

MINUTES
TOWN OF BELMONT
POLICE CHIEF SCREENING COMMITTEE
Monday September 16, 2019 9:00am
Select Board Meeting Room, Town Hall

2019 OCT -2 AM 7:54

CALL TO ORDER

A regular meeting of the Police Chief Screening Committee was called to order in open session at 9:04am by Chair Mark Paolillo in the Select Board Meeting Room at Town Hall. Members: Patrice Garvin, Chief James Hicks, John Phelan, Wendy Murphy, Frank French, Raymond Johnson, Michael McAllister, Maryann Scali, and Gi Yoon- Huang were present.

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

Process

Mr. White noted he sent out questions for the committee to ask Chief McLaughlin to review. Most of the committee replied in favor, and Ms. Yoon-Huang wanted to discuss in open session before meeting with the Chief.

Mr. White reviewed the process, all candidates submitted 12 month plans, it is the committee's responsibility to review them and discuss them in executive session. Process is for the committee to identify candidates to be interviewed, the candidates identified would present their plans to the committee and the committee would question each candidate for 30 minutes about their plan. The traditional interview process would follow the plan presentation with 6-8 standard questions that the committee would ask each candidate. Each candidate would be afforded 90 minutes with the committee.

Mr. White stated he met with Mr. Paolillo to discuss interviewing Chief McLaughlin, the reservation from the previous committee meeting was the bias Chief McLaughlin may pose. Mr. White discussed with Chief McLaughlin interviewing with the Committee and provided him the questions. Mr. White and Chief McLaughlin are confident Chief McLaughlin will not present a bias and he will be providing information on the department and specific responsibilities of the Chief.

Ms. Garvin inquired about the benefits of interviewing Chief McLaughlin.

Mr. Paolillo noted benefits include understanding the current job of the Chief and what the expectations of the future Chief would be, discover what issues he is facing today and how those issues would impact a new Chief.

Mr. McAllister stated the interview may be perceived as presenting an advantage for the candidates coming in because they can view the notes of this meeting and see what Chief McLaughlin thinks the department needs, and then answer the questions based on Chief McLaughlin's ideas. Interviewing Chief McLaughlin afterwards may reduce that perception.

Ms. Yoon-Huang stated she has reservation about interviewing Chief McLaughlin and read the following statement:

“I have thought about this a great deal since our last meeting, and I have written a statement to be succinct. I say the following with great respect to our current Chief McLaughlin. In theory, interviewing Chief McLaughlin would make sense if there were open access from internal and external candidates for the job position. However, in this situation, much has already been conceded by his recommendations so that instead of having an open pool of candidates we are already narrowed to just a handful of internal candidates. The irony is that he himself would not have been able to apply in this situation as he was an external candidate for the job.

By eliminating external candidates, it disadvantages both Belmont and the internal candidates. Instead of being able to say, we’ve looked at all possible candidates, and we found this candidate to be the best qualified, we now can only say, that this candidate is qualified but may not be the best.

I am also grateful for the work of Mr. White from Groux-White consulting who gave us the report on Chief McLaughlin, but I was quite surprised when Mr. White informed us that he knew Chief McLaughlin since childhood.

Result is important but process is just as important. The first act that we do as a committee should not be interviewing someone who has already made a significant influence in the process. We should stay neutral as long as possible as we consider the candidates.

I would like to refrain from interviewing him at this point. It does not mean that we should not eventually talk to him in the future, but I would like to proceed with what we have been charged with which is to interview the candidates then possibly reconsider interviewing the current Chief in the future.

Thank you.”

Ms. Murphy noted the committee knows that Chief McLaughlin will be biased but the committee needs to presume he is biased and discount what he says but she still believes it is important to hear what he has to say.

Chief Hicks noted that Chief McLaughlin has gone on record for process but not on individuals. The interview has to be focused, what do we want from this interview and when do we need the information from Chief McLaughlin.

Ms. Garvin noted the general public often doesn’t understand what the Chief does day to day it would probably be good to hear what he thinks are the priorities of Town, it may be the timing of when we bring him in that the committee should decide on.

Ms. Scali made a motion to interview Chief McLaughlin seconded by Mr. French. **Vote 9-0-1**

Ms. Scali made a motion to interview Chief McLaughlin today, Mr. French seconded. **Vote 5-4 -1**

Chief McLaughlin Interview

Chief McLaughlin was welcomed by Chair Paolillo and thanked for giving the committee his time for interview. Mr. Paolillo confirmed that Chief McLaughlin had the questions in front of him and asked him to proceed to question 1.

Question 1: Please provide us, without making reference to any specific potential candidate, what it takes to be a successful Police Chief in Belmont?

Chief McLaughlin stated a Chief needs to be accessible, approachable, available and a good listener. The Chief has presence all over the community and should attend as many meetings as possible, as the face of the department, it is important for the Chief to be present in the community. A good Chief would continue to build bridges to resolve some of the issues, externally and internally including all different groups within the community. Belmont has a lot of committees and events and it is important for the Chief to be available for all type of meeting and events and to be seen as a pulse of the community.

Question 2: Absent the PC recruitment, what are the challenges, opportunities and needs of the future of the Department?

Chief McLaughlin stated it is a double edge sword, Belmont Police Department is a relatively young and the Chief works to keep all members engaged and tries to provide them opportunities. Being part of The Northeastern Massachusetts Law Enforcement Council (NEMLEC) provides opportunities outside of the department. The Chief needs to reinvest in their department, ensure members are cared for.

Chief McLaughlin noted NEMLEC is comprised of 65 cities and towns in Northeastern Massachusetts, he has served as president for 2 years. NEMLEC has a regional response team, 40 man SWAT, motor unit, incident management team that can be used by member communities in times of emergencies. NEMLEC holds monthly meetings, chiefs come together to discuss situations in the communities. Belmont doesn't have the resources at times to have such teams as part of their department but can use NEMLEC to be able to assist when needed.

Chief McLaughlin stated another challenge is the current renovation, it is huge opportunity within the department when it comes to technology and practices continually changing. Chief McLaughlin feels the department needs someone that is dedicated to software, to be able to drill down programs and maximize the potential of them. They have many programs today, the department needs to use everything efficiently and having a strong relationship with the Town Administrator is helpful.

Question 3: What about the job aside from personnel, budget and administrative issues kept you from sleeping some nights?

Chief McLaughlin stated the building has kept him up a lot at night. Until the project was approved he stated he would think about what could go wrong in the current building they are in. In addition, having a young department has been challenging because of the way the world is changing, the position of police officer is confrontational around the world, he has been concerned for some of the young officers if are put in a position out of their control and they don't know how to react in. As Chief he has worked to ensure they are trained appropriately to respond to all different calls.

Question 4: Revenue limitations must have handcuffed you from addressing some community needs. What are the two or three initiatives you wish you were able to initiate that you never did?

Chief McLaughlin stated having a dedicated software person would help the department but has been tough to create with budget limitations. The department needs resources to be able to make

processes better. He continued discussing traffic a major issue. While many committees in Town work to help traffic the Police Department doesn't have the resources like Cambridge and Boston do to make a large impact. In addition the department has had trouble filling the Crossing Guard posts often sending Police Officers to fill in when needed.

Chief McLaughlin stated the accreditation process has not been completed, he has been involved in it since day 1 and had to get over some hurdles with the unions. Currently it is on the right track but wished it came sooner. The accreditation process is currently in the self-assessment stage of the 3 stage process. Annual dues are built in the budget so it does not affect the budget significantly.

Another initiative was the building, getting the renovation project was the biggest accomplishment and he knows it will move the department forward.

Mr. Paolillo asked about the top 2 challenges for the next police chief.

Chief McLaughlin noted he is concerned as where we are going as a society and how it impacts the department and what they are expected to do. The individual officers are doing things daily that go under the light but are good for the community.

Ms. Murphy noted her experience with working in the field of violence against women as a big proponent for her involvement with the Town. She stated the incidents rates can increase in suburban towns, can the Town do more to bring this to light on violence behind closed doors. How do we get private violence in the public? What can the department do better?

Chief McLaughlin noted officers are trained on domestic violence, nothing is swept under the rug but there are laws that cover what can be public and put into the paper. He is not sure what more the department could do, the officers provide resources if they need them, for the victims and the families.

Chief McLaughlin was thanked by the Committee and left the meeting.

Review Potential Questions

Ms. Garvin feels the committee should wait to decide on questions until candidates have been identified.

Mr. Paolillo noted the questions have to be the same for all candidates, only three members sent their top questions to Ms. Porter. Mr. Paolillo suggested the committee waits to decide on questions until more feedback is received by Ms. Porter.

Mr. McAllister stated he did not send Ms. Porter questions because he is not sure what the criteria is for the Police Chief and that is typically how he would identify questions when interviewing a candidate; establish a criteria ahead of time and then create questions that address each element from the criteria.

Mr. White noted the committee creates the criteria to represent the Town in some way so the criteria will be different for all the members of the committee.

Ms. Scali suggested having a question on structure and process of the department, because the 12 month plans all discuss that differently.

Ms. Yoon-Huang wanted to add to the list of questions something on the Police response to the vulnerable population, what do you think the interaction with the police should be with the vulnerable population: mentally disable, youth?

Ms. Murphy suggested a questions on bias in policing. It is easy in Belmont not to be mindful when there isn't a reason to think about bias-policing. A suggested question: What is the department doing to prevent bias policing in certain circumstances?

Mr. White noted during the 12 month plan reviews the questions should be based on areas similar to what Ms. Murphy noted. The questions can be different for each candidate during the 12 month plan presentation based on what each candidate presents.

Mr. Paolillo stated that the plans for each candidate will be different and each candidate may go down a different road which is a good exercise for the candidates and the committee.

Mr. McAllister stated he believes questions to the candidates should be about what they have done, as opposed to simply what ideas they may have. He feels there is more value is learning what each candidate has had experience in dealing with.

Ms. Murphy asked if the questions that the committee wants to ask each candidate should be discussed in executive session.

Mr. Paolillo noted per the open meeting law it can't be done in executive session.

Ms. Murphy is concerned they will be over prepared by knowing what questions are being asked.

Mr. Paolillo noted the committee will vote on the questions the meeting prior to the first interview.

The committee will continue to send Ms. Porter question ideas.

Mr. Paolillo noted the next meeting the committee will finalize the interview questions.

Review of Department Organizational Chart & Roster

Ms. Porter reviewed the organizational chart provided to the committee and explained the printed roster provided contains all Police Department employees A-Z, gender and race. The e-mailed version has different tabs sorted by unions, jobs etc.

Ms. Yoon-Huang asked what Civil Service is?

Chief Hicks, noted it falls under the State's Human Resources Department, it was created to eliminate patronage so there is a balance and a fair process for entry level positions and promotions. There is a written test that qualifies you, there is a formula for every position. You can consider 3 people for that position to avoid patronage. Extra points are provided for veterans.

Mr. White noted Civil Service provides protection for the employees. Employees have the right to grieve certain things and action based on state law, civil service regulations and the union contracts. Chiefs can receive a selected list to choose from selective minorities.

Chief Hicks noted that all civil service candidates can choose residence and other community preference. Communities can request the list to be non-resident and resident, there is some leeway, and the special list requires some work.

Ms. Porter will provide information on Civil Service to the committee for the next meeting.

Review and approve minutes of September 5, 2019

Ms. Scali made a motion to approve the Open Session Minutes of September 5, 2019. Seconded by Mr. French. Vote: 10-0-0

Executive Session

Ms. Scali made a motion to enter into executive session per Reason 8. Seconded by Mr. French.

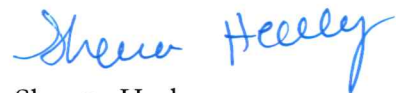
Roll Call Vote: Patrice Garvin Aye, Raymond Johnson Aye, Michael McAllister Aye, John Phelan Aye, Chief Hicks Aye, Gi Yoon-Huang Aye, Wendy Murphy Aye, Maryann Scali Aye, Frank French Aye, Mark Paolillo Aye.

Committee moved to executive session at 10:23am

Committee entered back into open session at 11:03am.

Ms. Scali made a motion to adjourn the open session at 11:04am, Mr. French seconded. **Vote** 10-0-0

Respectfully submitted,



Shawna Healey
Human Resource Generalist

Voted and Approved 9-20-19