



Board of Selectmen

Board of Selectmen Meeting Minutes

February 14, 2023

The Yarmouth Board of Selectmen meeting was called to order at approximately 6:00 p.m. by Chairman Michael Stone. Selectmen present: Michael Stone, Daniel Horgan, Mark Forest, Peter Smith, and Dorcas McGurrin. Also attending: Town Administrator Robert L. Whritenour, Jr.

1. Call to Order

Chairman Stone welcomed everyone to the meeting and read the following notice into the record:

“This is to formally advise that, as required by G.L. Chapter 30A, §§ 18-25, and pursuant to Chapter 20 of the Acts of 2021, An Act Relative to Extending Certain COVID-19 Measures Adopted During the State of Emergency, signed into law on June 16, 2021, as extended by Special Legislation dated July 16, 2022, the Yarmouth Board of Selectmen will hold a public meeting on Tuesday, February 14th, at 6:00 p.m. in the Hearing Room, Yarmouth Town Hall, 1146 Route 28, South Yarmouth, MA. The public is welcome to attend either in-person or via the alternative public access provided below.”

The Chairman said that the access instructions were available on the Yarmouth website. He then led everyone in the Pledge of Allegiance.

2. Discussion and Possible Vote – New Fire Chief

Chairman Stone announced that the Board members would be discussing the search for the new Fire Chief and deciding whether to vote for the new Fire Chief this night or continue with the process. He then invited the Town Administrator to give a brief overview of what had taken place in the process up to this point.

Town Administrator Whritenour explained how the consultants from Municipal Resources, Inc. (MRI) had worked with the Town to develop a detailed position profile, determining what attributes the Town was looking for in a Chief. There was an internal posting, and then those initial candidates went through the MRI assessment center, which was a day long series of activities simulating real life scenarios that a fire chief would go through on a daily basis, whether it be the tactical command review of a fire scene, budget preparation issues, collective bargaining, etc. The Town’s Charter required a minimum of three candidates to be submitted to the Board of Selectmen for consideration, however, only two applicants passed the assessment center. Mr. Whritenour stated that they determined that a second recruitment would be required, this time posting the position externally. The two internal candidates who passed the initial assessment, reapplied for the second process. A total of four candidates qualified to go through MRI’s new round of assessments. After that was completed, three finalists were selected to be interviewed by the Board of Selectmen. The interviews took place on January 12. A subcommittee was appointed, and they met with the consultant to go over the results of the interviews. As this process was going on, and as area chiefs were contacted for feedback, the consultants found an additional candidate who had originally been bypassed from the second round, but who had received some very high recommendations. It was decided by the subcommittee and MRI that the fourth candidate should be put through the assessment center process. Mr. Whritenour reported that the candidate passed, scoring higher than the other candidates had, and was recommended for an interview before the Board. That

interview took place on February 10. The Board now had four finalist recommendations to consider, all of whom had met the minimum qualifications, had gone through the assessment center process, had been scored and evaluated by the MRI team, and had been interviewed by the Board of Selectmen. Mr. Whritenour stated that it was now up to the Board to determine if it was comfortable appointing one of the candidates as Fire Chief.

Chairman Stone stated that it was important the public understood each step of the process. He reported that the Board received letters from some firefighters from the Yarmouth Fire Department, stating that the selection should be made from the internal candidates. The Chairman noted that one of those candidates had not passed the assessment process, so their conclusion was an incorrect one. The assessments resulted in two internal candidates qualifying, as well as a candidate from Rhode Island and another from a different Cape Cod fire department. He then invited each of the Board members to speak.

Selectman Forest reiterated that it was important that people understood the process and realized that it was consistent with the requirements put forth by the Town's Charter. He thanked the Town Administrator, the Human Resources Director and MRI for all their work. Due to the decision process being a difficult one, the assessment process and overall evaluations were extremely important. He said each of the four candidates presented to the Board had dedicated their lives to serving the public. They demonstrated a willingness to make the ultimate sacrifice by putting their lives on the line every day. Selectman Forest said he had nothing but high praise for each of the candidates. He said that they each had their own set of strengths, and they all had their own set of weaknesses, however, there was one candidate in the assessments who had been categorized with the words superior, exceptional, and strong. He said that candidate scored the highest in the assessment process. This same candidate came highly recommended, with incredible education experience, credentials, and diversity of experiences which would be important with respect to the Chief position. Selectman Forest stated that the individual who had risen to the top of the list was Captain Enrique Arrascue, and he would recommend to the Board that they appoint Captain Arrascue as the Town's next Fire Chief.

Selectman Horgan thanked the candidates and their families for going through the process, and apologized that the process took longer than initially expected. He said that the decision was a difficult one, however, it was important that the decision be the correct one. Selectman Horgan said that he was extremely impressed with Chief Varone, and noted his integrity, relaying how Chief Varone even told the Board to hire somebody from within the Department rather than himself. Although Chief Varone certainly had the qualifications, Selectman Horgan felt he was not quite the right fit for what the Town was looking for at this point in time. In describing Captain Smith, Selectman Horgan said that he was extremely impressed with the amount of work and training Captain Smith had put himself through. He said that at some point he could see Captain Smith being a Chief, with his dedication and passion, however, he felt Captain Smith was not quite ready yet. Selectman Horgan said the hardest challenge was deciding between the Town's Acting Chief, Jon Sawyer, and the latest candidate, Captain Arrascue. He said that Acting Chief Sawyer was an amazing man, likeable, and a mainstay in the Fire Department for many years. He had a great deal of respect for Acting Chief Sawyer and the job that he had done, and that he had "done Yarmouth proud." What was difficult for Selectman Horgan was that the search brought forward another candidate with all the same qualifications but had a wider background and scored higher in the assessments. He said that many things in Captain Arrascue's resume were hard to overlook, such as the way he led others. Selectman Horgan said that the Yarmouth Fire Department had many really good men, but the Department needed a better succession plan and needed better training, and he felt that he could depend on Captain Arrascue to provide that. Selectman Horgan said that it came down to deciding between two people, and it was a very difficult decision, but "one I'd give my heart to, and the other one I give my vote to." He said Captain Arrascue was the right man for this time, and recommended him as the best candidate to take the Department forward. Regardless of the resulting decision, Selectman Horgan said that he would be one hundred percent behind the new chief.

Selectwoman McGurrin also apologized for the long selection process. She stated she was also impressed with Chief Valone, and his credentials. In regards to Captain Smith, she said what resonated with her was when he said it was time “to put the benches back outside the firehouses.” She felt that was apropos. Selectwoman McGurrin said that it had been a pleasure to work with Acting Chief Sawyer over the years, especially while she had worked as the director of Heatherwood. Heatherwood was a senior community so there was a lot of interaction with the Fire Department. Acting Chief Sawyer used to do their fire inspections at that time. Selectwoman McGurrin said his credentials, as with all the candidates, were superb. His dedication was also bar none. She said she would like to select two candidates, however, that was not possible. She said that Captain Arrascue had a well-rounded resume, held a union position, held a finance position, and had a paramedic background. She felt he was the one to lead the Department going forward. Selectwoman McGurrin said she was deeply grateful to Acting Chief Sawyer and for stepping up as he did, however, at this time, she would recommend Captain Arrascue as the new Fire Chief.

Selectman Smith said what he could say would mirror what was already said. He congratulated all the candidates for making it through the long process. He said everyone put in a lot of work, and everyone had pluses and minuses, and all who had interviewed could be a Chief. However, he felt one candidate out of the four rose above the others. Selectman Smith noted Captain Arrascue’s budgeting background, his maritime response, and paramedic experience, as well as having scored higher than everyone else during the assessment. He said that if a vote was taken this night, he would vote for Captain Arrascue.

Chairman Stone sincerely thanked all the candidates, particularly Acting Chief Sawyer. He said he knew the Board’s comments were genuine and heartfelt in their admiration of the Acting Chief. Although the process was long, Chairman Stone did not regret the time it took in finding someone who would be a perfect fit. The consultants were professionals who helped with the screening of the candidates, and were a benefit to the Town in the decision-making process. He said that in best of all possible worlds, Captain Arrascue would have already been a Deputy Chief. That was a gap in his resume. Chairman Stone believed if chosen as Chief, Captain Arrascue would need some direction from the Town Administrator and others during the transition, however, that should not be considered a criticism. He would get the support. Chairman Stone noted Captain Arrascue’s strong education, with a Master’s in Public Administration. He was impressed with how Captain Arrascue made the transition from the financial world to a world where he could help others and make more of an impact in people’s lives. He felt that Captain Arrascue was a transformational person, whom others would follow. He thought a strong succession plan within the Fire Department could be developed. He felt Captain Arrascue’s low-key style would not alienate people or be overwhelming but would be an attribute. For those reasons, Chairman Stone was prepared to vote for Captain Arrascue as the Town’s next Fire Chief, and asked if there was a motion.

MOTION: That the Board of Selectmen appoint Enrique Arrascue as the next Fire Chief.

Motion by: Mark Forest

Seconded by: Peter Smith and Dorcas McGurrin

Roll Call Vote: Mark Forest, aye; Dan Horgan, aye; Dorcas McGurrin, aye; Peter Smith, aye; Michael Stone, aye.

Vote: 5 ayes; 0 nays. The motion passed unanimously.

The Board members congratulated Captain Arrascue, and the Chairman invited him to say a few words. Captain Arrascue thanked the Board, his wife and family, his friends, and those colleagues who helped him get to this position. He said that he was very grateful for the opportunity and would work very hard with all the men and women of the Yarmouth Fire Department to make it a department they all could be proud of.

3. Adjourn

MOTION: To adjourn.

Motion by: Mark Forest

Seconded by: Dorcas McGurrin

Vote: 5 ayes; 0 nays. The motion passed unanimously.

The meeting adjourned at approximately 6:40 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Mary Alice Florio". The signature is written in a cursive style with a large initial "M".

Mary Alice Florio

