

Town Administrator Study Committee
Minutes
April 17, 2012

Members Present: Mary Beth Harrity, Clarence Snyder, Mary Lou Knight, Chantal Hirtle, Peter O'Connell, Kevin Erkkila. **Absent:** Cindy Mundell.

Invited Guests: Donna Neylon, Diana Schindler

Meeting was called to order at 7:03.

The Committee welcomed Donna Neylon, current Administrative Assistant to the Brookfield Board of Selectmen. Donna was asked to describe her history in town government and replied that from 1970 – 1985 she was a Clerk and/or Selectman in the town of Oakham. Since then she has worked in multiple town departments. When asked what she saw as the most important qualities in an Administrative Assistant or Town Administrator she listed: well organized, efficient, diplomatic and knowledgeable about the workings of town government.

Donna described some of the challenges she currently encounters in performing her duties as:

- Constant traffic and phone calls interrupt her work day at Town Hall. Most productive day is Friday when she works from home.
- Can't spend the time required for grant writing, RFP's and major projects
- Current clerical support is mainly responsible for filing. Administrative Assistant would be more productive if clerical support was available to answer phone, pay bills, and do research as needed.

When asked if she thought that Brookfield would benefit from moving from an Administrative Assistant to a Town Administrator Donna replied that moving to a Town Administrator could help to:

- Reduce time Selectmen spend on routine business. Pool of Selectman candidates is limited because of large time commitment required under current system.
- Create/update job descriptions for town employees
- Monitoring work schedules – act as office manager at town hall.
- Provide timely handling of personnel issues
- Coordinate budget development and monitor budgets throughout the year
- Proactively research, apply for, and administer grants
- Hold regular meetings with Departments Heads and work closely with financial team as a peer.

Donna feels that most resistance to a Town Administrator would be due to increased salary costs. That increase could be offset by less dependence on outside experts particularly the RFP and grant administration areas.

The Committee thanked Donna for her insights and her time.

At 7:30 Diana Schindler, former Town Administrator for the Town of Southampton joined the meeting. Diana currently works for the Hampshire Council of Governments and has held both Administrative Assistant and Town Administrator positions.

Diana described the move to a Town Administrator as an investment in a town's growth and cited initial resistance to the cost and the change in the power structure. There may be a need to track savings for a couple of years and to educate the population on the benefits of a Town Administrator. Person hired as a Town Administrator should be a professional in town government.

Diana described what she sees as the primary functions of a Town Administrator:

- Budget and Finance
- Personnel management
- Research grants and new revenue streams
- Coordinate with regional governmental groups
- Supervision of projects
- Volunteer coordinator
- Create efficiencies
- Focus on Capital Planning
- Constituent outreach
- Technology upgrades

Clerical support should be provided for:

- Meeting minutes
- Filing
- Town Report
- Licensing/permitting
- Mail and phone

The Town Administrator position and responsibilities are driven and directed by the Board of Selectmen. Consensus among Selectmen is needed to determine what support they need and the amount of responsibility/authority they will delegate to the Town Administrator. The Board of Selectmen set the tone for the Administrator's interaction with Department Heads.

The Committee thanked Diana for her time and her valuable insights. Offer was made to reimburse Diana for her travel expenses and was graciously declined.

Motion was made by Clarence Snyder to accept the minutes of the 3/19/2012 meeting as distributed. Seconded by Kevin Erkkila. Passed

Mary Beth Harrity reported that the Selectmen had approved \$250 for committee expenses.

Wording in the Charge for the Town Administrator Study Committee was changed to read "up to seven persons appointed by the Board of Selectmen to include one member or representative of the Board of Selectmen and six Members-at-Large."

Sample surveys were distributed and reviewed. Mary Beth Harrity will update the survey to include a section for survey participant's role and will include the first three questions as submitted by Kevin Erkkila. Updated surveys will be e-mailed to the committee members.

Decision was made to interview Department Heads and ask them to complete the survey before sending surveys to all town employees and committee members.

Assignments for interviews:

Mary Beth Harrity – Town Accountant, Treasurer

Clarence Snyder – Police Chief, Town Clerk

Mary Lou Knight - Elementary School Principal, Water Department Head, Joe Kilmavich

Chantal Hirtle – Tax Collector, Librarian, Rudy Heller

Peter O'Connell – Assessor, EMS, Bev Lund

Kevin Erkkila –DPW Head, Fire Chief, Stephen Comtois

Next Meeting:

- Tuesday, May 1 at 7:00 in the Town Hall
- Tuesday, May 15 at 7:00 in the Town Hall

Adjournment: Clarence Snyder moved to adjourn at 9:03. Seconded and passed.

Respectfully submitted,

Mary Lou Knight, Clerk