that same does apply to employees. The First Selectman is the leader of the Town and keeps the second and third selectman informed of significant items but not every decision made. Lahm asked about the budget of the Town. Mattson said the annual budget is \$10M – 12M dollars, depending on capital projects, and approximately \$6.5M (60 - 65 %) of that total goes to Regional School District 18. Lahm asked about coordination among the Treasurer, Tax Collector, and Tax Assessor. Mattson said the Treasurer is an elected position so does not report to him. Communications with him are relatively small. He gets most of the needed financial reports out of the system himself. The Treasurer comes in on Saturdays only and runs his little show by himself mostly on a manual, paper basis. The Tax Collector and Tax Assessor are employees of the town and do report to the First Selectman and he has daily conversations with them. Kiker asked about the challenges for the town looking out 4-5 years. Mattson spoke about the replacement of two bridges in town and replacements for up to 19 employees.

There is also the continuation of road and bridge improvements and taking care of the Town and pandemic related things. The town is currently in a state of emergency due to the pandemic. Lahm asked about emergencies in town. Mattson mentioned storms, hurricanes, etc. Lahm asked about how many hours the First Selectman works. Mattson said he works about 40 – 50 hours/week. He never takes more than eight consecutive days of vacation and, when he is on vacation, he stays connected to town via phone and internet. Mattson said the town hall and library have been without heat the last three days. He said he is not a facilities manager, but it falls on him to work with contractors to get the systems repaired and back in service.

Hagan asked if any other members of the Committee had questions for the First Selectman. Godley spoke about the need to provide a mechanism to provide additional support to the First Selectman's Office. Lord spoke about the roles of the second and third selectmen and that the First Selectman really runs the town. Tyler said that Lyme is small, but we should avoid thinking small also means simple. The State put frequent, significant requirements on the town. She asked if Mattson had any other cost savings ideas he could implement for the town. He mentioned uncovered catch basins, inability to accept credit card payments and pay bills electronically, solar energy, etc.; there are savings everywhere if we had time to look for them.

Mattson discussed the support he and the town receives from the second and third selectman. They are elected and are only required to come to two meetings a month and sign checks once a week. Lord does hundreds of things for the town that go unnoticed. Kiker has completely rebuilt the town's communication capabilities. Hagan noted that elected officials are free to do everything they possibly can or free to do nothing at all. He said he is very grateful to the three people in the Selectmen's office and the efforts made by each of them.

Lahm asked the ultimate question: is Mattson was going to disband the Committee? Mattson said he does not have an opinion at this time. He also said he does not think the focus of the Committee should be on the First Selectman. A long discussion was held regarding the future of the town governance and support within the town. Godley made a motion, seconded by Sauer, to recommend to the Selectmen to have the Treasurer position move from elected to appointed. A brief discussion followed. The Committee voted unanimously to approve the motion.

Tyler made a motion, seconded by Kiker, that the Committee recommend Option #3 to the selectmen. A discussion followed including a detailed description of Option #3 (selectman, town meeting, with staff additions). The Committee voted unanimously to approve the motion.

Sauer asked the selectmen what other Committee action was needed to satisfy the charter. Hagan said that since the governance model recommendation was now approved, the Committee needed to complete the succession planning work for the Town's 19 positions. Mattson said the committee should write up its recommendations to the selectmen and that he could manage the employee replacements himself. Hagan said he would write up the meeting minutes and the draft for the Committee Report to the Selectmen.

The next Committee meeting will be December 2, 2020. It will be a virtual meeting on Zoom

Hagan declared the meeting adjourned at 7:45 P.M.

Respectfully submitted,

Dan Hagan
Chairman