

**RECEIVED  
TOWN CLERK  
BELMONT, MA**

DATE: March 25, 2021  
TIME: 10:38 AM

Meeting Minutes  
SELECT BOARD MEETING  
THURSDAY, JANUARY 21, 2021  
6:00 PM

Approved by  
the Select Board on:

3/15/2021

**CALL TO ORDER**

A special meeting of the Select Board was called to order at 6:00 pm by Chair Roy Epstein. Vice Chair Tom Caputo and Select Board member Adam Dash were present. Town Administrator Patrice Garvin, Chair of Fire Chief Screening Committee Dan Halston and interim HR Director Shawna Healey were also present.

Open Session to Conduct Fire Chief Interviews:

- 6:00 PM – Wayne Haley
- 7:00 PM – James Peplau
- 8:00 PM – David DeStefano

Epstein announced that the Chair of the Fire Chief Screening Committee, Dan Halston, will speak about the selection process and then each candidate will give a brief personal statement. After that the Select Board will ask questions of the candidates, and then the Select Board will deliberate and make a decision about their choice tonight.

Summary of search process by Dan Halston:

The Fire Chief Screening Committee had seven meetings from October 2020 to January 2021. The consulting firm Municipal Resource Inc. was contracted to assist in the screening process. The Screening Committee received 21 applications. One applicant withdrew, and the remaining 20 candidates represented 12 states. Seven out of 11 candidates submitted application essays to MRI. Six of the seven were selected for telephone interviews and comprehensive background checks. An Assessment Center was conducted with exercises in tactical, role playing, and impromptu exercises. The assessment was held in mid-December, at which time, MRI provided the results to the Screening Committee. The Committee then interviewed five candidates virtually and the candidates were scored. After additional meetings to discuss the candidates, the Screening Committee voted unanimously to recommend the three candidates invited for this evening.

Epstein explained that the Select Board made a list of questions to ask each candidate.

Acting Belmont Fire Chief Wayne Haley began with a statement about his background and interest in the position.

Questions from Select Board to Wayne Haley

Epstein:

What is your management style and how will that style fit Belmont? What are your strengths and weaknesses as a leader? And how do you think you can improve on those weaknesses?

Haley:

He said he feels that he has an empowering leadership style. Seeking feedback enables him to help those in charge to understand other's needs. This may also be a weakness if he becomes too empathetic.

Caputo:

What are your top three strategic priorities for your first year?

Haley:

1) Fill the vacant Assistant Chief position. Adding an Assistant Chief would hopefully result in a few internal promotions; 2) Another high priority for him is to help answer questions in regards to potential override service related questions, and; 3) Enhance and develop community engagement in the fire prevention area.

Dash:

What are your views on increasing diversity in Belmont Fire Dept?

Haley:

In Belmont, four out of 50 firefighters are women. We are restricted by results on the Civil Service test for new hires. He says Belmont has had minorities in the last 30 years but they are retired now. He believes that through enhanced recruitment techniques and targeted advertising that more diversity can be achieved.

Epstein:

Are there innovative ways to provide fire and rescue services more efficiently? How would you assess the suitability of those methods for Belmont.

Haley:

For last 25 years we have been running a minimum shift of 11 staff in Belmont Fire Department. This number is below FPA standard recommendations. He would like to meet the FPA standard, but knowing it's not fiscally feasible, he will strive to meet efficiency with that number. Staffing per vehicle is less than what we would like, but we have made it work for 25 years.

Caputo:

Who do you see as the vulnerable members of our community and as Fire Chief what would you do to effectively address this?

Haley:

The most vulnerable population in Belmont are our elderly. As a member of the Age Friendly Advisory Council he meets regularly with the COA and Senior Center staff and they have reviewed hazardous conditions in town and discussed ways to make them safer. His goal is to hire a staff to work on fire prevention, focusing on elderly living quarters and personal care.

Dash:

How do you assess the potential for increasing regionalization with mutual aid and resource sharing between Belmont and neighboring towns?

Haley:

He concurred that this would be a great focus. Partnering with other communities could leverage our resources and outcomes. This type of regionalization has not been done in a large scale on the East Coast, but there are models to look at on the West Coast. Regionalization offers a better pool of resources; and allows for standardized vehicles equipment, uniforms, and procedures. He would be willing to be on any committee to research this goal. He feels he has a good relationship with other communities. Currently as acting Chief he is working on collaborating with the Watertown Fire

Department to share a fire engine with three staff. Also, Lexington Fire Department is now assisting in areas near Winter St. He also plans to build future collaborations with Waltham, Arlington and Cambridge.

Epstein:

Our town is faced with an upcoming operating override. If it does not pass, how do you envision tackling cutting expenses? What implications do you anticipate that a failed override will have on services and how would you communicate this impact to residents?

Haley:

Cutting staff would reduce our already below standard 11 man crew. As soon as we get down to 10 staff, we would lose a fire engine in Belmont center and it would start to limit our ability to provide mutual aid. Our response rate in the Winnbrook or Belmont Hill area, may have to be increased to a 12-minute response. That is not acceptable. He says he would advocate for the Fire Department, but he also realized that he has to work with what he's given. If a reduced force was imminent, he would not want to put the Belmont ambulance out of commission. It's important to continue to provide mutual aid. He thinks it's important to attend the Belmont public meetings to communicate to people about cuts to services. In the past, he has met with members of the Warrant Committee about community outreach. It is important for the Fire Chief to attend every meeting necessary to communicate what is needed.

Caputo:

Explain how honest communication, honor and integrity relates to developing quality relationships with public town employees and committees. Give an example of how your honesty or integrity may have hurt or embarrassed you in the past with these constituencies.

Haley:

Clear communication has always been my strength. I am always honest with committees and town leaders. I have concerns with fire response to the community path. I want to go on record as protecting the safety of Belmont.

Followup Questions:

Epstein:

Are there any services you would like to see added to the Fire Department?

Haley:

We were first to have an airlift ambulance. Chief Frizzell was a strong proponent of this. We used to have to wait 15 minutes for paramedics to arrive, but now they come in five minutes. A stationery vehicle has to exist to administer necessary things before leaving scene of emergency. I'd like to expand that to community para medicine to prevent as many hospital trips. The community para medicine team could administer and communicate with hospitals to take care of the patient in the community.

Dash:

Do you see any changes you would make to organizational structure?

Haley:

In the 80s, the town eliminated the Deputy Chief position. That position was replaced with the Captain position. My plan would be to bring back the Deputy Chief position either through or outside of Civil Services. Adding this position would be beneficial for morale.

Caputo:

If you were to be selected as the Belmont Fire Chief, what you want your legacy to be?

Haley:

He said he would like to be known for bring back the Deputy Chief position and for expand services to include community para medicine. We already have two new fire stations and new equipment. Chief Frizzell did such a great job of shoring up our services, that those are the only two I would like to see.

Wayne Haley Closing Remarks:

Mr. Haley thanked the committee and Select Board for a smooth process. I fell in love with fire services because of the mentors and colleagues I had in Belmont. They encouraged me to study. Belmont provided me the opportunity for training and education. This has been satisfying. Whatever happens, I would still like to come to work. I think I have a lot to offer to town. I'm hoping to continue to be given the opportunity to keep paying back what was given me.

[Epstein proposed a five-minute break until 7 pm and next interview.]

[Roy Epstein resumed meeting by introducing Candidate 2, James Peplau, Battalion Chief from Waterbury, CT]

Opening statement from James Peplau

Mr. Peplau stated that he has been a Battalion Chief in Waterbury, for 26 years. Waterbury is a city of 107K people. It is a city of predominantly suburban neighborhoods; the city has 204 firefighters, with 20K calls annually. He said that Battalion Chiefs also participate in an administrative capacity. He feels that he has a strong sense of service, and focuses on helping others. James studied Engineering in college at Rensselaer Polytechnic Institute. He feels he is a well-rounded leader in emergency services, especially EMS delivery systems. During his tenure at Waterbury, he finished his MBA in Business Solutions. He has also served on heavy rescue HAZMAT operations. He said he also has behind-the-scenes experience and training in fire investigation. As a fire officer, he got involved in HAZMAT training and he became an Incident safety manager. In that capacity, he worked with community departments. During his tenure in Waterbury, he received \$15M in grants and he has used these grants to purchase uniforms and protective gear and to implement training programs. He organized fire fighters to install smoke and seal alarms. He said he finds enjoyment in speaking with residents. He has taken IFF classes, served on executive boards, and received distinguished fire fighter of the year in 2017. He hopes to continue to work to deliver high quality services effectively. He is applying for this position because he wants to work in a community with a strong sense of service, like Belmont.

Questions from Select Board to James Peplau

Epstein:

What is your management style, how will it fit into Belmont, and what do you feel are your strengths and weaknesses as a leader, and, lastly, how do you improve on those strengths?

Peplau:

He feels that a Fire Chief needs more than one style. The basis of the job, is enabling town firefighters support each other in their joint mission. He feels that the best approach is collaborative, with open door policy. He thinks that inviting input from all levels of organization, either through chains of commands or by committee, works best. The only exception collaborative approach is during

emergencies because that work needs to be done quickly. From what he knows of Belmont, it seems to be a town that celebrates collaboration and has talented people to volunteer or be employed by town to work successfully in collaborative goals.

Peplau feels that his strength is intelligence. This strength helps him to use integrity to help build trust with those he works and passion in providing high quality services. He feels that his weakness is often the pursuit of perfection. He is working on trying to establish concrete deadlines for himself that can help him overcome this weakness.

Caputo:

What are your top three strategic priorities for your first year?

Peplau:

As an outsider, my strategies are to find the functionality gaps and prioritize and address those gaps. There are several ways to benchmark performance. He would start by working with the current leadership to understand root causes and begin addressing them. He would make sure the department functions effectively to identify highest priority efficiencies and then benchmark with like communities and keep improving the department using those benchmarks.

Dash:

What are your views on increasing diversity in the Belmont Fire Department?

Peplau:

Town employees should reflect the same demographics as community at-large. He is in favor of attempts to diversify workforce while maintaining standards of the workforce. He said he wouldn't lower standards to recruit, but instead make sure recruiting efforts are broad based.

Epstein:

Are there innovative ways to provide fire and rescue services more efficiently and how would you assess the suitability of those ways for Belmont?

Peplau:

I believe we should be using technology to better convey information and using Mobile data terminals through dispatching systems is one way to use better technology. Technology should assist sharing resources. In his analysis of the response history of Belmont and surrounding towns, he thinks that utilizing better technology could prevent duplicated services for resources that have low utilization rates. He would look at who is using similar services and try to get broader representation of department. Regional aspects, shared resources, larger role in paramedic care and not having staff truck of your own impact efficiencies.

Caputo:

Who do you see as the vulnerable members of our community and as Fire Chief what would you do to effectively address this?

Peplau:

sometimes the unseen are the most vulnerable members of the community: the elderly, young, homeless and low income. To reach them, he would attempt to use the model similar to "The HUB" in Chelsea. This is a group of city department and social service agencies that meet periodically and work collaboratively to solve specific problems by targeting the right groups and individuals. This model could be used to tackle problems like the opioid crisis. This is a good tool for identifying need and providing what is needed.

Dash:

How do you assess the potential for increasing regionalization with mutual aid and resource sharing between Belmont and neighboring towns.

Peplau:

In New England we have small hamlets and we build capacity and try to answer calls on our own. We should look holistically to provide higher levels of service. Utilization rates for apparatus may not be high and can be shared, but then there are times you need certain apparatus in emergencies. Fires are infrequent but high risk and we have to be strategic and realistic about the risk of shared resources. He believes that there are places where we could reduce services in certain areas and still maintain adequate coverage.

Epstein:

Belmont is faced with an upcoming budget override. If this override does not pass, how do you envision cutting expenses? What impact do you see a failed override would produce in town and how would you communicate this impact to residents?

Peplau:

He replied that you cannot save money on the non-wage and benefit costs, and it would not be safe to strip out costs of supplies and equipment. The rest of budget is wages and benefits. If there is a significant cut to the Fire Department budget, we could approach the union to spread the pain over existing employees. He feels that laying people off should always be the last step. But if layoffs are necessary, he feels that one of highest priorities would be to support the person laid off in getting another good job. He emphasized that when there is an emergency, such as a structure fire, there are jobs that need to be done and we need all the firefighters we can get. It creates risk when you have to lay off firefighters. Budget affects operations. You can try to train firefighters to work with a reduced force, but it's difficult for them to move more thoughtfully when they are put in danger. He said he would make sure that the true impact of cuts are communicated in real terms to the citizens.

Caputo:

Explain how honest communication, honor and integrity relates to developing quality relationships with public town employees and committees. Give an example of how your honesty or integrity may have hurt or embarrassed you in the past with these constituencies

Peplau:

He said he believes in building collaboration to help people share and work towards solutions. Sometimes integrity involves sharing things that can be embarrassing. I don't have specific examples, but I know it's important to be sometimes have to say you don't have the answer, but you will look into it. He said he is aware that different groups may know more than he does. Every group has their own particular lingo, and often you have to tease out answers in layman terms. If you ask questions to get the right answers then you are more apt to arrive at a genuine answer.

Followup questions:

Epstein:

I was struck by what you said about Chelsea. Have you seen that in other communities?

Peplau:

James said that the Chelsea model has gotten a lot of publicity. He said Waterbury didn't build something like The Hub so he doesn't have direct experience with the model. But he thinks that building a similar process/model would require getting an understanding of who the stakeholders are.

This could be an efforts that involves the combination of fire, police, COA, public health, local health care providers, and social services agents.

Caputo:

If you served a long career, what would you want your legacy to be upon retirement?

Peplau:

He said he has received many grants and he has never wanted his name on any of them. For him, it's about the mission more than the recognition. It's about who he serves. He would prefer a legacy of dedicated, humble service, competently carried out and delivered. His greatest satisfaction is helping others. He hopes that the model he set for others would be his legacy.

Dash:

Do you have any ideas for proposed changes in Belmont Fire Department structure?

Peplau:

He said he does not have any specific ideas yet. He would want to be able to evaluate how it runs before he makes changes. He knows that the former Fire Chief wanted to focus on EMS Coordination. He thinks that might merit consideration, but he understands the economic challenges that are present. People are asked to wear multiple hats. Before he makes any decisions about changes to EMS, he would like to know how duties are distributed and how the EMS shift works. He would not advocate changes, until he understood how EMS training and service is carried out.

Peplau Closing statement:

He said has always pursued a path that led him to be a capable leader and he has worked across departments while delivering successful solutions. Fire service may have chosen him, but he is honored to have served. Many of the best people he knows are firefighters. Firefighters are like a supportive family; they help each other automatically. It has been an honor to lead other firefighters to deliver high quality services. He makes a special effort to thank others for any help he receives. It was gratifying to see what my references said about me and I feel honored to have reached this stage of the process. He expresses his sincere gratitude to his supporters. Friends and family are the stars of his life.

[Roy Epstein resumed meeting by introducing Candidate 3, David DeStefano, Battalion Chief from North Providence, RI]

Opening statement by David DeStefano:

Mr. DeStefano said he would like to share some of his background and attributes. He has a Master's in Public Administration and a Bachelor's in Fire Science. He is nationally certified as a fire and safety officer and fire service instructor and has certificates from the national fire academy of FEMA in emergency planning management, multi hazard planning for schools as well as active shooter incident response. He has been on the N. Providence Fire Department since 1989 and currently serves as a battalion chief in the operations division. The N. Providence Fire Department protects 40K residents living in 5 ½ square miles. It is the only ISO class 1 fire dept. in RI. There are 8000 incidents per year, and they have 100 fire fighters with four platoons working from three firehouses. He said that in his position, he integrates with all levels of government. He is responsible for coordinating emergency and administrative functions including investigating citizen concerns, Human Resource support and evaluation of performance of subordinates. He also interacts with external and internal vendors for procurement of supplies and services. He was in charge of designing all department Class 1 ISO training

programs. He supervised annual performance requirements for certification and maintained budget guidelines for personnel program and equipment required for safety and training. He developed occupational and safety standard programs with OSHA and FTAs. He also coordinated the annual medical surveillance program for 100 employees and Instituted training programs to improve awareness for behavioral health issues. He was also responsible for investigating and documenting all organizational injuries and maintaining a database and analysis matrix for that project. He has worked as a contract instructor for RI Emergency Management. In this role, he taught command structure to health care providers, managers in all levels of government, managers critical infrastructure, scientists, and military managers Rhode Island. He has also developed curriculum and coordinated program and classes for RI Fire Academy. He has been an instructor since 1998. He co-developed the first hybrid, online course for academy. He also has experience as a tech writer and writes for Fire Service magazine, and works with Oklahoma State University publication house and was selected to help write three training manuals for North America. He serves as subject matter expert for the US edition of best selling publication *Municipal Emergency Operation Center*. He participates jointly with other municipal depts. to maintain warning centers and standards of public safety coverage and access to transportation. He works with law enforcement in fire department active shooter response training. He is responsible for mass casualty decontamination for a major portion of RI. Writing policies, institution programs to leverage resources for small fire departments has been the cornerstone of his work. He has extensive experience writing policies and developing curriculum for small fire departments. And he lectures at international fire department instructor conference. He works as Instructor and consultant in venues regarding policy development, new equipment and procedures and incident command exercises.

As Belmont Fire Chief, he would use his experiences to provide citizens the best fire department possible. He outlined seven strengths and goals: 1) His first responsibility is to the residents and fire fighters of Belmont, working as a capital steward of financial human resources. He believes her could find common ground and has a reputation as firm and fair leader. 2) He said he would have an active voice and provide input, both internal and external, to stakeholders. He would provide a report card type approach on performance so criteria could keep the fire dept accountable and elevate visibility and morale. 3) He would use research and planning skills to undertake community risk assessment, and set standard of cover for hazardous protection. With this data, he said, Belmont can plan for the future for nature of hazard and response capability. 4) With years of writing, he can be messenger for community safety. He will seek cooperation of all our members raising exposure of work for community. 5) Use his education and experience to analyze operating budget to glean the best advantage with resources provided. If duplication is discovered, then he would capitalize on savings. 6) He will use scientific research to mesh technology and equipment to arrive with best practices to leverage resources. He is strategically positioned to do this, given his nationwide exposure to fire experts and his years experience with teaching programs. 7) His experience working with law enforcement and as speaker and instructor as well as building coalitions with working groups, makes him positioned to open up the fire department to recruit people who never would have considered fire fighting. His passion for fire service would inspire others. He feels his education and passion could lead the Belmont through challenging times to a great future.

Questions from Select Board to David DeStefano:



Epstein:

What is your management style? As Fire Chief how will it fit Belmont? What are your strengths and weaknesses as a leader and how do you improve on your weaknesses.

DeStefano:

His management style is one of inclusion. No one does anything alone. He wants to work as part of a team in the town and the management of day to day activities of department. Getting buy-in from all aspects of the town is important to him. He promises to provide firm and fair leadership by listening to others.

He said his strengths are the ability to work with diverse groups and bring people together whether citizens, elected officials, other firefighters or town administrators. His determination is to advance fire service as he has done for over 30 years.

He feels his weakness is that he sometimes thinks his relentless pursuit of perfection can work against him.

Caputo:

What are you top three strategic priorities for first year?

DeStefano:

Life safety, incident stabilization, and property conservation. As Fire Chief, he would evaluate our capabilities and leverage capabilities using the best policy, trainings and people

Dash:

Tell us your views about increasing diversity in the Belmont Fire Department.

DeStefano:

Diversity is good for all. The more representation the better off we will all be. Part of it is making folks aware that fire fighting could be a great career. It's our challenge to find those people who would be good fire fighters. He suggests that putting our heads together with educators and town, and business owners would help this search. Most important is reaching out to people who don't know what direction they want to go, people who have never thought they wanted to be a firefighter. He would like to see direct recruitment drives. He also said one of the most successful ways of recruiting candidates is by raising stature and profile of Belmont Fire.

Epstein:

Are there innovative ways to provide fire and rescue services more efficiently? And how would you address the suitability for Belmont?

DeStefano:

Efficiency is driven by capability, your equipment and policies and the way you leverage your personnel to achieve. Having the best policies that coincide with your capability and equipment will lead to the highest productivity. The most important question is to ask do we have the capability to use resources to our advantage? And evaluate if there are resources that we can take advantage of in Belmont or in surrounding towns that we can leverage to assist us.

Caputo:

Who do you see as the vulnerable members of Belmont? As fire chief what would you do to address their needs?

DeStefano:

Vulnerable members are the very young, very old, and very poor. Those are the demographics most in need of fire and rescue services. Belmont's elderly pop is about 12% and Belmont has young people too. I don't believe Belmont has a large poverty problem but those are always the most at risk. To

address the young, we need to talk to parents or education providers. We can address older people through the Council on Aging. He said a multi level approach is always the most successful. Once we get past COVID, we need to meet and greet seniors in person at Senior Centers or where ever we can find them. We will have ambassadors to reach out and keep them safe, whether getting ready for winter or summer dangers.

Dash:

How do you assess potential for increasing regionalization, mutual aid and resource sharing between Belmont and neighboring towns?

DeStefano:

The First thing is to look at is what resources are available. Existing mutual aid agreements need to be reviewed to make sure they are still current and ensure their applicability to today's world. If we stay active and network as a fire fighter unit, the we can keep current with identifying what is important to today's world. Then next look at duplicate capabilities.

Epstein:

Belmont is facing override for operational costs. This has to be passed by voters. If the override does not pass, how do we address cutting costs at fire department? What impact on services do you anticipate with a failed override and how would you communicate that impact to residents?

DeStefano:

We would need to keep the community Informed about our capabilities, directly and through Select Board. If override failed, and budget needed to be modified, the last thing we want to impact is service delivery. He said he would start at bottom and work his way up. Look for things that don't impact the ability of the department to complete our mission in the next fiscal period. Then make it clear to the residents, that any cuts projected for more than a year out, will erode capabilities.

Caputo:

Explain how honest communication, honor and integrity relate to developing a quality working relationship with public and town committees and employees.

Can you provide example where honesty has hurt or embarrassed you in the short run but benefited you in the long run.

DeStefano:

People find out quickly if you are not honest particularly in the fire chief role. Honesty is so important, but it's hard to tell people things they don't want to hear. He said if he might be tasked with developing policies and orders not everyone will like. But as a Fire Chief, the residents of Belmont and my fellow firefighters will get someone who is looking out for them, and who tells it like it is. There are times when I have not been the most liked Battalion chief. Unfortunately, it's not a popularity contest. I want to make sure citizens stay safe and firefighters go home at the end of day.

[Followup questions.]

Epstein:

Do you have particular observations about the Belmont ambulance fire and rescue.

DeStefano:

He said he comes from a place where 72% of responses are EMS services. He said all he knows about Belmont EMS is that you're operating with one ALS rescue unit and backed up by one private ambulance service. We need to leverage the private service and make sure that we getting the most out of the

dollars returned in billing process. We are not a for-profit department, but we would still want to get the most out of the EMS revenue stream. He said he is well versed in deployment of EMS resources and he has operated numerous EMS incidents of different types. Fire based EMS is a fantastic delivery system. When a fire department is intimate with the community, you are best equipped to provide the best EMS/ALS service

Caputo:

if you were to be offered and accept the job and have a long career, what would you want your legacy to be?

DeStefano:

The most important legacy he could have, is that he is a good firefighter who cared about the people who worked for him and who he worked with. He would want to be known for doing his best to protect the people he was charged to protect and he did they very best for fellow firefighters.

Dash:

Did you look at our organizational structure? Would you revise?

DeStefano:

He said he has seen a rough organizational structure but he doesn't know how it meshes with actual day to day capability. Looking on paper, it looks good for town size. If people are participating as they should to full effect, it looks like a well-run fire organization. But things change and we may need to revise according to changes in the last years.

David DeStefano Closing statement:

He wants to thank Belmont. Everyone has been helpful and kind and forthright and professional. He felt comfortable going through the process. He recapped that because of his educational training and experience and passion he can offer 100% of what he is in those areas. He has worked 30+ years to become fire chief. He feels that the Belmont Fire Department is the perfect venue for his skills as a leader and he feels he has the ability to leverage resources well.

DeStefano asked about timetable on decision?

Epstein said it won't be long. Hopefully tonight!

[Five-minute break. Reconvene at 8:35.]

Discussion on Fire Chief Candidates and Possible Vote on Appointment

Epstein said they just concluded interviewing three candidates.

Epstein said he wanted to thank MRI and the screening committee for delivering really exceptional candidates. However, because they are all excellent candidates, it makes selection more difficult. He said he thought about each individual since receiving their materials. Select Board met individually with them last Saturday. He feels the interview questions tonight helped to deepen what they have to offer and it's evident they each have a lot to offer.

He said he would like to make a decision this evening. His choice would be to have a combination of the services of both Wayne Haley and David DeStefano. They complement each other well. David

DeStefano as Chief and Wayne Haley as Assistant Chief. If Haley was made Assistant Chief, then he would like to see his role reexamined to make use of his considerable background. He said his goal would be to make it professionally rewarding for both men.

Dash liked them all. He thought Wayne Haley was impressive in this interview. He knows the town and department so well and Dash said he liked his idea about home paramedic. He liked James Peplau's outside of box ideas about analyzing truck service. However, he also thought his answers were vague. Dash felt that David DeStefano had a good attitude and energy. He had impressive background that spanned from national to smaller town. When we brought in Chris Roy and Patrice Garvin, they came in from outside and brought new ideas and changes. But it has also been beneficial to have inside people promoted from within, like at Belmont Light. David was clear and concise about everything. He thinks he would be suited for dealing with fallout from failed override. We can't go wrong with whomever we pick. But he also cautioned that there is also a chance the person from inside who applied may not stick around.

Caputo said the search was done very transparently and thoroughly and he feels the public is aware of the process. Dan did a good job of running the search. We started with 20 candidates and rigor has produced three good candidates. There were not only interviews, but also multiple processes for real world tests. He said he is looking for a candidate who has a commitment to service delivery. He would like to see someone who has focus on new ideas, as well as innovative mindset. Someone who thinks about diversity and is a continuous learner. He thinks that all three checked many of those boxes. And he reiterated that this was a testament to the quality of the process. At end of the day, due to feedback received from assessment processes, his choice goes to David DeStefano. He is well educated and trained and he has operational rigor. He seems to care about the safety of the town and he has an obvious passion for his job. If we could get both Haley and DeStefano to serve, we would be very lucky.

Epstein said we need only one chief. As he has gotten to know Wayne better, he realized he has a skill set. He has a set of technical skills that the town could make use of to go beyond conventional assistant chief. We may want to redefine the position to make it more rewarding.

Dash said that Haley seems well liked in town government. We have interacted with him frequently during COVID crisis. Caputo declared we are a small community and we expect town leaders to be good collaborators. It seems Wayne Haley is committed to that. The question is: Can we retain Wayne and make offer to David?

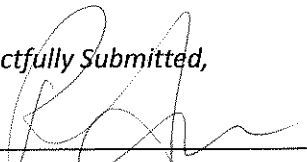
Epstein said he could speak in greater length, but it wouldn't change the outcome. We have been going through materials for awhile. This process began in late November with 20 applications, then essays, then there was assessment center interview and screening. The assessment center was very comprehensive. The exercises consisted of a series of role playing, and mini crises that had to be solved. The exercises were evaluated by peer reviewers, professional fire fighter evaluators. The Screening Committee consisted of Patrice Garvin, Ralph Jones (former selectman and member of warrant committee), Kathy Keohane (library board) and Dan Halston (attorney and member of Warrant Committee), residents from the community and a business person. This was an objective and thorough vetting of candidates and the result is outstanding.

The Select Board thanked the search committee and Human Resources for their work.

*Motion made to offer position of Belmont Fire Chief to David DeStefano contingent upon negotiation and execution of contract. Approved by vote of 3-0.*

*Approval of motion to adjourn meeting made by vote of 3-0.*

*Respectfully Submitted,*



---

*PATRICE GARVIN, Town Administrator*

