

**BOARD OF SELECTMEN
MEETING MINUTES – March 16, 2023**

7:00 p.m. - Chair's Introduction to Remote Meeting

Chair Cohen stated that this open meeting of the Board of Selectmen was being conducted remotely consistent with the July 16, 2022 Act Relative to Extending Certain COVID-19 Measures Adopted During the State of Emergency and that all members of the Board of Selectmen are allowed and encouraged to participate remotely.

Chair Cohen noted that the Order allows public bodies to meet entirely remotely so long as reasonable public access is afforded so that the public can follow along with the deliberations of the meeting. He added that ensuring public access does not ensure public participation unless such participation is required by law. Chair Cohen noted that this meeting will allow for Public Comment throughout the agenda. He indicated the various ways that the public may view or participate in this meeting as listed on the posted agenda.

Chair Cohen confirmed that the following members and people anticipated on the agenda were remotely present and could be heard.

Board of Selectmen

Mitch Cohen
Julianne Hirsh
Kristen Wixted
Jason Perreault
T. Scott Rogers

Others

Becca Meekins, Assistant Town Administrator
Jason Little, Finance Director

Any votes taken this evening will be by roll call.

PUBLIC COMMENT

Chair Cohen invited comments from the public. There were none.

DISCUSSION AND VOTE REGARDING PROPOSED AMENDMENT TO SENIOR TAX DEFERRALS MGL, c59, SECTION 5 CLAUSE 41A FOR INCLUSION IN TOWN MEETING WARRANT

Finance Director Jason Little was present to provide information on the Warrant Article relating to Senior Tax Deferrals. The article is focused solely on senior tax deferrals pursuant to Massachusetts General Law (MGL) Chapter 59 §5 (41A).

Mr. Little indicated that he had attended a Board of Assessors meeting where there was some discussion regarding a potential warrant article that would offer additional senior tax relief. A follow up meeting was held among various Town staff, including the Assessor's Office, in August of 2022 whereby a similar discussion ensued. Town staff across multiple departments researched options for what criteria and programs are in place in neighboring communities.

Mr. Little noted that Northborough's current income limits are set to the default in the statute, at \$20,000 per household, and the interest rate applied to the debt is also the default at 8%. The default interest rate at 8% is relatively high in comparison with some neighboring communities as shown on the next page.

<u>Tax Deferrals (59,5 Clause 41A)</u>			
	<u>Interest Rate</u>	<u>Income Limits</u>	<u>#</u>
Grafton	4%	\$40k	2
Marlborough	4%	\$62k / \$93k	6
Northborough	8%	\$20k	1
Shrewsbury	8%	\$30k	0
Southborough	2%	\$45k	3
Westborough	0%	\$40k	6

Mr. Little explained that the "41A" Tax Deferral program allows a senior to defer taxes on their property by creating a lien on their property up to a total of 50% of its equity. He added that there is little participation in this program due to many seniors either having existing liens, not wanting to pass the property on to an heir with liens attached, and/or accessing other private options like reverse mortgages at more competitive rates.

Mr. Little noted that following consultation with Town staff, he is recommending the adoption of an interest rate of 4% (from 8%) and increasing the income threshold to \$64,000 (from \$20,000), the maximum allowable at this time, in order to expand eligibility and enhance the benefit for seniors in Northborough. Mr. Little explained the thought process of how Town staff arrived at the recommendation of 4% for the interest rate. Board members agreed that 4% seems like a good rate at this time. Chair Cohen noted that he is happy that this is being addressed and suggested that the rate be readdressed every 2 to 4 years and that it be as flexible as possible for those seniors that might be eligible. Mr. Little added that the final warrant article will be reviewed by Town Counsel.

Selectman Wixted moved the Board vote to include an article on the Town Meeting Warrant to amend the Senior Tax Deferrals MGL, Chapter 59, Section 5, Clause 41A to reduce the statutory interest rate of 8% to 4% and to increase the income threshold from \$20,000 to \$64,000; Selectman Rogers seconded the motion; the roll call vote was taken as follows:

Perreault	"aye"	Hirsh	"aye"
Rogers	"aye"	Cohen	"aye"
Wixted	"aye"		

REVIEW OF TOWN ADMINISTRATOR RECRUITMENT PROPOSALS

Ms. Meekins noted that the Select Board issued a Request for Proposals (RFP) seeking responses from search consultants to assist in the recruitment of a new Town Administrator. Included within the RFP was a scope of work to be completed by the selected firm/consultant on behalf of, and in partnership with the Select Board. The scope includes immediate support in identifying and assisting with selection of an Interim Town Administrator, assistance with the formation of a Screening Committee, facilitation of public input session(s), support throughout the interview process, reference checks and employment verification, and selection and negotiation of a contract.

Ms. Meekins reported that proposals were received from Municipal Resources, Inc., GovHR USA and Community Paradigm. She noted that each consultant will make a presentation, will talk about their background and experience and will answer questions.

The March 16th meeting packet that includes the following proposals can be found [HERE](#)

The March 16th presentations can be found [HERE](#)

Municipal Resources, Inc.

Municipal Resources, Inc. (MRI) Project Team Members Buzz Stapczynski and Robert Mercier were present and each shared their individual professional experience. Together they have conducted 20-25 searches together since being employed with MRI.

Following a brief review of their recent searches, Mr. Stapczynski and Mr. Mercier provided the following answers to questions asked by members of the Board.

How will MRI solicit input from the Select Board, internal stakeholders and the public?

MRI will first meet with the Select Board who will then decide who MRI should speak with. They will typically meet with School Superintendents, Department Heads and will schedule a community listening session. They have in the past, created an anonymous email that would go directly to MRI staff.

What techniques or methods are used to move everyone involved in a shared vision of what will be expected in the new Town Administrator?

MRI will speak with the Select Board, who may suggest someone that has a good feel for the community be contacted. MRI will pay attention to what characteristics the Select Board and the community expect and MRI will work to align the ideal candidate based on that information.

Is there anything the Select Board and Town staff can do to increase the quality of candidates?

Meetings of the Select Board should be conducted as efficiently and professional as possible since potential candidates will watch Select Board meetings, Town Meeting, etc. to obtain a sense of how the community governs itself.

What strategies will MRI employ to solicit interest from a diverse group of candidates?

MRI has been successful in several communities in aligning a diverse group of candidates for the final interviews. Although MRI will not manufacture diverse candidates they do know of communities and organizations that they can reach out to based on their past experience.

What strategies will MRI employ to help the Screening Committee reach a consensus on which candidates to recommend for the final interviews?

Mr. Mercier noted the importance of establishing a screening committee with a strong chairperson that will be able to keep the committee members focused. MRI team members will stay actively involved from the beginning through the final selection and formal appointment process.

Has there ever been a situation where you have had an unsuccessful recruitment and what did you learn from it?

Mr. Mercier stated that in his experience, he has not had an unsuccessful recruitment, adding that in their proposal it states that if a recruitment is unsuccessful, they will conduct another recruitment at no additional cost.

GovHR USA

GovHR USA Vice President Michael Jaillet was present and shared his 34 years of local government management experience and his 3 years of recruitment experience working with GovHR USA. He will act as the Town's lead consultant and will be responsible for the recruitment and selection process. He will be assisted by a home office recruitment coordinator and a reference specialist.

Following his power point presentation, Mr. Jaillet provided the following answers to questions asked by members of the Board.

How will GovHR USA solicit input from the Select Board, internal stakeholders and the public?

GovHR USA will speak with the Select Board and Department Directors to get a sense of what characteristics are being sought in a Town Administrator. GovHR USA will also provide public forums to meet with members of the community. Conducting a survey can also be part of the initial recruitment process. Department directors will have an opportunity to comment on the initial pool of applicants before the finalists are brought before the Select Board.

What techniques or methods are used to move everyone involved in a shared vision of what will be expected in the new Town Administrator?

GovHR USA will meet with the various stakeholders to gather everyone's ideas of what they are looking for in a Town Administrator. Through those discussions, and most times because there is a familiarity amongst the stakeholders, a consensus is reached.

Is there anything the Select Board and Town staff can do to increase the quality of candidates?

GovHR USA encourages anyone who knows of a potential candidate that might be a good fit for the community to contact him. He would then personally reach out to that individual to encourage that they apply. Mr. Jaillet also stressed the importance of maintaining a professional reputation as an organization, which will be important to the candidate.

What strategies will GovHR USA employ to solicit interest from a diverse group of candidates?

GovHR USA prides itself on diversity and will make a special effort to reach out to diverse communities.

What strategies will GovHR USA employ to help the Screening Committee reach a consensus on which candidates to recommend for the final interviews?

Mr. Jaillet stressed the importance of building consensus amongst members of the Screening Committee. It is also important for the Select Board to build consensus after interviewing the final candidates. He reviewed what that process would look like.

Has there ever been a situation where you have had an unsuccessful recruitment and what did you learn from it?

Mr. Jaillet stated that he has not had experience with not being able to recruit qualified candidates. He noted that there was one instance when there were two candidates and the top one dropped out. Neither one of the next two candidates measured up. Following a second round of recruitments, a successful final selection was made.

Community Paradigm

Bernie Lynch, Sharon Flaherty and John Petrin were present and each shared their backgrounds and professional experience. Mr. Lynch indicated that Community Paradigm (CP) has been providing executive recruiting services across the Commonwealth since 2015. He added that CP assisted Northborough in the search for a Library Director, Principal Assessor, Council on Aging Director, Health Agent and Assistant Town Administrator.

Following his presentation, Mr. Lynch provided answers to the following questions asked by members of the Board.

How will Community Paradigm solicit input from the Select Board, internal stakeholders and the public?

CP will meet via zoom with each individual member of the Select Board to gauge what each is looking for in a Town Administrator. A questionnaire is distributed to Department Directors and to the community at large to gauge what they think is important. CP will also reach out to community stakeholders that provide community services and will conduct community forums to engage the public.

What techniques or methods are used to move everyone involved in a shared vision of what will be expected in the new Town Administrator?

CP will work with the Select Board in developing a position profile that all stakeholders are able to read in digital form. This is something that will bring together thoughts around a vision in order to build a consensus about what the Select Board and other stakeholders think Northborough needs in its next Town Administrator. The position profile and the input from the Select Board, internal and community stakeholders will provide an advantage of in-depth conversations for the use by the Screening Committee.

Is there anything the Select Board and Town staff can do to increase the quality of candidates?

It is important that the Select Board members are clear about what they are looking for in a Town Administrator and to highlight some of the things that might get an individual excited to apply. During Select Board meetings, members should share their excitement about welcoming a new Town Administrator. Potential candidates will watch meetings to see if it is a place where they will feel welcomed and supported. Direct assistance from Board members is also important. For example, sharing information about someone they know who may be interested in the position.

What strategies will Community Paradigm employ to solicit interest from a diverse group of candidates?

CP recognizes the importance of diversity and has connections with many underrepresented groups. They have been successful in reaching out and bringing diversified candidates forward in previous searches.

What strategies will Community Paradigm employ to help the Screening Committee reach a consensus on which candidates to recommend for the final interviews?

CP will build relationships and form a partnership with members of the Screening Committee from the onset of the recruitment process to make sure that all voices at the table are heard. It is important that Screening Committee members understand and are comfortable with the characteristics and skills that are being sought in a Town Administrator.

Has there ever been a situation where you have had an unsuccessful recruitment and what did you learn from it?

Mr. Lynch explained a situation where CP felt that the Screening Committee was making a wrong decision to bring a certain candidate forward for a final interview. He indicated that CP learned that there may be situations where they may need to be more assertive in their assistance to Screening Committees.

DISCUSSION AND VOTE TO AWARD TOWN ADMINISTRATOR RECRUITMENT CONSULTANT CONTRACT

GovHR USA

Board members agreed that GovHR USA was not as strong as the other firms and by consensus decided that their services would not be discussed further.

Municipal Resources, Inc. (MRI)

Selectman Wixted stated that she was really impressed with Municipal Resources, Inc. (MRI) because they did their homework and knew a great deal about what is happening in Northborough compared to the others. She appreciated their personalities and feels that they would listen to, rather than direct, the Select Board throughout the process. She feels that MRI would work more collaboratively with the Board than Community Paradigm (CP).

Selectman Hirsh likes that MRI has a larger network to reach out to, including other states, compared to CP that focuses mostly on Massachusetts. Chair Cohen and Selectman Perreault noted that there are pros and cons to that, adding that each state has its own unique character and laws. Someone from out-of-state would have an extra learning curve versus someone from in-state who is already knowledgeable and familiar with the Massachusetts laws and form of government.

Selectmen Perreault and Rogers feel that MRI and CP are both very capable and have a lot of experience with placement of Town Administrators in a number of communities that are demographically similar to Northborough. CP has some direct familiarity with Northborough through its number of previous placements in other department positions. Selectman Perreault noted that depending on the experience of Select Board members, some guidance, structure and discipline might be precisely what is needed during the recruitment process. Selectman Rogers added that it seems that CP would be quick to move ahead with recruiting an Interim Town Administrator.

Chair Cohen noted that he really likes CP and has had the opportunity to work with Mr. Lynch in the past and acknowledged that he has found some excellent candidates that have resulted in great hires for Northborough. He added that he was similarly impressed with MRI, especially since they acknowledged the changes in the Board membership following the upcoming election.

From a scoring standpoint, Selectmen Perreault and Rogers and Chair Cohen noted that looking at their paper scores only, based solely on the criteria set forth in the RFP, CP ranked slightly higher than MRI. With that being said, all acknowledged that MRI's interview made up for any lack of information contained in the proposal. Selectman Wixted feels that the interviews should have more weight than the paper scores, reiterating that MRI would work more collaboratively with Board than CP, adding that personal interaction between the consultant and the Board is most

important to her. Selectman Hirsh added that there might be a little bit of complacency on the part of CP as they already know so much about Northborough, whereas MRI will have to take a more detailed approach in educating themselves on what might be best for Northborough.

Selectman Rogers moved the Board vote to award the contract for Town Administrator recruitment services to Municipal Resources, Inc. contingent upon the review of references and to authorize the Town Administrator to execute the contract; Selectman Hirsh seconded the motion; the roll call vote was taken as follows:

Perreault	“aye”	Hirsh	“aye”
Rogers	“aye”	Cohen	“aye”
Wixted	“aye”		

Ms. Meekins reported that because Municipal Resources, Inc. did not submit the lowest price proposal, the Board is required to submit an explanation as to why they chose to award the contract to Municipal Resources, Inc. rather than the firm with the lowest price proposal. She congratulated the Board on their selection and looks forward to getting the recruitment process started.

Chair Cohen thanked Ms. Meekins for her efforts and expects that she will be heavily involved in the search process and she can be helpful to the Board in many ways.

ADJOURNMENT

Selectman Rogers moved the Board vote to adjourn; Selectman Perreault seconded the motion; the roll call vote was taken as follows:

Perreault	“aye”	Hirsh	“aye”
Rogers	“aye”	Cohen	“aye”
Wixted	“aye”		

Meeting adjourned at 10:40pm.

Respectfully submitted,



Diane M. Wackell
Executive Assistant to the
Board of Selectmen

Documents used during meeting:

1. March 16, 2023 Meeting Agenda
2. Memorandum – Senior Tax Deferrals
3. RFP – Municipal Resources, Inc.
4. RFP – GovHR USA
5. Community Paradigm