



## **Board of Selectmen** **Public Meeting Minutes** **December 4, 2015**

*The regular meeting was called to order at 6:00 p.m. in the Town Hall Hearing Room by Chairman Erik Tolley. Selectmen present: Norm Holcomb, Jim Quirk, Tracy Post, and Michael Stone. Also attending: Town Administrator, William Hinchey. The Board of Selectmen gave the Pledge of Allegiance.*

### **1. Town Administrator Candidate Interview**

Chairman Tolley introduced Mr. John Salomone and asked him to introduce himself to the Board and to provide his background, his career, and his experience. Mr. Salomone thanked the Board for the opportunity to interview for the position. He then went on describe his personal life, his background, and experience.

Selectman Stone asked Mr. Salomone what aspects and responsibilities in his experience make him attracted to Yarmouth. Mr. Salomone explained that his experience with funding and oversight of a wastewater treatment project give him the background he needs to handle Yarmouth's wastewater project. Mr. Stone asked how he would bring economic development to the town and asked what ideas he has. Mr. Salomone commented that businesses that are compatible with Yarmouth could be enticed to relocate to Yarmouth given what the town has to offer as a tourist attraction.

Selectman Post commented that given Mr. Salomone's experience in New York and Connecticut, but none in Massachusetts, how would that impact his ability to serve effectively under Massachusetts General Laws. Mr. Salomone stated that the basic tenets of general law are similar between Connecticut and Massachusetts. A few differences are Connecticut does not have a Proposition 2-1/2 or state oversight of town budgets. He also commented that contract negotiations with unions are very similar given the labor laws that govern collective bargaining. He also commented that he would rely on staff to ensure the town is always in compliance but felt the differences between Connecticut and Massachusetts are minor.

Selectman Quirk asked Mr. Salomone what he would do in his first 90 days if he were appointed to the position of town administrator. Mr. Salomone stated he would do a lot of listening. He also commented that he would get out into the community, meet departmental personnel, school personnel, community leaders, and service organizations within the town. He didn't anticipate being behind the desk much or making any changes within 90 days.

Selectman Holcomb asked for examples of Mr. Salomone's successes in economic development and additional information on business relocation efforts he has had in the past. Mr. Salomone stated that he believes the region sells itself. Given the town's financial stability, the beauty of the region and climate, and a diverse population, Mr. Salomone stated he is not afraid to go out and sell the town and personally engage with corporations to encourage relocating or expanding their businesses in Yarmouth. Mr. Salomone gave an example of a corporation wanting to expand their business in geo-thermal technology and using the city hall as a test platform which resulted in business development for the city. He also provided examples of transportation

expansion with the construction of two train stations which eliminated wasted land sights and provided for state and federal funding to the city.

Chairman Tolley asked what Mr. Salomone felt the difference were, if any, between a town manager and a town administrator, and if there is a difference, how would Mr. Salomone adjust his management style to fit Yarmouth's governmental organization. Mr. Salomone stated that there is not much difference between the two. One difference he identified was the elected officials for the town have more administrative oversight than a town council would have in Connecticut. The town council in Connecticut is strictly a policy-making board. One other difference is the town meeting approach that Yarmouth is established under.

Selectman Post asked Mr. Salomone to describe his management style and define his strengths and weaknesses. Mr. Salomone stated that first and foremost, he is a teacher and a mentor. He also stated that he is pretty ambitious and therefore delegates responsibilities to aid in completing items on your agenda. Mr. Salomone stated he has an open door policy and only closes his door to maintain confidentiality when required. Mr. Salomone provided examples of professional failures and examples of his successes. Selectman Post commented that perhaps the town does not have the staffing that Mr. Salomone has in Newington and asked how he would balance his objective of being out from a desk his first 90 days with accomplishing the town's business. Mr. Salomone stated managing his time, delegating without losing control, and realizing the importance of being out in the community would accomplish his goals.

Selectman Quirk asked Mr. Salomone to describe his philosophy with regard to establishing a budget and how would he go about doing it. Mr. Salomone described his process in that he begins a budget incrementally, starting with the capital budget and then incorporates that into the operating budget. He pays close attention to revenues as well as expenditures and urges the town council to do the same. He stated he believes in honest budgeting and is not a risk taker with budgets. He expects departments to adhere to their budgets; he is fiscally conservative.

Selectman Holcomb asked how involved his department heads in Newington are in the budget process. Mr. Salomone stated that his department heads and he work very closely with the finance director and he expects his department heads to monitor their budgets. His department heads are very involved with developing their budget submissions and he believes that is one of their most important responsibilities.

Selectman Stone asked Mr. Salomone what core values he relies on when facing difficult circumstances or having to make difficult decisions. Mr. Salomone stated he tries to exercise fairness and flexibility; he sees his core value of preparation as vital and ensures he does his homework with regard to having all the information available on a given situation; and he tries to remain neutral and not play favorites. Selectman Stone asked Mr. Salomone how he uses his core values to find a resolution. Mr. Salomone stated that the most difficult situations to face are personnel reductions and lay-off's. He stated that he tries to do it in a fair way while maintaining fiscal responsibility.

Chairman Tolley asked Mr. Salomone what he sees as his biggest challenge in Yarmouth and how will he face it. Mr. Salomone stated that he sees a stable source of revenue as a challenge, as with many towns, while maintaining the level of service residents expect.

Selectman Quirk asked Mr. Salomone how he would align the school's budget with the town's budget given that the school district is a regional district. Mr. Salomone stated that he would establish a good working relationship with the superintendent and would not contact the school

board without the superintendent's knowledge. He further stated that communication between the towns and the school district is key to successfully managing the budget process.

Selectman Holcomb asked Mr. Salomone to explain what his strategy has been and what the typical collective bargaining contracts have been with regard to the police and fire departments. Mr. Salomone explained that he has not had a wage increase over 3% since he has been the town manager in Newington. Mr. Salomone explained his strategy in that he goes in with a game plan that he has briefed the policy makers on. He tries to offset any wage increases with management efficiencies.

Selectman Stone asked, in terms of collective bargaining, if part of his negotiating is to attempt to reduce costs such as offering give-back's (sick leave, as an example). Mr. Salomone stated that yes, he has used that strategy. With respect to his management practices, Selectman Stone asked Mr. Salomone what he would put in place to ensure accountability from his staff and to strengthen his team. Mr. Salomone explained that beyond yearly reviews, he believes in quarterly performance reviews, which provides greater opportunities for feedback. He also conducts frequent staff meetings and has formed working sub-committees to avoid having frequent large staff meetings.

Selectman Post asked Mr. Salomone to explain his thought process when he is faced with making difficult decisions such as reductions in staff. Mr. Salomone explained that as a service organization, he would attempt to effect reductions in areas that would least effect services, if possible. Selectman Post asked if Mr. Salomone's current policy board is goal-based. He explained that the board sets goals for him and feels he has been successful in achieving those goals.

Selectman Holcomb asked if Mr. Salomon has experienced budget surpluses. If so, what are the actions of the town manager and town council. Mr. Salomone explained that the council is the budget authority. He explained he tries to maintain a 12% fund balance of the operating budget.

Chairman Tolley asked Mr. Salomone to explain his experiences with regard to community development. Mr. Salomone explained that while he was town manager in Auburn, NY, he and the city council removed parking meters in the downtown area. The reduction in revenue from the meters was more than offset by the increased revenue from the retail establishments in the downtown area. He again spoke to the transportation redevelopment that he has been involved in in Newington, and the addition of a manufacturing company in the aerospace industry.

Selectman Post asked Mr. Salomone if he is familiar with regional development and the Cape Cod Commission. Mr. Salomone explained that he is familiar with both and was a member of a central Connecticut regional planning organization which represents over 40 communities.

Selectman Holcomb asked Mr. Salomone to describe the organizational chart in Newington, asked how many direct reports he has, and if he has made changes over the past 10 years. Mr. Salomone explained that of the 10 major department heads, all but 2 have had turnovers over those 10 years. He described Newington's organizational chart as rather flat and therefore is a firm believer in delegation. He explained that due to lack of sufficient staff, he has 16 direct reports. Selectman Holcomb asked Mr. Salomone to pick one of those department heads and describe his strengths. Mr. Salomone chose the new police chief in Newington and described his strength as his operational experience, having come up through the ranks. Additionally, he has a good grasp of

the financial side of his department. He also believes one of the chief's strengths is that he is also a believer in getting out into the community.

Selectman Stone asked Mr. Salomone what he would do to assess employee morale if he were to be appointed as Yarmouth's town administrator. Also, once that assessment was done and it was learned there was a morale issue, what would you do to resolve those problems. Mr. Salomone explained that he fosters two-way communication through his open door policy, his department head meetings, and his sub-committee meetings. Additionally, he holds quarterly meetings with the unions to discuss any ongoing issues within the unions. He believes communication and recognition of excellent performance are important morale issues.

Selectman Post asked Mr. Salomone that, given his length of public service, does he still feel he has the passion for the work. Mr. Salomone stated that he is not as passionate in his current position as he was a few years ago which is why he is looking to make a change and feels he still has the ability and the energy to be passionate about a new position.

Selectman Quirk asked Mr. Salomone how he would balance preserving Yarmouth's history and landmarks with new development. Mr. Salomone explained that his view is that any new development must be consistent with community values.

Chairman Tolley asked the candidate to give a closing statement. Mr. Salomone asked the Board what the next step was in the process. Chairman Tolley explained that the agenda does allow for the Board to make a decision this evening but will also be on the agenda for the December 8th meeting should the Board not make a decision tonight. Mr. Salomone thanked the Board for the opportunity to interview for the position and enjoyed the process.

The Board agreed to hold a discussion on the candidates. Mr. Holcomb commented that he was impressed with Mr. Salomone's experience and his comments with regard to economic development and union negotiations. Mr. Holcomb did have some reservations concerning the number of direct reports that Mr. Salomone has in Newington. Selectman Holcomb commented on Mr. Johnson-Staub stating that he has matured under the mentorship of Mr. Lawton and Mr. Hinchey and was impressed with the choices he made with regard to his family.

Selectman Post also commented on Mr. Salomone's direct reports and felt it was an inefficiency in the organization and was concerned about the amount of delegation necessary. Ms. Post also commented on her support of Mr. Johnson-Staub and her belief that we should hire from within when the right candidate is available.

Selectman Quirk stated he would like to wait to make a decision and commented on the strengths and weaknesses of each candidate.

## 2. Adjourn

**MOTION: To move that the Board of Selectmen adjourn the meeting.**

**Motion by: Jim Quirk**

**Seconded by: Mike Stone**

**Aye 5    Nay 0**

Respectfully submitted,



Linda Dennehy

## DISTRIBUTED MATERIAL AGENDA PACKET

- Cover Letter and Resume from Mr. John Salomone