

TOWN COUNCIL MINUTES
AUDITOR SELECTION COMMITTEE-EXECUTIVE SESSION
Town Hall Council Chambers
March 7, 2022 at 6 PM

Present: Michael Molisse-Chair
Kenneth DiFazio-Councilor
Greg Shanahan-Councilor
Pascale Burga-Councilor
Christopher Heffernan-Councilor
Joseph Callanan, Town Solicitor

Recording Secretary: Diane Hachey

Chair Molisse called the Auditor Selection Committee Meeting to order at 6:02 PM.

Chair Molisse requested that the committee go into executive session for the purpose of considering applicants for interviews. This purpose qualifies under Exemption #8 of Executive Session.

The committee intends to adjourn from executive session and will not reconvene in open session.

A roll call vote was taken to enter executive session by Diane Hachey:

Councilor DiFazio-Y
Councilor Shanahan-Y
Councilor Burga-Y
Councilor Heffernan-Y
Chair Molisse-Y

First candidate was #13-Yvonne Zhao

Councilor DiFazio asked the following questions:

Are you familiar with Municipal Finance Law on Procurement & Contracts?

She stated that she is not very familiar but is a quick learner. She is pursuing her Masters in Accounting while working full-time and expects to receive it this year. Her GPA is 4.0

As Town Auditor, what role do you see yourself in the annual budget process?

She believes that money should be used for what it is intended.

Kindly summarize why you think you should be the individual hired as Town Auditor?

She came to this country 4 years ago and received guidance from her local government office. She believes one needs to be detail oriented and guarantee that rules are followed.

Councilor Burga asked the following questions:

Why are solid internal controls important in government?

She believes it is commonsense-society needs to have rules and operate effectively and efficiently. Government has strict regulations.

Why is an annual physical inventory of town capital assets important? How would you go about accomplishing this?

It is not just important in town but in every business. Records must be accurate and first importance is physical inventory not just accounting. Policies and procedures are also needed. Inventory sources need to be checked so we can project needs for the future.

What do you consider to be your strengths?

She is detail oriented, she worked in IT when in China and it was very high paced and she multitasked. This helped her organize and time manage.

Councilor Shanahan asked the following questions:

Please discuss your experience with municipal government and how you would carry over your past experience.

Honestly, she doesn't have any experience in government, but closest was when she worked in a bank in China.

What would be your goals and objectives if appointed to a three-year term as Weymouth's Town Auditor?

She would master the hands- on experience. She wants to pass the CPA exam and her MBA would help.

What do you consider to be your weaknesses and how do you handle?

Gaining a solid knowledge of the job. She can sometimes take over an assignment herself and not give to others to make sure it is done correctly. She is working on this, but also noted that she is a team player.

Councilor Heffernan asked the following questions:

How do you feel about being a sole contributor in the audit function since there is no staff to delegate to?

It doesn't concern her.

If you uncovered a significant wrongdoing in the town government who would you notify and how? What action would you take and what would you want to happen?

It depends on the detail, she would report wrongdoings to the CFO to make sure they are involved. She would report findings and evidence as discovered.

How would you prioritize requests from Councilors (as there are 11) regarding special analyses or projects?

She isn't aware of priorities now, but would be once on the job. She would weigh first very urgent requests versus the importance. If she questioned priority, she would check with her supervisor.

Chair Michael Molisse asked the following questions:

Are you available to work one or two nights per month, attending meetings that can last until 11 PM?

No problem.

Please discuss your auditing experience.

Chair Molisse noted that this was previously covered.

Do you have a past or current relationship with any member of this Council or town administration which could be considered a conflict of interest?

No.

May we contact your current employer for a reference, if you are chosen as a finalist?

Yes.

She thanked the committee for the opportunity and for their consideration. Candidate left the room.

Councilor Burga noted that she had a strong work ethic and was very personable, but there was a long learning curve as unfortunately she doesn't have applicable experience. Councilor Shanahan agrees as she has the drive for the job but the time frame for budget review is upon us, which doesn't allow for much time for training.

Next candidate was #11 Robert Brooks:

Councilor DiFazio asked the following questions:

Are you familiar with Municipal Finance Law on Procurement & Contracts?

Not municipal but private sector in procurements and contracts.

As Town Auditor, what role do you see yourself in the annual budget process?

He would verify that numbers are accurate, that each department is on goal, ensuring that all is in order.

Kindly summarize why you think you should be the individual hired as Town Auditor?

He is accurate with numbers, has a strong background in accounting, is punctual and reliable.

Councilor Burga asked the following questions:

Why are solid internal controls important in government?

Due to accountability you need to set standards for verification.

Why is an annual physical inventory of town capital assets important? How would you go about accomplishing this?

You need control, verification and accurate records.

What do you consider to be your strengths?

He is accurate, picks up discrepancies and looks at the big picture and doesn't get caught up in the details. He can also present situations logically.

Councilor Shanahan asked the following questions:

Please discuss your experience with municipal government and how you would carry over your past experience.

He doesn't have a lot of municipal experience.

What would be your goals and objectives if appointed to a three-year term as Weymouth's Town Auditor?

He would be committed to the job, is accurate and would establish relationships with department heads and staff.

What do you consider to be your weaknesses and how do you handle?

He sometimes gets ahead of himself and is hard on himself. He corrected this by making a to-do list, and exercises to release stress.

Councilor Heffernan asked the following questions:

How do you feel about being a sole contributor in the audit function since there is no staff to delegate to?

He is up for the challenge.

If you uncovered a significant wrongdoing in the town government who would you notify and how? What action would you take and what would you want to happen?

He would investigate himself and then bring to the attention of his supervisor.

How would you prioritize requests from Councilors (as there are 11) regarding special analyses or projects?

He would review all requests to determine order of priority and would delegate if needed.

Chair Michael Molisse:

Are you available to work one or two nights per month, attending meetings that can last until 11 PM?

Yes.

Please discuss your auditing experience.

He has limited auditing experience, he worked with CPA's for year- end projects.

Do you have a past or current relationship with any member of this Council or town administration which could be considered a conflict of interest?

No.

May we contact your current employer for a reference, if you are chosen as a finalist?

Sure, he works for himself.

Candidate left the room.

Councilor DiFazio questioned how he became a consultant so early in his career. Councilor Burga questioned that if he worked for himself since 2009, how would we get a reference.

Councilor Heffernan asked if it was appropriate to ask for personal references. Joe Callanan said that as long as the committee is consistent and asks the same from all candidates.

Councilor DiFazio summarized that he was very down to earth but doesn't have any experience.

Next candidate was #3 Antonio Della Valle

Councilor DiFazio asked the following questions:

Are you familiar with Municipal Finance Law on Procurement & Contracts?

He is not familiar with municipal finance but is in the finance industry and has been reporting on financials for companies for the past 10 years.

As Town Auditor, what role do you see yourself in the annual budget process?

He believes reviewing financials to make sure they line up.

Kindly summarize why you think you should be the individual hired as Town Auditor?

He was previously in sales and was a customer service representative at a financial institution. He has the ability to communicate efficiently and has a grasp of financials.

Councilor Burga asked the following:

Why are solid internal controls important in government?

Without internal controls, there wouldn't be any guidelines and rules to follow.

Why is an annual physical inventory of town capital assets important? How would you go about accomplishing this?

Overall you need to have an idea of inventory-he likened it to owning a house, and you want to know the worth and market value. It also brings to light liabilities.

What do you consider to be your strengths?

He has the ability to focus regardless of his surroundings. Cited a situation in college when he had a paper due and there was a party-he was able to zone in and complete the paper.

Councilor Shanahan asked the following questions:

Please discuss your experience with municipal government and how you would carry over your past experience.

Doesn't have specific municipal experience, but has been to Town Hall and the DMV to register his car.

What would be your goals and objectives if appointed to a three-year term as Weymouth's Town Auditor?

Once he secured the job he would do the best job possible, He asked what the career path would be. Councilor Burga answered that he could go on to become the CFO.

What do you consider to be your weaknesses and how do you handle?

Public speaking is hard for him but he can do it. He attempts to overcome by asking questions at meetings or when there are a lot of people around.

Councilor Heffernan asked the following questions:

How do you feel about being a sole contributor in the audit function since there is no staff to delegate to?

If he had questions he would ask his supervisor and he is comfortable working alone.

If you uncovered a significant wrongdoing in the town government who would you notify and how? What action would you take and what would you want to happen?

He would bring to his manager's attention and going forward would add controls or oversight so it won't happen again.

How would you prioritize requests from Councilors (as there are 11) regarding special analyses or projects?

He would determine what is the order of importance.

Chair Michael Molisse:

Are you available to work one or two nights per month, attending meetings that can last until 11 PM?

Stated that it would depend on which nights as he has a young child.

Please discuss your auditing experience.

Councilor Molisse reiterated that this question was previously answered.

Do you have a past or current relationship with any member of this Council or town administration which could be considered a conflict of interest?

Not that he is aware.

May we contact your current employer for a reference, if you are chosen as a finalist?

Yes.

Candidate left the room.

Councilor DiFazio noted that many of the candidates appear to not know the specifics of the auditor position, and he is surprised that they didn't prepare for the interviews.

Councilor Burga noted that this candidate doesn't have any applicable experience.

Councilor Heffernan was concerned with bringing up the story of when he was in college, didn't think too professional.

Next candidate was #4 Christine Cadorette

Councilor DiFazio asked the following questions:

Are you familiar with Municipal Finance Law on Procurement & Contracts?

Yes, as she worked for the Town of Marshfield under the direction of the Director of Finance and was the Assistant Treasurer.

As Town Auditor, what role do you see yourself in the annual budget process?

She believes in transparency and that funds and receipts need to be allocated properly on behalf of the residents.

Councilor Burga asked the following questions:

Why are solid internal controls important in government?

As stated previously, transparency is very important and uniformity in procedures.

Why is an annual physical inventory of town capital assets important? How would you go about accomplishing this?

Everything needs to be accounted for in order to forecast future needs.

What do you consider to be your strengths?

She is very good with EXCEL and has been in the finance field for a while. She is proficient with systems and quick at learning new systems.

Councilor Shanahan asked the following questions:

Please discuss your experience with municipal government and how you would carry over your past experience.

She had an audit and her job was to gather receipts and pertinent information. She doesn't remember if it was an internal or external audit.

What would be your goals and objectives if appointed to a three-year term as Weymouth's Town Auditor?

Being transparent to the public. She believes information and maintenance of records is key to accuracy.

What do you consider to be your weaknesses and how do you handle?

At times she takes on too much-but overcomes this by making lists of items to be done and prioritizes tasks.

Councilor Heffernan asked the following questions:

How do you feel about being a sole contributor in the audit function since there is no staff to delegate to?

She sees the role as overseeing resident taxes of the town. She feels you should double check yourself to catch any errors.

If you uncovered a significant wrongdoing in town government who would you notify and how? What action would you take and what would you want to happen?

She would start with the Town Council and ask for direction and protocol so the matter could be rectified.

How would you prioritize requests from Councilors (as there are 11) regarding special analyses or projects?

It depends on the deadlines, then the size of the project in order to ensure progress. Chair Michael Molisse asked the following questions:

Are you available to work one or two nights per month, attending meetings that can last until 11 PM?

Yes.

Please discuss your auditing experience.

She noted her past experience at State Street Bank and completion of monthly- end reports where she worked till 10PM.

Do you have a past or current relationship with any member of this Council or town administration which could be considered a conflict of interest?

Not to her knowledge.

May we contact your current employer for a reference, if you are chosen as a finalist?

Yes, if you let her know first.

Candidate left room.

Councilor Burga noted that she answered all questions well and has relative experience in Marshfield but only for a limited time.

Councilor Shanahan questioned why she was only in municipal government for such a short time but found her very poised and personable and considered her the stand out for tonight.

Chair Molisse noted his concern with her 6- month employment with the town of Marshfield.

It was confirmed that if the committee makes a recommendation to the Town Council, that it must be for two people. Councilor Burga noted that if the committee puts two candidates forward, the Council could vote no.

Councilor Shanahan suggests checking references, prior to submitting names to Council.

Chair Molisse stated that none of the candidates really qualified for the position. He suggests attempting to hire someone who is retired, changing the position to part time or possibly contracting out services. He noted that Diane Hachey reached out to the Mass. Society of CPA's to investigate potential candidates and she hasn't received a call

back. He further stated that he is not comfortable putting two candidates forward as there is a lack of experience. He feels that the committee wouldn't be completing their job if they recommended candidates whom they believed didn't have applicable experience.

Councilor DiFazio recommends that the committee forward the two best candidates and allow the Council to decide to hire or not.

Councilor Burga is concerned that we could potentially be jeopardizing someone's career as the Town Council meeting would be conducted in an open forum.

Joe Callanan confirmed that he is uncomfortable putting anyone forward due to the committee's hesitations. It was suggested to put it out to bid and procure. Diane Hachey is investigating this possibility.

Councilor Burga motioned for NO RECOMMENDATION for a town auditor, motion seconded by Councilor Shanahan. Unanimously voted.

At 7:31 PM with no further business to conduct, the committee voted to adjourn from executive session.

A roll call vote was taken to adjourn from executive session by Diane Hachey:

Councilor DiFazio-Y
Councilor Shanahan-Y
Councilor Burga-Y
Councilor Heffernan-Y
Chair Molisse-Y

Respectfully submitted by Diane T. Hachey as Recording Secretary

Approved by Chair Michael Molisse/ Auditor Selection Committee
Voted unanimously on 4 April 2022