

**MINUTES
TOWN OF BELMONT
BOARD OF SELECTMEN
SELECTMEN'S MEETING ROOM
Tuesday, May 29, 2012
8:15 AM**

CALL TO ORDER

A meeting of the Board was called to order in open session at 8:40 am by Chair Paolillo in the Selectmen's Meeting Room. Selectmen Jones and Rojas were present. Interim Town Administrator Kellie Hebert was present.

Interviews of Finalist Candidates for Permanent Town Administrator (TA) Position

1) David Kale

Chair Paolillo thanked the screening committee as chaired by Selectman Jones. He then invited Mr. Kale to the table and briefly reviewed his credentials.

Selectman Jones informed the Board that Mr. Kale's background and experience are an excellent match for this position.

Mr. Kale began by saying that this position provided a great opportunity to advance his career. He noted that he is also very interested in working in Belmont, as it is a well-regarded community. He noted that having watched several Selectmen meetings, it is clear that the Board of Selectmen are a hard working, professional group and he would like to join them.

Mr. Kale then reviewed his present position as Budget Director in Cambridge/Deputy Finance Director. He reviewed various budget numbers that he has managed in Cambridge. He noted that Cambridge has a larger budget and more resources than Belmont, but that the budget is managed conservatively and that they do not tax to the full levy.

Mr. Kale reviewed the budget process time-line that is followed in Cambridge. He noted some of the differences in Belmont and Cambridge with regard to property taxes and free cash certification.

In answer to a question from Chair Paolillo, Mr. Kale reviewed his experiences as the Chief Financial Officer for the Arlington School Department. He then explained what happened with the override scenario in Arlington. Chair Paolillo said that he admired the "one budget" approach in Arlington; he explained that Belmont is moving in that direction as well.

Chair Paolillo asked about the budget process in Cambridge with regard to the City Council. Mr. Kale explained the process.

Selectman Rojas asked about Mr. Kale's vision for Belmont that is distinct from the way it Belmont currently operates. Mr. Kale said he would begin by analyzing the current budget assumptions for the FY13 budget. He noted that a five-year financial projection would be necessary with the understanding that there could be a budget gap, and that the gap will need to be dealt with.

Selectman Jones asked about his ability to work with and manage the department heads in Belmont, especially since Cambridge is set up differently. Mr. Kale noted the differences and said he would first set out to understand fully what the current department heads do to create their budgets and run their departments.

Chair Paolillo said that the new TA needs to lead the day-to-day operations of the town and to execute the Board's policy. He said he would like the new TA to feel free to disagree with the Board. Mr. Kale expressed that teamwork is important and that he would support the department heads to manage their own departments. He stressed that communication would be a key element in his management approach as well.

Selectman Rojas asked about Mr. Kale's experience in dealing with the residents from Cambridge since Belmont residents will definitely be in touch with him. He provided some examples of dealing with residents' concerns in both Cambridge and Arlington (for both town and school issues).

Selectman Jones said that the Board is looking for the new TA to take a strong leadership role. He asked if Mr. Kale was ready to emulate the strong Town Manager position in Cambridge and apply it to Belmont. Mr. Kale said that yes, he was. He spoke again to the concepts of teamwork, communication, and loyalty. He said he would work closely with Interim TA Kellie Hebert and that he would be supportive of the department heads while moving forward.

Chair Paolillo spoke about various type of budgeting styles: programmatic and performance based. He said that a strong strategic plan and long-term plan would be necessary in Belmont. He asked Mr. Kale how he would approach long-range planning, both programmatically and fiscally. Mr. Kale replied that long-term planning requires close collaboration with department heads to establish funding priorities. He said he would also look to save money wherever possible. Regarding long-term planning for the operating budget, Mr. Kale offered that a strong TA will create a vision for the departments that will involve some compromise and well thought-out policy decisions that will need to be defended.

Selectman Rojas asked about how Mr. Kale would measure individual performance and achievement for department heads. He spoke to how Cambridge evaluated positions and pay grades. He said goals would need to be identified and efficiencies would need to be discussed. He said he would monitor the performance of the department heads. He will

hold regular staff meetings. He said he will provide direction and feedback to the department heads.

Chair Paolillo spoke to the collaborative budget process that took place this year with the school committee. Mr. Kale agreed that a good working relationship with the school department is key. He said that he understands fully the budget drivers of a school budget. He said that he would work to reduce and streamline the school budget as well. He spoke to the necessity of trust and communications in dealing with the school department. He noted that he does bring to the table first hand experience on the school side.

Questions from Mr. Kale:

Mr. Kale asked if the Board appoints town employees. Selectman Jones said that the Board appoints for the Police Department, but not the Fire Department. He said they do not appoint below the level of department heads.

Mr. Kale then asked about procurement and contracts. Selectman Jones replied that the Board signs contracts that are above \$100K, but that this does not need to be the case. Chair Paolillo said that more of this contract approval process could be handled by the new TA, going forward.

Mr. Kale asked about the time-frame for this position, as well as the time-frame for setting priorities going forward. The Board asked if two weeks time was appropriate to begin the TA position. The Facilities Manager position would be a priority for the very near future. The Board discussed that they understand that changes take time. Selectman Jones spoke to the consolidated Facilities Manager position and that it has taken considerable time to establish this position appropriately.

Chair Paolillo asked about potential collaboration with Cambridge. Mr. Kale noted that perhaps Cambridge could share its expertise with smaller towns in the area (e.g. Belmont). He used the example of LED streetlights as a cost and energy savings measure and that Cambridge could share its knowledge in areas such as that.

Mr. Kale thanked the Board for its time and for holding a professional job search.

Chair Paolillo thanked Mr. Kale for his time.

The Board took a short recess.

2) Peter Morin

Chair Paolillo welcomed Mr. Peter Morin to the table and asked Selectman Jones, who chaired the screening committee, to say a few words about Mr. Morin's experience.

Selectman Jones noted that Mr. Morin's experience with the state, as well as his work in Braintree, would be valuable assets to Belmont. He very briefly reviewed his credentials.

Mr. Morin gave an overview of his experience over the years, noting that his experience in Braintree would offer insight into the budget process in Belmont. Mr. Morin offered some specific insights into the budget process in Braintree (noting that their government structure has, at its center, a strong mayoral leadership role) and what his responsibilities have been there. He spoke to the inherent budget gaps and noted that innovation has helped to bridge the gap. He explained that he was in charge of both fiscal and day-to-day operations in Braintree and that this was essential for him in executing budget decisions. He said he meets with department heads on a daily basis. He said he closely oversees all operations of the town. He said that beyond budgeting, he is involved with procurement, strategic planning, labor negotiations and media contact. He said he is also in direct contact with residents. He offered distinctions between the Mayor's role and his role.

With regard to the school department, Mr. Morin said that the willingness to work collaboratively is appealing and important. He noted that the vision for a town needs to be shared, especially with the schools. He said that constituents are very concerned about the schools. However, the schools need to consider the town's position, as well. He said he was impressed with Belmont's consolidation with school and town maintenance.

In answer to a question about Braintree's finances, Mr. Morin spoke to the process that he and the Mayor undertook in order to get the town's fiscal outlook on the right track. He outlined ways in which money was saved without cutting services e.g. town vehicles, positions cut, hiring freezes. He said the school budget was not cut because teachers cannot be removed from the classroom mid-year.

Mr. Morin then reviewed the town's reserves of cash and its bond rating. He said Braintree is now on the right track and that "best practice" policies are now in place. He noted Braintree's OPEB policy and its overall budget numbers.

Selectman Rojas asked about what his steepest learning curve would be in Belmont. Mr. Morin replied that meeting the people and establishing working relationships with department heads that are based on trust. He added that finding ways to innovate in a well run community will be both challenging and important. He said he is attracted to Belmont as it is a highly informed, intelligent community.

Chair Paolillo asked why Mr. Morin was attracted to this position. He replied that Belmont is doing the appropriate hard work and making the right choices. Belmont understands that change can be an ally. Regarding the Board structure, Mr. Morin agreed that the Board should not be making the day-to-day policy decisions, on roads for example, but rather, it should be establishing the broader policy on which roads would be repaired over the next five years. Mr. Morin also agreed that he will want to give his opinion to the Board, to lay out options – but that he expects their push-back from time to time.

Selectman Jones said he was intrigued by his decision to leave Braintree. Mr. Morin replied that this is the natural next position for him and that jobs like this do not come along that often. He said this would be an enjoyable challenge for him.

Selectman Rojas asked about what changes he would implement into Belmont's budget process. Mr. Morin spoke about incorporating "best practices" for Belmont. He spoke about the "inter-agency service agreement" as a way to make budget changes. He noted ways to have a better-informed budget process. He said his approach would be to make incremental changes, to earn trust, and to decide what is in the best interest of Belmont.

Selectman Rojas asked how he would measure performance and achievement among staff in town. Mr. Morin discussed establishing performance measures noting specific data points that can be evaluated e.g. sick leave, returned calls, etc. He said that this information is being captured, but then needs to be evaluated. The data already exists and now decisions can be made based on this data going forward. He said he would ask the department heads how they determine if they are doing a good job.

Selectman Jones asked about meetings with department heads. Mr. Morin noted that he meets with the financial team weekly, but meets informally with various department heads often on a daily basis. He said department heads have unlimited access with him. Mr. Morin said that he will support the department heads and that this is a "one town" approach. He said that he will cross lines to solve problems. He added that successes and problems (across town departments) are shared. The bottom-line, he said, is working toward what is best for the town. Meetings are important for communication, he said, but meetings need to have a purpose.

Chair Paolillo asked about his experience in Braintree as a Selectman. Mr. Morin articulated some of the fiscal challenges that Braintree faced, noting that the relationship with the schools was not collegial (at that time). Collective bargaining negotiations were difficult at certain times in the past. He said it was difficult to provide leadership in areas where the Board had no jurisdiction. However this forced cooperation across departments, which in the end, was positive.

Chair Paolillo asked about long term financial planning. Mr. Morin said the first step is to identify five-year goals. The budget expresses the priorities of the community. The cost of the goals will need to be identified, gaps will need to be identified, ways to close the gap will need to be identified, and then the plan gets formulated. He explained how Braintree approached their budget goals (roads, schools, beautification efforts). He outlined ways in which Braintree increased its commercial growth. He noted that debt exclusions and operating overrides do not pass in Braintree. The vision, he said, needs to be put into motion and carried out by the town employees.

Selectman Jones noted that the commute will not be easy (40 miles), to which Mr. Morin replied that if he likes the job – "it won't be a problem. I'll be there."

Questions from Mr. Morin:

What was most challenging about the budget process this past year?

Selectman Jones said there was tremendous change in personnel right in the middle of the budget season. Chair Paolillo agreed and added that the schedule was aggressive and that the timing of the state aid number is problematic. He added that the Board would like more community input into the budget process going forward. Mr. Morin said that community outreach is important and that reaching out to the various boards and committees is also important. He then spoke about trust and collaboration with town employees as well as with residents. He said people need to be included in the process, even if it doesn't go their way.

Mr. Morin thanked the Board. He said that he has enjoyed the conversation as well as the application process.

Chair Paolillo thanked Mr. Morin for his time.

The Board moved to adjourn the meeting at 11:41 am.

Ms. Hebert, Interim Town Administrator