

2020 MAR -6 AM 8:59

Minutes  
Town of Belmont  
Select Board  
Select Board Meeting Room  
Monday December 9, 2019 6:00pm

Approved by  
the Select Board on:

3/2/2020

**CALL TO ORDER:**

A regular meeting of the Select Board was called to order at 6:02pm by Chair Tom Caputo. Vice Chair Adam Dash and Select Board Member Roy Epstein were present. Town Administrator Patrice Garvin was also present.

**ACTION BY CONSENT:**

Mr. Caputo asked the Chair of the Police Chief Screening Committee Mark Paolillo to give a brief overview of the work completed by the committee.

Mr. Paolillo reviewed the Screening Committee process and the results. There were 5 candidates that applied, 4 males and 1 female. The Committee decided to meet with five candidates and ask the same questions to each candidate, prior to the interviews one candidate withdrew. The committee selected three candidates to move forward for a second round of interviews where they would present their 12 month plans that were submitted with their applications.

Mr. Paolillo noted after the second round the committee voted to recommend the two candidates that the Select Board will meet with tonight.

**Open Session to conduct Police Chief Interviews**

Mr. Caputo noted each candidate has an hour to present their 12 month plan and have an interactive process with the Select Board.

Mr. Caputo asked the first candidate Christopher Donahue to join them at 6:14pm.

Mr. Donahue introduced himself and jumped into his presentation.

Mr. Donahue discussed the mission of the Belmont Police Department and noted this is the community's first year plan not his plan. It will be collaborative and changing throughout the year based on feedback from the community and employees.

Mr. Donahue noted the 6 pillars of 21<sup>st</sup> century policing presented by President Obama and how these are important to his plan.

Mr. Caputo asked about data in policing and his thoughts on how the department can use more data in the department.

Mr. Donahue noted in 2014 he attended the FBI Academy where he learned different techniques with crime mapping systems. It is important to use the data within the Police Department to justify how the department is going to do the policing. A Crime Mapping program that focuses on different areas to identify where policing is done would be useful to the department. It is important to bring

more people into the Police Department to use more technology, and use co-op students to get better training.

Mr. Donahue continued his presentation stating he has 16 focus areas that will be fluid and changing over time. Mr. Donahue noted it is important to be involved in community policing, visiting families and making a positive police presence throughout town and that he would plan to have officers assigned to each focus area to be able to have measurable outcomes in each area.

Mr. Dash asked what are the three most important focus areas to him as Police Chief?

Mr. Donahue stated that Traffic and Transportation Advisory, Accreditation, and Racial Perception and Police bias are his top three.

Mr. Donahue continued with his plan discussing how each precinct will have two officers assigned to them to be able to do community policing and solve problems.

Mr. Dash asked how he thinks the SRO is working in the High School and Middle School?

Mr. Donahue said it is working great, the Police Department has developed a great relationship with the schools, the officers are approachable and the department has been able to solve a lot of issues and problems in the schools and at home having the SROs on site.

Mr. Donahue stated that the elderly demographics are growing and it is important for the department to assist the elderly so they are not taken advantage of. The officers should get more training to be more receptive to the types of issues that seniors are dealing with like calls seniors are receiving creating banking fraud.

Mr. Caputo asked about the relationship between the COA and the Police Department?

Mr. Donahue stated there needs to be more officers assigned to the COA that can work to understand the needs of the elderly population.

Mr. Donahue moved on to racial bias and police bias, and stated he believes it is important to rotate officers into different meetings.

Mr. Dash, inquired on how the department recruits and hires unbiased officers?

Mr. Donahue stated there is no perfect way to recruit an unbiased officer but you have to ask the right questions and do a good background investigation.

Mr. Caputo asked if he could share his thoughts on a recent community debate regarding the book *The Hate You Give*, that was assigned to Belmont students as summer reading.

Mr. Donahue noted he had read the book and it is important to be transparent. He would have engaged the officers and find out what they think, have a sit down and explain that it was not against the Police and truly explain what the book is trying to represent.

Mr. Donahue moved on to another focus area stating he would assign officers to police in businesses. He noted the department gets calls from businesses and if there are officers assigned to businesses the department can work to actually resolve issues that are seen in patterns. The Town is trying to bring in more business and it is important to allow for active problem solving by having the

Police Department involved right away. When a new business is coming to Town officers assigned to business development would be able to meet with the business and assist them with any concerns they may have.

Mr. Donahue noted the well-being of officers is important and that our officers are exposed to a lot of things and it is very important to find resources for them to be able to cope with what they deal with.

Mr. Dash asked to explain a stressful situation he has been in as an officer?

Mr. Donahue noted during the Watertown bombing, he made the decision to go over to Watertown with all of Belmont's officers to assist the horrific incident. Mr. Donahue noted he was on the news rail and the officer that got shot in the incident had the same last name as him. It also effects the people at home, people contacted his wife making sure he was okay. You have to talk it through and realize things are happening day to day, having open discussions about it with family makes a difference.

Mr. Donahue noted the Traffic and Transportation Advisory Committee is one of the highest priorities in Belmont. Mr. Donahue suggests increasing enforcement and traffic unit by 5 members, but this would not affect budget he would reassign officers.

Mr. Donahue continued his presentation and noted much of his technology, media and public relations ideas are costly and just ideas that would need to be explored before implementing.

Mr. Dash asked how would you deal with issues of privacy in regards to cameras and drones used in policing?

Mr. Donahue noted it is important to talk to the department and establish best practices. The body cameras are costly and it needs to be establish if they are effective and determined if there are any privacy issues before implementing.

Mr. Dash asked if the devices would help incidents in Belmont?

Mr. Donahue believes the drone would be effective in SWOT situations, but he is not sold on body cameras, there are issues with storage and privacy and it is important to ensure they are effective.

Mr. Epstein asked if technology is required at all for accreditation?

Mr. Donahue said currently it is optional.

Mr. Caputo asked about identifying best practices how do you identify them and implement them?

Mr. Donahue noted you look to see what works nationally and state wide. What are other accredited departments doing and follow that.

Mr. Epstein asked what other departments are accredited?

Mr. Donahue noted he knows Watertown, Lexington, and Cambridge are accredited.

Mr. Donahue noted Belmont Police needs to work collaboratively with other departments and communities. It is important to share resources and use the best approaches and work together to

provide the best resources. He noted the simulation of the school shooting in the Waltham that the department participated in and how it is a collaborative approach that he hopes to continue as Chief.

Mr. Donahue noted it is important to accept the resources offered by the Attorney General and District Attorney's office when it comes to abuse. These issues are happening every day.

Mr. Donahue showed his roadmap for the first 52 weeks which included assigning and working with the 16 focus areas to help motivate officers.

Mr. Donahue noted he is a big fan of zero-based budgeting and realizing what is important and what each individual member can contribute to the department.

Mr. Dash asked Mr. Donahue about his budgetary skills?

Mr. Donahue noted he has an accounting degree from Bentley and worked on several budgets in different jobs. When Chief O'Malley was there he worked on the budget with him and met with capital budget and warrant committee to understand the budget and restrictions.

Mr. Epstein asked Mr. Donahue about the increasing of the pool of candidates and his thoughts on civil service?

Mr. Donahue noted Civil Services creates a list with Belmont residents on the top of the list. It is important to get a more diverse and more effective police department and to do that, the department has to get out of civil service to create a bigger pool of candidates with a wide variety of people.

Mr. Caputo asked what he sees as the Chief's role with the town and community?

Mr. Donahue noted he would want to be out in the community like Chief McLaughlin. Be the community leader and show up at different events and community outreach programs. It sends the message that the police department is involved, other officers should also be present to show the whole department is vested in the community.

Mr. Dash noted Belmont became a welcoming Town in 2017 and asked Mr. Donahue how he would handle detainer requests as Chief?

Mr. Donahue said it is important for the Police Department to realize the sensitivity to these issues. The department has to be approachable to every resident and we would not engage in that type of behavior.

Mr. Epstein asked about the feasibility on regionalizing dispatch?

Mr. Donahue noted there are a lot of areas to look at, dispatch is an opportunity. Belmont could be a regional center with Arlington or Lexington. With the new facility being built the department could cut costs by being the host of the regional dispatch center.

Mr. Caputo asked what do we do about traffic in Belmont?

Mr. Donahue noted make it not as desirable to cut through the town. People are using apps to find the quickest route, no one wants traffic to go through town and the department has to work to make it harder to get through Town. Try to make it safe for people to travel through.

Mr. Dash asked how he would plan on handling the marijuana dispensary coming to Town.

Mr. Donahue said he would reach out to neighboring communities that have already experienced it to create a policy. It would be important to sit down with the businesses, neighbors and see how they feel. There needs to be transparency on how the department will deal with it by following other departments.

Can you give specific examples?

Mr. Donahue state that community members may fear what is going to happen and the size of the dispensaries. How are can the Police Department make it safer? The department has to sit down with the businesses and identify the issues and create solutions.

Mr. Epstein, noted that police find themselves in difficult situations, making decisions on deadly force, are you satisfied with the training the current force has?

Mr. Donahue noted he is never satisfied, training has to continue to evolve. Mr. Donahue noted that the training the department receives is currently through in service training every year. It is important to realize the department is doing everything they can.

Mr. Caputo any final comments?

Mr. Donahue noted he is excited to be here and excited to take over as the Chief. He has been looked up to by officers throughout his career, he would collaborate and bring the community and police department together to make a positive impact.

Mr. Donahue was thanked and the interview concluded at 7:10pm.

Mr. MacIsaac was asked to join at 7:13pm

Mr. MacIsaac jumped into his presentation of his 12 year plan.

Mr. MacIsaac noted that there is always room for change and growth, and that he plans to build on the success that Chief McLaughlin created.

Mr. MacIsaac reviewed the statistics of Belmont, population and square miles. He noted the percentage of businesses in Town and the tight budget it creates for all departments in Town.

Mr. MacIsaac noted the FY21 budget decrease of 2.45%.

Mr. MacIsaac noted there are significant opportunities coming in to the department as the new Chief, specifically being able to appoint the Assistant Chief and Captain and work with the command staff.

Mr. MacIsaac discussed his first week meeting with different groups to listen and collaborate with.

Mr. Dash asked if there are issues with IT in the Police Department noting it was one of the department heads he would meet with in the first week.

Mr. MacIsaac noted the police department is currently on their own network and he wants to find out where the department would be if there is an unanticipated event that would take the department offline.

Mr. MacIsaac noted technology is concerning and very important to the department, the department must be able to pull information out and make it readily available. The software is continuing to change and the department has to stay on top of it.

Mr. MacIsaac noted that one of the most difficult things as a Police Department is setting goals and getting back on track when something comes up that takes you off the project. The department has to be held accountable for their goals. As Chief Mr. MacIsaac would hold a weekly meeting with staff to see what is needed in the week ahead and review what happened in the past week.

Mr. MacIsaac noted the need to create positive change in the command staff, change is coming, a new chief, new captain. The change has to be positive for everyone in the department and community. Anyone in a leadership position needs to work to bring out the best in their staff. Mr. MacIsaac noted he would present and share the plan which has already been done.

Mr. MacIsaac noted assisting staff with stress is important.

Mr. Dash asked him to explain a stressful situation in his job and how he handled it?

Mr. MacIsaac stated as you get higher up in rank and you have to discipline staff it has become very stressful. He has sat on both sides of the table during contract negotiations and that has become stressful as well. These things create internal stress and you have to learn to deal with it.

Mr. Caputo asked what is your leadership style?

Mr. MacIsaac said he is a democratic style, he likes to give people the opportunity to give input to the change and listens to people's ideas.

Mr. MacIsaac noted that leadership is observation, interpretation, and intervention. In order to make interpretation correct you need to step back, see the department through the employees' eyes, got example: has the equipment been working, are the officers being asked to work longer hours. As Chief he will listen aggressively to the staff.

Mr. Epstein noted the phrase of the warrior mindset and asked if that applies to his style.

Mr. MacIsaac noted the 21<sup>st</sup> century policing by Obama talks about the change from a warrior mindset to a care taker mindset. It is important to take the warrior mindset that we are trained in and make sure there is a delineation from the training when they are responding to the community to ensure there is a care taking mentality.

Mr. MacIsaac noted that he will tell the staff he chose them and he knows they did not choose him. He is going to assume they have gratitude, they want to improve as police officers and human beings and that they want to be part of a successful police department. He will tell his staff if he is not accurate then they need to come to talk to him.

Mr. MacIsaac noted he would have officers be involved in the budget process to help them understand why certain things are being done.

Mr. MacIsaac noted taking the salaries out of the budget there is only about \$606,000 to allocate and actually budget for.

Mr. Dash asked to explain his skillset on handling the budget.

Mr. MacIsaac stated he has been doing the budget since 2012 with Chief McLaughlin and Donna Costello. He noted you try to manage the overtime throughout the year and that since 2012 changes has been made on how overtime has been budgeted.

Mr. MacIsaac noted adaptive problems vs technical problems. The core priorities are all adaptive problems that need collaboration to solve the problems. The core priorities he sees are traffic, elderly, youth, people in crisis and domestic violence.

Mr. Caputo asked how can you see the police department and COA collaborating to address the COA needs?

Mr. MacIsaac recommended assigning a liaison with the COA and having office hours there. He believes that by having more of a police presence at the COA will make the elderly more comfortable approaching the police when they need assistance. An idea would be to have officers present at the COA by setting up a work station there for them to be able to write reports there and having a police vehicle present.

Mr. MacIsaac continued his presentation and reviewed traffic enforcement. He noted all officers need to make traffic enforcement a priority. Officers that sign out a police motorcycle need to hit a certain number of citations per shift or the motorcycles will be removed from the budget.

Mr. Dash asked how will you collaborate with these different groups?

Mr. MacIsaac noted by attending the Traffic Advisory Committee, and the different meetings as well as residents. Mr. MacIsaac also noted using C4RJ and continue to collaborate and work with the SROs to assist the youth in Town.

Mr. Dash asked if he felt that the SROs are helping in Belmont?

Mr. MacIsaac noted yes, the relationship has never been stronger in his years with the police department.

Mr. Caputo asked if he could share his thoughts on a recent community debate regarding the book *The Hate You Give*, that was assigned to Belmont students as summer reading.

Mr. MacIsaac stated that one day one of the officers brought the book to him and article that said the town was forcing the students to read the book about anti-policing. Mr. MacIsaac noted he bought the book right away and read it and shared what he thought had value with Mr. Phelan and didn't think there was any reason for the department to get upset by it. The important thing is to realize as officers that people believe their life is in danger when they interact with a police officer. Mr. MacIsaac noted there was a viewing of the movie and there was an open discussion on it that he attended. He doesn't feel that he has the position to tell the school not to read a certain book. He suggested to Mr. Phelan the students review the Graham verses Connor case to see why the officers did not face charges.

Mr. MacIsaac noted in 36 years 39 pedestrian fatalities in Belmont and the average age 77 years old. Mr. MacIsaac created a presentation on it, there is a risk for this population. Emphasize the need to bright clothing, using regulated cross walks etc.

Mr. MacIsaac noted the department should explore creating resource nights for victims of domestic violence. It is important for the officer to remain in contact with the victim and ensure they are safe.

Mr. MacIsaac noted that civil service doesn't help the department create diversity. There is currently only 8 people on the list. Town Meeting will need to vote to get out of Civil Service and will allow the department to recruit from colleges with good programs. Civil Service restricts the department right now from seeking diversity.

Mr. MacIsaac noted the five year strategic plan to develop in June of 2020, engage and collaborate with the community and identify strategies for accomplishing long term goals. He stated there are five phases of the developing the strategic plan that would be distributed to the community and staff. The strategic plan would include the 6 pillars of Obama's Community Policing.

Mr. Dash asked what your thoughts on the marijuana dispensary are and how would you address it?

Mr. MacIsaac noted one of the issues would be traffic, the company noted they could use applications to place order ahead of time, but there will be curiosity of people to see what it is like. The company noted their operation is different than other towns specifically the ordering through your phone on the app.

Mr. Epstein pointed out the two slides that showed a remarkable summary of different department activities, how do you go about devoting adequate study on these areas?

Mr. MacIsaac noted he expected the studies on these areas to take about 6 months, he plans on dividing the section by the supervisors. Provide data and examples as to how the programs have made value to the department and the community. Mr. MacIsaac wants to get ahead of the curve. There needs to be a study to show why we have the department size we do.

Mr. Caputo, asked the candidate if he had any additional strategies on getting a diverse force with good talent?

Mr. MacIsaac noted the civil service has 3 avenues, recruit residents that live in town to take the test, rule #8, go to civil services and show we need a specific type of officer, or show there has been a past practice of racial discrimination when hiring officers which has not been the case. Once out of civil service, the department can recruit the best people, with diverse backgrounds. We can find an officer in another Town or City and recruit them to come to us.

Mr. Dash noted Belmont became a welcoming town in regards to immigration in 2017, what is your position in regards to detainers and federal ICE.

Mr. MacIsaac noted he wants to make sure the officers don't violate their oath. It is a great thing that happened and the Police Department has to have the same value of the community. As far as detainers, the town does not hold anyone here, the resident would go directly to the court house, the Town doesn't hold anyone and it up to the court to decide. If you are an undocumented immigrant



in Belmont it is important for the community to know we will not turn someone over to ICE or have them deported by the country.

Mr. Epstein, asked if there is low hanging fruit in the Belmont Police Department?

Mr. MacIsaac, noted his plan is about creating an attitude and philosophy for the department for the Town. Mr. MacIsaac noted he would love to be accredited but it is a process and the department has to continue to establish the command staff before working to get accredited. There is a lot of resources needed to become accredited.

Mr. Caputo asked what do you do to identify best practices and what do you do to see them through?

Mr. MacIsaac noted you need to get the good ideas from collaboration and communication. The officers bring things back from training, the department has to be willing to try new things to improve the organization. The back office stuff needs to be improved, the department has a great software program that is only being used for 10% functionality.

Mr. Dash asked what are your thoughts on body cameras and drones and the privacy of them?

Mr. MacIsaac stated he thinks they are good for the officers and the civilians, the public records laws is unclear where the body cameras fall. The storage of the data and how long does it need to be stored for is still unanswered. It is very expensive and he does not believe the Town can afford it right now. The drone would be effective in areas like Town Day, both would be more of wish list items for the department.

Mr. Epstein asked if you are concerned about managing a budget that is shrinking, especially given the staffing demands from new technology?

Mr. MacIsaac noted it concerns him for the officers, they will be working with less. The Town has to receive the services they need, and it is important to look at the department thoroughly to determine what can be cut and what needs to stay. Officers are aware of the budget constraints.

Mr. MacIsaac noted he is excited and has enjoyed the process and hopes he is able to serve the Town of Belmont as Police Chief.

## **Discussion**

Mr. Dash thanked the screening committee and noted he agrees with Mr. MacIsaac's top priorities and that he gave concrete Belmont examples, was very specific and strategic. In short Mr. Donahue sounded like a great cop. Mr. MacIsaac sounded like a great leader.

Mr. Epstein noted they are two great candidates. The major difference is that Mr. MacIsaac is more attuned to the issues on the management side of things and Mr. Donahue has given thought but Mr. MacIsaac has more actual experience managing these types of problems and has thought about solutions in a way that reflects that experience. Mr. Epstein believes Mr. MacIsaac is a stronger candidate for the Town right now.

Mr. Caputo is in the same position, thinks there are two great candidates. Mr. Donahue has great experience as an officer and appreciates his financial background. Mr. MacIsaac is a proven police

leader, excited to see the depth he seems to understand the issues. Mr. MacIsaac has a belief in continuous improvement and is very thoughtful in leadership and has the ability to collaborate across the town. Two very good candidates the nod goes to Mr. MacIsaac.

Mr. Caputo thanked the search committee for being thoughtful and thorough in this process.


Mr. Dash made a motion to appoint James MacIsaac as the Police Chief for the Town of Belmont subject to the successful completion of contract negotiations, Seconded by Mr. Epstein. Vote 3-0-0.

Mr. Dash made a motion to adjourn. Seconded by Mr. Epstein at 8:22pm. Vote 3-0-0.

Respectfully Submitted,

Shawna Healey

HR Generalist

  
Respectfully Submitted,  
\_\_\_\_\_  
PATRICE GARVIN, Town Administrator