

Monday, July 15, 2019
Board of Selectmen's Meeting Minutes
Foxborough Town Hall
Andrew Gala Meeting Room
7:30pm

Members present: Mark Elfman, Chairman
Leah Gibson, Vice Chair
Edward T. O'Leary, Clerk
David Feldman
Chris Mitchell

Others present: William Keegan, Jr., Town Manager
Michael Johns, Assistant Town Manager
Amanda Smith, Community Information Specialist

Chairman M. Elfman called the meeting to order at 7:30 p.m. and read the agenda into the public record.

1. Citizen's Input

Allison Bancroft, 22 Market Street, came before the Board to provide an update about the plan to be before the BOS next week as she has learned from attending all meetings since the bid was chosen. A. Bancroft raised concerns about the plans as presented and their compliance with setbacks and high requirements under zoning regulations. A. Bancroft referenced the past petitions signed by hundreds of citizens who do not want a property that is not consistent with the existing look of the neighborhood and does not fit the needs expressed by many in Town. A. Bancroft requested the BOS deny the municipal conversion permit next week when it is before them and choose a developer who adheres to the already lenient requirements and does not seek waivers around them.

2. Board of Selectmen to Interview Finalist for Finance Director/Town Accountant Position, George G. Samia

M. Johns summarized the selection process used to bring the final candidate to the BOS tonight; including a BOS member on the hiring committee and introduced Mr. George Samia to the BOS as the finalist for the Finance Director/Town Accountant position.

Mr. George Samia introduced himself to the BOS and summarized his history in municipal finance; has worked in five towns and has served as a Town Administrator/Finance Director in East Bridgewater for nineteen years.

D. Feldman asked Mr. Samia if he had done his research of the Town of Foxborough past financial reports; Mr. Samia said he has reviewed past reports in the Dashboard. D. Feldman asked if Mr. Samia had reviewed the Town's Financial Policies adopted in 2016; G. Samia said he had not reviewed all but are aware of some through the interview process and discussions. D. Feldman asked if Mr. Samia has done financial forecasting as done by the Town of Foxborough's prior Finance Director; Mr. Samia gave an example of a system he built in East Bridgewater that involved forecasting for years ahead while keeping control of itself within specific boundaries. Mr. Samia said the few revenue sources outside of State Aid left the Town a bit more vulnerable and made this model a necessity for the Town. D. Feldman asked how Mr. Samia managed thirteen balanced budgets in his career and asked how he managed to maintain the balanced budgets without over taxing the residents of East Bridgewater; what could he not do from the fiscal management side. Mr. Samia said using tight restrictions, known revenue sources and conservatively estimating State Aid, he used that as the final number and backed the budget down from that. Mr. Samia said the Town had to do a debt-exclusion override; the only two overrides in his career with East Bridgewater. D. Feldman asked Mr. Samia to explain his separation from the Town of East Bridgewater; Mr. Samia said the Board of Selectmen in that Town did not renew his

contract and it was thirty years well spent that had to come to the end. Mr. Samia said by the end it made sense to part ways and move on to a new opportunity. D. Feldman said our high financial rating is based strongly on current financial policies and asked for Mr. Samia's commitment to adhere to these policies and help to enhance them; forecast properly and build to the models to stay the steady course. Mr. Samia said he was impressed by the progress the Town of Foxborough has made to pay down the OPEB liability and said he is not coming in to change what already works well; he wants to add value to the Town and find ways to enhance as he in the position. G. Samia said he is pleased that he has gotten the sense that the Town of Foxborough works as a team when it comes to finance; a group effort.

C. Mitchell asked how he split his time in his former dual role; Mr. Samia said he spent more than 50% of his week working on Finance duties, with the help of his staff. C. Mitchell asked if his former team had been together for a long time; Mr. Samia said they had worked together 6-7 years and that it can be hard to find good people in the municipal finance positions. C. Mitchell asked what his management style is; Mr. Samia said he prefers to work collaboratively and likes to bring together people with great ideas that can add value to the department and projects. Mr. Samia said if you have the right team around you, you will get all the answers you need.

E. O'Leary said there was substantial pushback at Annual Town Meeting this year regarding spending issues, recommendations made by the Advisory Committee and said there is a portion of the population that consistent tax increases and the perceived spending that will result in beginning a budget discussion much earlier this year to develop a plan and share information. E. O'Leary said the Town is looking for someone with experience who can work with people of differing opinions and needs who can still provide a high level of service. Mr. Samia said the situation the Town is currently in differs from the Town he came from that wants to slow down the spending. Mr. Samia said he tends to be more conservative with his spending and sees this to be a more conducive environment to his approach.

L. Gibson said she was on the committee and that he answered all her previous questions. L. Gibson said she left the interviews feeling that Mr. Samia is the clear choice and would be a great asset to the Town. L. Gibson said everyone she reached out to have nothing but positive things to say about him.

M. Elfman said the new budget process as E. O'Leary mentioned is beginning earlier this year; August. M. Elfman said that does not give him a lot of time to get deep into the role but said he is crucial to this conversation; Mr. Samia said he supports having these conversations earlier rather than later. M. Elfman said he thinks it would be great for him to meeting with the Advisory Committee as well. L. Gibson added that his desire and ability to start right away was encouraging.

C. Mitchell asked M. Johns to review the process used to narrow down the candidate pool; M. Johns said the Town narrowed down the 90 applicants down to a pool of 12; split into two groups of 6. M. Johns said the first group of 5, as one was hired elsewhere, were interviewed and the second group of 6 was not needed. M. Johns said the 12 candidates were the most serious and qualified of the entire pool. C. Mitchell asked if the interview committee voted unanimously; M. Johns said all eight voted for Mr. Samia. Bill Yukna, School Business Administrator, came to the table as another representative from the interview team to say that all applicants were great and that Mr. Samia checked off all the boxes. B. Yukna said he still feels very strongly that Mr. Samia is a great candidate for this role.

L. Gibson said while hiring two candidates at the same time seems like it is not the ideal situation, having both new employees come in together at the same time will be a positive change in the department as they learn the Town together and work together to reshape the department.

Motion that the Town Manager develop a contract to offer to George G. Samia as the Finance Director/Town Accountant made by E. O’Leary, motion made second by D. Feldman

Discussion: B. Keegan reiterated this is a conditional offer of employment.

Final Resolution: Motion Carries 5-0-0

3. Board of Selectmen to Interview Finalist for Director of Accounting Position, Marie Ann Almodovar; Possible Vote to Appoint

B. Keegan said normally the BOS would not appoint this position but given the Town’s current hiring processes the candidate is before the BOS for appointment.

Marie Ann Almodovar introduced herself to the BOS and gave a summary of her professional background in the Town of Concord. Ms. Almodovar said she started on the treasury side of Concord and moved up to the Accounting side; gives her a unique perspective to do her job efficiently and to identify details. M. Elfman asked Ms. Almodovar about the extra work she has done for the Town of Concord in addition to her role. Ms. Almodovar said she created guides for everyone to use that aids in performing business with the Finance Department.

E. O’Leary said there has been a bit of turnover in the Finance Department in the last nine months and a lot of key employees are still there who are looking for people with new ideas and different practices and asked if she thinks she can cope with a changing dynamic like that. Ms. Almodovar said she works well with people and calls on her experience working in both the treasury department and the accounting department while working as a team and ultimately serving the residents. L. Gibson said seeing Marie work her way up through the Finance Department in Concord in impressive.

M. Johns said the BOS make a motion to appoint Ms. Almodovar as the Director of Accounting and begin work on an offer letter tomorrow if the BOS desires. C. Mitchell asked when she could start if appointed today; Ms. Almodovar said she would need to give her current employer two weeks’ notice. G. Samia said he is excited to work with Ms. Almodovar. M. Johns said the Town of Foxborough prides itself on developing professionals through trainings and education opportunities and it was clear that Ms. Almodovar was also looking for growth from professional organizations and further her education; the Town feels this would be a great relationship for both parties. M. Johns said he spoke with her past co-workers and are sad to see her leave but not surprised as she is always striving to reach farther and higher in her career to grow and develop, professionally.

Motion to offer conditional offer of employment to Marie Ann Almodovar for the position of Director of Accounting made by E. O’Leary, motion made second as amended by D. Feldman

Discussion: B. Keegan clarified for the BOS that this is a conditional offer of employment; motion amended.

Final Resolution: Motion Carries 5-0-0

4. Adjourn

Motion to adjourn at 8:30 p.m. made by E. O’Leary, motion made second by D. Feldman

No further discussion

Final Resolution: Motion Carries 5-0-0