



**TOWN OF BOXBOROUGH
Executive Session Minutes
Boxborough, MA 01719**

Draft August 24, 2022; Redraft 10/15/2022

BOARD/COMMITTEE: Boxborough Town Administrator Screening Committee – Executive session

DATE: Monday August 8, 2022

TIME: 12:05PM

PLACE: Town Museum 575 Middle Road, Boxborough, MA

In attendance: Gary Kushner, John Fallon, Cindy Markowitz, Al Murphy, Hugh Fortmiller, Denise Dembkoski, Lee Slade.

Other: John Petrin, Paradigm Associates; candidates #18, #9, #16

The meeting was called to order: Gary Kushner-aye, John Fallon-aye, Cindy Markowitz-aye, Al Murphy-aye, Hugh Fortmiller-aye, Denise Dembkoski-aye, Lee Slade-aye; approved 7-0

Candidates #18, #9 and #16 were interviewed based on a set of agreed to questions that were asked by John Petrin (see attached). Each candidate was given time to make an introduction and also time to give a wrap-up summary and ask questions of the committee at the end of the interview.

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Candidate #18 (Gregory Johnson)

Candidate #18 used their introduction to briefly summarize their resume, state why they felt they were the right candidate for Boxborough, and why they wanted to become the Boxborough town administrator. They stressed that due to the physical location of both their work and home they felt they had a strong knowledge of Boxborough and its character and issues. As a sitting town administrator in a town of roughly twice the size of Boxborough, they already were experienced in acting in an independent fashion in all facets of the Boxborough position, including budgeting, human resources, negotiating union contracts, etc. and used to working with limited staff. They characterized their leadership style as supportive: letting town staff do their job while helping the staff grow and acting as mediator to help staff work together. Their goal for the first year would be to visit every board and commission and listen to their concerns. Their basic philosophy is that good listening is 75% of the job. They believe in chain of command and will work through department heads. As town administrator they are an agent of the elected select board and will take direction from that group. They felt it was very important for a town administrator to always remember that the purpose of the job is to



serve the people. Before starting a career in municipal government, they served in a leadership role in the Marines for 3 years. In their wrap-up the candidate thanked the committee for the opportunity to interview for the position and summarized their qualifications. There were no questions of note to the committee.

Candidate #16 (Marie Crowley Sobalvarro)

Candidate #16 used their introduction to briefly summarize their resume, state why they felt they were the right candidate for Boxborough, and why they wanted to become the Boxborough town administrator. They stressed that Boxborough was one of the few towns for which they would be willing to leave their current position and that due to the physical location of both their work and home they felt they had a strong knowledge of Boxborough and its character and issues. As a sitting assistant town administrator/human resources director in a town of roughly the same size, they were experienced in acting in a semi-independent fashion in all facets of the Boxborough position, including budgeting, human resources, negotiating union contracts, etc. and used to working with limited staff. They characterized their leadership style as collaborative and leading by example. Goal is to give town staff the room to do the job and respect the chain of command but realizing that not everyone has all the knowledge that is needed. The candidate felt that it was their job to provide that knowledge and that different kind of motivations is needed for different people. Budget approach is to define the problem and then determine the resources needed. Their goal for the first year would be a “real” survey (of board and commission and residents) to determine priorities and concerns and outreach to “meet people where the people are”. They feel it is important to consider both how to keep continuing operations going while planning for the future keeping in the mind the impact on the taxpayer. As someone who spent 5 years as a member of an elected select board, they are completely aware that the Town Administrator is not the “6th member” of the elected select board; they are in charge of day-to-day operations under the direction of that group and need to communicate with the board and individual members. They believe in using the resources of the Collins School of Government and State Department of Local Services/Department of Revenue where appropriate. Some strong analytical/budget positions in private industry before starting a career in municipal government. Three years as a member of a town finance committee; 5 years as an elected member of a select board. In their wrap-up the candidate thanked the committee for the opportunity to interview for the position and summarized their qualifications. There were no questions of note to the committee.

Candidate #9 (Unsuccessful candidate)

Candidate #9 used their introduction to briefly summarize their resume, state why they felt they were the right candidate for Boxborough, and why they wanted to become the Boxborough town administrator. They stressed that they were passionate about town government and had a strong knowledge of Boxborough and its character and issues. Has been an assistant town administrator in a town the same size as Boxborough for two years; prior



experience was an assistant or analyst. They had some limited experience in budgeting and human resources but only under direct supervision of the town administrator and did not have any direct supervisory experience. They characterized their leadership style as working to empower and utilizing their peacekeeper personalities. Creating teams would be a goal as would be reducing turnover. Better on-line presence is key to citizens relationship going forward. The best way to determine economic development priorities would be to reach out to boards and local businesses. There is a need as town administrator to take their direction from the elected Select Board; important to meet frequently with the chair of the select board to ensure no surprises. In their wrap-up the candidate thanked the committee for the opportunity to interview for the position and summarized their qualifications. There were no questions of note to the committee.

It was agreed that detailed review of the candidates' interviews and cover letters/resumes would take place the afternoon of August 11 after all interviews had taken place. A few members of the committee expressed some first impressions of the three candidates who had been interviewed: preliminary thoughts:

- a) #18: very strong interview; specific answers to all questions; excellent experience; probably viable candidate
- b) #16: strong interview; specific answers to almost all questions; good experience; probably viable candidate
- c) #9: good interview; specific answers to many questions; weak experience; might not be a viable candidate

Denise moved to adjourn and Lee seconded

Gary Kushner-aye, John Fallon-aye, Cindy Markowitz-aye, Al Murphy-aye, Hugh Fortmiller-aye, Denise Dembkoski-aye, Lee Slade-aye
Approved 7-0 and adjourned at 3:50PM

Provided by Gary Kushner- clerk; Redrafted by John Fallon

Documents used:

Cover letter and resumes of candidates #18, #9, and #16
TA Screening Committee candidate questions



Boxborough Town Administrator Candidate Questions

The following topics and questions are suggested to assist the Boxborough Town Administrator Screening Committee in its candidate interview process. The questions are drafted in verbatim style but would be used as prompts to elicit answers in the particular topic category. Optional probes to dig deeper into responses are also listed.

TOPIC	POTENTIAL QUESTIONS	PROBES
Career Overview & Interest in Boxborough	Thank you for your interest in Boxborough. We would like you to take a couple of minutes to tell us about yourself and why you are interested in the Town of Boxborough.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Circumstances of /for leaving current or last position • How well do you know Boxborough? • Municipal experience (Municipal law)
Leadership and Management Style	<p>How would you describe your leadership style?</p> <p>Let's say that the relationship between the Select Board and FinCom are not as strong as they could be. What ideas would you have to improve that?</p> <p>Citizen boards and volunteers are important in Boxborough. How would you cultivate those relationships.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Working with a team • Mentoring and coaching • Delegation • Conflict resolution (Examples) • Creating change • Staff meetings • Morale building
Financial Management	<p>What is your experience with municipal finance and budget preparation?</p> <p>Boxborough like many towns is always reviewing their financial capacity. What ideas would you have to enhance revenue or reduce costs?</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Managing budget growth • Managing tax burden on citizens • Financial policies • Fiscal planning experience • Leading through a budget crisis • Examples of creativity related to budgeting • Monitoring financial condition • Alternative revenue streams
Project Management	Tell us about your experience with project management. With climate change an issue,	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Capital budgeting • Procurement experience • Gaining community buy-in



	<p>how would you propose communities develop strategies to be sustainable and resilient? "Where do you think Boxborough should place global warming issues on its list of priorities, and what experience would you bring to help us reduce carbon emissions throughout the town?"</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Writing, securing, and managing grants
TOPIC	POTENTIAL QUESTIONS	PROBES
Economic Development	<p>With what you know of Boxborough, how would you describe Boxborough's attitude towards maintaining its current character into the future and what suggestions would you make to improve on the approach to economic development?</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Interacting and collaborating regionally • Developing a commercial tract • Economic development grants • Knowledge of Boxborough as it relates to this topic
Personnel Management	<p>Tell us about your experience with personnel management, such as hiring and working with unions.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Selecting new department heads • Evaluating employees • Collective bargaining • Building morale
Municipal Management/Professionalism	<p>What are some municipal Best Practices that you view as important? And try to implement or uphold in a community?</p> <p>What municipal trends excite you?</p> <p>How do you stay current on such trends?</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Data based decision making • Community engagement • Technology • Use of social media
Citizen Relations & Government Transparency	<p>Boxborough is committed to customer service and transparency with our government and our services. What would you bring to this commitment?</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Being new to the Town, how would you build relationships with citizens? • How would you work to communicate with residents and keep them informed? • Examples of how you



		<p>approach open government</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Examples of how you make government and decision making more transparent
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TOPIC	POTENTIAL QUESTIONS	PROBES
Relationship with the Select Board	<p>How would you approach managing the culture in Boxborough to align the roles of the TA and the Select Board? And how would you define a successful relationship between the Board and the Administrator?</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Familiarity/experience with Select Boards/Town Meeting form of government • Managing conflict • How would you communicate with the Board and keep members informed?
Other Questions	Committee questions beyond those already asked.	
Candidate Question	That ends our questions. Now it's your turn. Is there a question you would like to ask us?	