

TOWN COUNCIL MINUTES
AUDITOR SELECTION COMMITTEE-EXECUTIVE SESSION
Town Hall Council Chambers
December 13, 2021 at 5:30 PM

Present: Michael Molisse-Chair
Kenneth DiFazio-Member
Rebecca Haugh-Member
Pascale Burga-Member
Christopher Heffernan-Member

Not Present: Joseph Callanan, Town Solicitor

Recording Secretary: Diane Hachey

Executive Session

Councilor Heffernan motioned that the committee go into Executive Session to discuss candidates. Chairman Molisse noted that this is for the purpose of considering applicants for potential interview and qualifies under Exemption #8 of the Executive Session Guidelines which reads as follows:

To consider and interview applicants for employment by a preliminary screening committee appointed by a governmental body if an open meeting will have a detrimental effect in obtaining qualified applicants; provided, however, that this clause shall not apply to any meeting, including meetings of a preliminary screening committee appointed by a governmental body, to consider and interview applicants who have passed a prior preliminary screening.

The committee's intention is to adjourn from Executive Session and they will not reconvene in open session. Motion seconded by Councilor Haugh.

Chair Molisse called the roll to enter into Executive Session:

Kenneth DiFazio-Y
Rebecca Haugh-Y
Pascale Burga-Y
Christopher Heffernan-Y
Michael Molisse-Y

Candidate number 6 (James McNichols) was brought before the Auditor Selection Committee and introduced. Chair Molisse noted that each member would ask a series of questions:

Councilor DiFazio:

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

He is currently employed at American Service Company as Accounting Manager/CFO/ and Compliance Officer.

He worked for the Housing Authority as their Chief Procurement Officer for 12 years and is familiar with but would need to review.

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

Provide accuracy and clarity by auditing town departments. He would look for payroll records and accounting records to see any issues.

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

He has internal auditing experience--his employment with Pulse Network was as an internal auditor. He currently prepares all internal controls and records.

You have software experience—are you familiar with our Munis system?

No, but he is a quick learner.

Councilor Burga:

Why are solid internal controls important in government?

Because taxpayers money is being expended and people need to have confidence in their government, if work isn't scrutinized, it reflects poorly on the town.

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

This is very important as taxpayers need to know where their money is going. It also establishes the needs of the town, what to project for a future budget and ensures that inventory is matched to records.

What do you consider to be your strengths?

Easy to get along with as he likes people, professional and analytical.

Councilor Haugh:

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

He is a Senior Accountant and Compliance Officer, Chapter Chair for SEIU Local 888, and has worked on federal budgets and grants. In his private sector experience he knows financials and is confident that he can transfer these skills.

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

To complete audits on a timely basis and work with the external auditors. He considers this an opportunity for personal growth.

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

He talks and moves too fast and is working on slowing things down.

Councilor Heffernan:

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

That is fine with him as he likes to work independently and is prepared to work on his own. He also likes to supervise staff.

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 assumes he would report to the TC President and members and would ask for further scrutiny of his funds and if individuals were found to be accountable for misdoings then they should be prosecuted.

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

He is able to multi-task and change priorities as needed. If something is amiss it would receive priority. He would want to establish a good working relationship with town departments.

Chair Michael Molisse:

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

Absolutely.

Please discuss your auditing experience.

He handles general liability insurance, 401K benefits and conducts internal audits so that insurance policies comply.

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, but he noted his loyalty with the owner of his current company.

Candidate left the room and the committee debriefed.

The committee discussed Mr. McNichols and noted that he interviewed well but didn't have the depth of auditing experience in a municipality that they had advertised for. This candidate would be workable but there would be a steep learning curve, concern was raised that he was unfamiliar with MUNIS.

Discussion ensued regarding the importance of checking all references, college degrees, social media and CORI verification. Chair Molisse noted that he in conjunction with Diane Hachey and Caroline LaCrix would verify references and that Human Resources would complete a CORI check as that is protocol for new hires.

The process as to how many candidates need to be recommended to Town Council was discussed. Chair Molisse clarified that at least 2 names need to be put forth or the recruitment process would need to be reinvented and the position readvertised.

The second Candidate (Douglas Lee) Candidate number 11 was brought before the committee and introduced. Chair Molisse explained that each member would ask a series of questions.

Councilor DiFazio:

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

Not specifically as he is not currently employed by a municipality. He does possess first- hand knowledge of school IT solutions.

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

Soup to nuts-each line item needs to be scrutinized for accuracy.

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

He has a diverse background and is an IT co-founder and owner of a company, of which he has two partners, for the past 16 years. He likes to work with numbers and suggest more efficient ways to do things IE: booking of funds within the confines of town rules and regulations.

Councilor Burga:

Why are solid internal controls important in government?

Internal controls are important in every walk of life-especially in a municipality as the funds come from people and the state-- and money must be utilized properly.

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

Depending on the time line he would develop a time line of depreciated items and perform a physical count.

What do you consider to be your strengths?

Detail oriented, meticulous and likes things to be in order. He feels these traits are important in this type of position.

Councilor Haugh:

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

He doesn't have municipal experience but does IT consulting and works with towns for a 3-5 year plan for them to properly expend funds.

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

Would ensure that procedures are reviewed and corrected if needed. Define a better way to move forward and ensure funds are properly allocated. He would also review prior years work for a baseline.

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

Spreading himself too thin, although he can multitask and is able to meet deadlines.

Councilor Heffernan:

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

He is not looking to make friends-one needs to find errors. He works best on his own, but stressed the need to have department heads assessable.

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 verify the work, ask the outside auditor to review the findings, then request an emergency Council meeting.

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

One request shouldn't have priority over another, unless it has a deadline.

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 is in charge of a sales team- which covers payroll to sales, He has a direct hand in reviewing that the correct numbers are in the correct accounts.

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, his two business partners are aware that he is here.

Candidate number 11 exited the Chambers and the Auditor Selection Committee debriefed.

It was noted that Candidate 11 doesn't have any municipal experience, yet interviewed well.

A discussion ensued as to whether or not the committee wishes to bring both of these candidates forward and the determination was made that neither candidate possessed the requirements needed for the position.

The ramifications of not having an auditor in place immediately were discussed and it was determined that as long as an individual is in place for the Mayor's budget submittal in April.

It was suggested that the committee possibly investigate an interim auditor- as it is unfortunate that the committee can't put candidates forward. It was determined that the position should be readvertised, same ad, same venues and same salary. Due to the impending holiday, the position will be readvertised on January 3 and the closing date for resume submissions will be January 19.

Councilor Haugh will need to step down as she will no longer be on the Council, and Councilor DiFazio will be out of town till the end of January. They will replace Councilor Haugh in order to have a full complement of members on the committee.

Outstanding issues cited that Diane Hachey was requested to ask of Caroline LaCriox were as follows:

- what language to use to inform this evening's candidates that they were not chosen
- request that Human Resources reach out to the remaining 23 candidates to tell them they didn't make the interview process
- when the job is reposted, what suggestions does Human Resources have.

Chair Molisse reiterated that the job search will be continued, posted/advertised on January 3 and deadline to submit resumes will be January 19.

With no further business to conduct, Councilor Heffernan motioned for adjournment at 6:47 PM, motion seconded by Councilor Haugh and voted unanimously.

Respectfully Submitted by Diane Hachey

Approved by Councilor Michael Molisse, Chair of Auditor Selection Committee
Approved 19 April 2022