

MINUTES  
TOWN OF BELMONT  
POLICE CHIEF SCREENING COMMITTEE  
THURSDAY SEPTEMBER 5, 2019 7:00PM

2019 OCT -2 AM 7:54

Conference Room 2 Town Hall

**CALL TO ORDER**

A regular meeting of the Police Chief Screening Committee was called to order in open session at 7:01 pm by HR Director Jessica Porter in Conference Room 2 at Town Hall. Members: Patrice Garvin, Chief James Hicks, John Phelan, Wendy Murphy, Mark Paolillo, Frank French, Raymond Johnson, Michael McAllister, Maryann Scali, and Gi Yoon- Huang were present.

Also present: Richard White Consultant; Jessica Porter H.R. Director

**Introduction**

The group went around and introduced themselves:

Patrice Garvin, Town Administrator  
John Phelan, Superintendent of Schools  
Mark Paolillo, Former Select Board member.  
Chief James Hicks, Natick Police Chief  
Raymond Johnson, Belmont PTO Member  
Michael McAllister, Chenery Middle School Principal  
Maryann Scali, Council on Aging Board Representative  
Gi-Yoon Huang, Citizen Representative  
Frank French, Citizen Representative  
Wendy Murphy, Citizen Representative  
Rick White, Consultant  
Jessica Porter, HR Director  
Shawna Healey, HR Generalist

**Chair Election**

Ms. Scali nominated Mark Paolillo for Chair. Seconded by Ms. Garvin. **Vote 10-0-0**

**Review of Committee Charge**

Mr. Paolillo explained the screening committee acts as an advisory to the Select Board and asked what plays into the charge of the screening committee?

Ms. Porter explained the Request for Proposal (RFP) and that the committee is charged to recommend to the Select Board a minimum of two qualified internal candidates for interview, the Select Board can take the recommendation and meet with the candidates or determine an external search is necessary. The Select Board can interview the candidates recommended and still decide to go external after the internal process is complete.

Mr. Paolillo asked if it was possible there was no internal candidates to be recommended by the committee?

Ms. Porter noted the committee after reviewing the internal candidates could recommend to the Select Board that there were no qualified candidates internally and to start an external search but the Select Board may still request to review the internal candidates and interview them.

Ms. Yoon-Huang inquired if the committee could recommend internal candidates that should be considered but also recommend an external search for the internal candidates to be considered with external candidates.

Ms. Porter noted the Select Board could review the internal candidate recommendation and further ask the committee to pursue external candidates. It was clarified that the committee is not charged with identifying the process, the process is to review the internal candidates and make recommendation to the Select Board based on the internal candidates. Once a recommendation has been made the Select Board will vote if an external search is necessary.

Mr. French asked for the department structure to be discussed, specifically how the Assistant Chief is appointed and what would happen to the Assistant Chief role when a new Chief is hired.

Ms. Porter stated that Human Resources will provide an organizational chart to the committee before the next meeting.

Mr. Paolillo explained the Asst. Chief is appointed by the Police Chief, if the new Chief appoints a different Assistant Chief, the current Assistant Chief would have the option to go back to his previous rank. It was also clarified that the Select Board would determine if an interim Chief needed to be identified and it would be the Select Board's appointment, this committee has no charge to identify an Interim Chief if a Chief is not identified prior to Chief McLaughlin's departure.

Ms. Murphy noted that the Select Board has final say and may not go with the committee recommendation.

Ms. Scali asked Chief Hicks if he has been in a similar recruiting situation and to share his experience since he is the only one on the committee in the field.

Chief Hicks stated he was an outside candidate both times he was appointed but the process did include internal candidates. Chief Hicks noted it effected the departments he went into as an external candidate because it prevented upward movement which caused disappointment in the ranks. It is up to the community, board and committee to decide what is best for the Town.

Chief Hicks noted Belmont's internal/external approach is a confusing process. The message to the candidates internally is that the Town thinks there may be more qualified candidates externally by putting internals through the process and then putting them to the side for an external process to be done.

Mr. French asked Chief Hicks about the internal problems of the departments he ended up being appointed in.

Mr. Hicks noted one department was stale and needed someone with new ideas. The previous Chief and Lieutenant had been there for over 40 years, there needed to be change. In the current

department there was a synergy issue with the Board and Town Administrator. They felt they needed a candidate with a different view on policing. Both situations were very different.

Mr. Paolillo noted the current Chief was an external candidate, with internal candidates that went through the process.

Mr. White noted all the candidates are capable of doing the job based on the job description, and clarified it is the responsibility of the committee to develop criteria and ranking to identify who is the best fit for the department. One caution Mr. White has is the difficulty of the RFP but wants to be clear that if the committee identifies a minimum of two internal candidates that could be recommended to the position then the committee does not recommend to the Select Board to go externally, if the committee is unable to identify a minimum of two internal candidates then the committee would recommend to pursue an external search.

Ms. Murphy inquired if we could identify an internal candidate as an interim Chief while we interview external candidates if the process to identify a Chief is not complete before Chief McLaughlin's departure.

Mr. Paolillo noted it would be the Select Board's responsibility to identify an interim Chief if necessary, and this committee would have no input or recommendation on that.

Mr. Phelan stated he thinks the Committee should review the internal candidates first to determine if we need to continue discussing the various different options.

Ms. Scali asked if the union suggested the Board looks internally. Mr. Paolillo noted the union encouraged the Board to consider internal candidates first because it will effect morale.

Ms. Yoon-Huang noted she thinks externally should be considered to give us the ability to see what is out there. Ms. Yoon-Huang thinks it will be helpful to compare the internal candidates to the external candidates.

### **Review of Feedback**

Mr. White referenced the Police Chief Feedback Synthesis and noted he interviewed all Department Heads of Town, all command staff and representatives from the rank and file including members of the union. He explained the Feedback Synthesis is general concise feedback from the meetings with both groups, staff and community members.

Mr. White noted feedback as to whether the Select Board should hire an internal candidate or external candidate was not part of the exercise but with both groups, many people spoke their opinion on the matter and felt the Town had enough talent internally. Universally, everyone has great regard for the current Chief: how he is as a leader, and engaged the community as well as how he has improved the footprint of the Police Department. The people he spoke with have enjoyed the collaborative relationships Chief McLaughlin has created throughout the years. The community has a stronger perception of the Police Department since Chief McLaughlin has been here. The synthesis notes there are more needs with the elderly and COA, mentally ill, and the youth in addition the police department staff is frustrated that there is no way to analyze the data they have and want improvement in technology to be able to provide information to residents and other town departments. Citizens and Staff recognize that Belmont is idiosyncratic, and needs a sensitive,

attentive and knowing manager that can recognize some of the informal and formal traditions that exist here. The staff Mr. White interviewed were less concerned about diversity than the community members that were interviewed.

Mr. Paolillo asked for demographics on police department for next meeting, including non-union personnel in the department.

Ms. Porter noted she will provide that with the organizational chart.

All agreed the next Chief should have a community presence like Chief McLaughlin.

Mr. White continued to discuss the synthesis noting communication was a mixed result, lower ranks in the Police Department have more concern about communication, however long tenured officers, captains, sergeants, lieutenants, and Assistant Chief felt communication was solid. Lower level officers would benefit from better communication, and it is important for the new Police Chief to identify and communicate the mission of the department with short and long term goals for the department. Mr. White stated police staff want a stronger presence in the schools and feel like SROs are effective. The Police Department foresees the upcoming changes in the school and there will be a hole in the middle school when they move to the new building. In addition both groups interviewed noted Traffic as a major concern for the new Chief.

Mr. Phelan noted with the change of structure the SROs will be at the Middle High School and they don't want the schools relationship with police to diminish during the construction and changes.

Mr. White noted regional dispatch should be explored, opiates are a concern and staff are pressured to create preventive programs to make sure they are helping students, and the fiscal cliff coming up the citizens group wants a leader that is experienced in budgeting.

Ms. Garvin noted nothing was mentioned of the new building and the construction in the synthesis.

Mr. White confirmed it was discussed and the department has faith in the process and that they have influence on what is going on.

Ms. Yoon-Huang asked if there was a list of citizens that were interviewed.

Mr. White noted they were told the conversations were anonymous.

Ms. Yoon-Huang understood each conversation was anonymous but thinks receiving a list of who was spoken to would help the committee understand the type of community members that provided the feedback.

Mr. White noted it was the building committee, the Select Board and active citizens in Town that were interviewed for the feedback synthesis. He agreed he would provide the committee a list of titles for the people spoken to and the number of people interviewed. Mr. White continued to discuss the process stating he thinks there is opportunity for the community to be involved. He planned to suggest to the committee to hold a Public Forum for the community members to meet the potential Police Chief. It would be structured so the committee would ask the first few questions then open it up to the public. This would expose the candidates to the public and be a type of

assessment center to see how they react to the public. Mr. White suggests the public forum be held after the Committee had interviewed the candidates and determined who should be recommended as finalists to the Select Board.

Mr. Paolillo asked Chief Hicks if he went through a process similar to the public forum Mr. White mentioned. Chief Hicks did not go through that in his processes.

Ms. Scali inquired why Mr. White interviewed citizens if the citizens on the search committee are representing the citizens.

Mr. White noted the feedback is designed to provide the committee with a base to go from so the committee understands what the staff thinks of the department and allows them to have an influence in the search. The citizens interviewed are active citizens involved in the police department and their feedback is valuable.

The committee decided to have members discuss their relationship with the Police Department and what it hopes in the next Chief.

Mr. Phelan noted that the Police Department, Chief and any staff engaged with in the school district have always been relationship building, and supportive, he has been amazed on how connected the department heads in the Town of Belmont are. Mr. Phelan has a trust of the police department, the 2 SROs and DARE Officers, Mr. Phelan just this week reached out to have traffic support for the first days of schools and the response is always immediate. The Police Department holds annual meetings with each school every year to discuss strategies of keeping students and staff safe. Mr. Phelan thinks relationship building and a collaborative approach is very important in the next Police Chief. He is accustomed to open, constant communication no matter the day or time the Chief has been available. Knowing the community and the culture of the community is important for the next Chief.

Mr. McAllister agreed with Mr. Phelan. He noted the Police Department and the School Departments jobs aren't always the exact same and the police department respects that. The Police Department supports the schools in many ways, cross walks, school bus safety and street safety etc.

Mr. French asked about the residency list required for the department. How does the Town diversify the department using the list? He knows the next Chief will be in charge of finding a way to diversify the staff in the department.

Mr. White noted you can request a special list for diversity in Town for the Civil Service positions and noted the Chief position is not part of Civil Service.

Mr. Paolillo suggested the Committee should ask the candidates questions about leaving civil service and/or how to create diversity in their staff.

Ms. Murphy noted she was on a police chief search committee for Foxborough. She stated that what was missing from the synthesis in her opinion were concerns on Bias Policing- when there is a very white community, mostly all male, the Town needs to own an invisible bias. Ms. Murphy noted it is an issue in Belmont. She believes there will be a need for proactive energy for these topics.

Ms. Murphy left the meeting at 8:14pm to attend to an emergency

Ms. Scali noted after talking to the Director of COA, there is no direct line of the Police Department to the Seniors. There is no specific Police Representative, or liaison representative with the COA and she feels that is important for the elder community to have something similar what the schools have in an SRO.

Ms. Yoon-Huang noted the child population in Town and the presence of the police at the elementary level is not there. In Elementary School the Police Officer should be the helper not the enforcer, she noted there is a specific need for the mentally disabled students. Also the non-English speakers are vulnerable, she wants a Chief with a philosophy on how to build relationships with these different categories.

Mr. Paolillo wants a Police Chief that will get ahead of the curve, and knows how to provide public safety to our community for the crime of the future.

Mr. French noted this search will reflect what the residents expect in the community, knowing the patrol numbers are effected by the needs of the other department.

### **Review of Job Description**

Mr. Paolillo suggested to skip this discussion, everyone had a chance to review the job description, and the job description has been posted and can't be changed. The Committee agreed to move on.

### **Preliminary Outline of Process**

Mr. White started to outline the process he suggested that before the next meeting the committee should review the 12 month plans for each candidate. This will assist with how to identify questions to ask the candidates. The questions to the candidates in the 12 month plans will be different since their plans are different. In addition to the questions on the 12 month plan, the committee will need to develop a list of standard questions to ask each candidate.

The candidates will have to give a 12-15 presentation on their 12 month plan, followed by questions from the committee about their specific plan.

Then there will be a series of standard questions the committee selects to ask each candidate.

Mr. Phelan noted he needs time to review the candidates before being able to make recommendation. The committee agreed to wait for the executive session until next meeting.

Mr. Phelan recommended there be a plan for the next meeting, and laid out what the Committee needs to do between now and the next meet. Each committee member will send Ms. Porter their top 8-10 questions from the list Mr. White provided and she will sort to present to the committee at the next meeting. The committee members will review the 12 month plans, resumes and cover letters for each candidate and think of questions to ask each candidate based on their plan.

Mr. Paolillo stated he thinks talking to the current Police Chief to see his thoughts on the community would be necessary for this committee to be able to make the best recommendation.

Mr. French asked if it is problematic to talk to the Chief since the internal candidates are all employees under him. He is worried what the perception of the meeting would be.

Mr. Garvin agrees she does not want the perception of the process to be tainted or appear biased in any way.

Mr. Paolillo thinks it is necessary to speak to Chief McLaughlin asking him specifically about he thinks The Town needs in a new chief, in an open meeting.

Ms. Scali suggested the committee vote on it.

Mr. Phelan noted that Mr. White talked to the Chief and his feedback is within the synthesis.

Mr. Paolillo understood that but feels the committee should hear directly from the Chief. The perception issue is understood but he thinks the committee would not be representing the Town to the best of their ability if they do not speak to the Chief directly.

Mr. Garvin stated that since the candidates are internal the committee does not want the candidates to think Chief McLaughlin is presenting a bias.

Chief Hicks agreed, since this is an internal process he inquired in Chief McLaughlin has gone on record about the Police Chief hiring process?

Mr. White confirmed Chief McLaughlin has been on record stating he wants an internal process.

Mr. Paolillo noted it would be an open meeting, anyone could come and listen if they wanted to.

Mr. White stated he could meet with Mr. Paolillo as the Chair and draft a set of questions to ask the Chief at the next meeting. Mr. White will share the questions with the Committee for their approval and the committee can vote to meet with Chief McLaughlin after reviewing the questions.

The next meeting was scheduled for September 16<sup>th</sup> at 9:00am

Ms. Scali made a motion to adjourn the meeting at 8:55pm. Seconded by Mr. Paolillo. Vote 9-0-0

Respectfully submitted,



Shawna Healey  
Human Resource Generalist

Voted and Approved 9-16-19

