

**Carver Select Board
Meeting Minutes
Town Hall Meeting Room #1
September 14, 2021 - 1:00pm**

In Attendance: Chair Mark Townsend, Vice-Chair Sarah Hewins, Robert Belbin, Jen Bogart, Jim Hoffman, & Assistant Town Administrator Elaine Weston.

Chair led the meeting with the Pledge of Allegiance and read the community prayer.

Interviews for the position of Town Administrator - Questions were asked from each member:

1:00pm James Kelly:

Hewins: Why did you choose municipal government as your profession?

Kelley stated he originally started with the state in the Board of Conciliation and Arbitration. All of the clientele were municipalities so it was a natural progression. He became the Human Resource Director in several towns. Has worked for the legislature, has been an auditor for the state and has served for numerous boards in his town. He stated he enjoys it as in his brief practice with law found that he would rather work from the municipal point of view as opposed to the opposite side.

Bogart: 'Rural Character' is a term often used to describe Carver. What does rural character mean to you?

Kelley stated he lives in Norton and it is a combination of rural, commercial and agricultural. In the meantime, many of the farms have been industrialized and the rural character has been lost. He stated the agriculture and open space needs to be valued and preserved.

Bogart: How would you balance preserving rural character with commercial, industrial and residential growth?

Kelley stated he would encourage open space and agricultural space preservation through the Planning Department. Various state and tax programs support this by making sure the information is out there and encourage it.

Belbin: When was the last time you apologized publicly for making a wrong decision while doing your job?

Kelley stated in regards to a labor contract presented to the Board of Selectmen, he thought it was brought to their attention in the past and was mistaken. He met with individual members of the Board as well.

Hoffman: What two things have you accomplished in your present job that you are most proud?

Kelley stated one was getting everyone through Covid, purchasing sufficient laptops so employees could go remote, obtain personal protective gear for staff and was able to give additional gear to local nursing homes in need. He was able to keep town services going by having plexi-glass installed quickly. He acknowledge the Emergency Management Director and other Department Heads with working together to bring 50% of staff back to town hall. Meals on Wheels was coordinated with the School so food could efficiently get to everyone in need. Second, was able to present a budget to the Board, then was informed of substantial cuts by the State, went back to the Board with presented cuts and not one item was 'passed' on at the Town Meeting.

Townsend: How do you approach financial planning and budgeting as a financial management strategy?

Kelley stated a five-year capital plan and previous budgets should be looked at as well as potential financial impacts, including revenues, meet with Department Heads and find out what they are looking for and inform the Department Heads what is going to be priorities and what isn't. Once that is done, various Boards must be consulted with and go forward with developing a budget and plan for the next few years and this should coordinate with the Contract Negotiation plan. This is important when looking at the impact of the budget, including the school contracts.

Hewins: Can you give us an example(s) of how you saved a town during a national financial crisis?

Kelley stated he has a bumper sticker on his desk that says 'It's the spending stupid'. He is always concerned about saving the town money, not just during a national crisis. In Millbury, all PILOT's were suspended and re-negotiated to increase revenues from those by 50%, RFP's went out for all employees benefits, all insurance expenditures have been cut in every town he has worked in. He believes in collective purchasing. Health care employee split was accomplished and looked to the state for various grants.

Bogart: The development of solar farms in Carver has exploded in recent years. What do you consider positives or negatives about having solar farms in a town like Carver?

Kelley stated in Norton, there was controversy over losing bogs to solar and the proper regulations were not in place at the time. It's impact on the environment around it are important. The impact of the access to the panels, neighborhoods and open space. There are places for solar with land that is an amenable use.

Belbin: How do you handle appointments to committees/boards with multiple applicants for the same position: If only one applicant and he/she differ, conflicts or publicly criticize your job performance, do you appoint?

Kelley stated if there are many applicants for a position, you are lucky. He stated it is tough to find people to volunteer their time for boards/committees. He would want the most confident and qualified person to be appointed and understands you are not going to please everyone all of the time. Negative comments on job performance should not effect that.

Belbin: In your opinion, how many committees is too many for any one person to serve on:

Kelley stated it would depend what they are already on as you need to be careful that those committees don't overlap on oversite.

Belbin: What would you do to increase community involvement?

Kelley stated it is important that people know what is available. He cited an example of cemetery upkeep and he increased funding for that specific purpose if the department could recruit people for the cemetery commission.

Hoffman: What are two things you feel you need to work on?

Kelley stated one is that he needs to take time to explain the issue he would like to address or in making a decision and sometimes people need background to the issue. Another issue is not to bite off more than he can chew and needs to delegate properly.

Townsend: What is your approach to capital budgeting? Are you familiar with our capital stabilization fund?

Kelley stated he is not familiar with Carver's policy, however, in Millbury there was a policy that a portion of free cash would be put into the Capital Budget. Money needs to be bank-rolled for needs and most towns will have a five-year capital plan and also expect the

unexpected. The life-span of most buildings can be anticipated. For roads, there should be a Chapter 90 plan in place. A percentage of marijuana revenue was allocated by by-law for capital funding.

Hewins: Why do you want this job in particular?

Kelley stated it is a lot closer to home. It has a rural and agricultural mix as well as industrial. He believes he would enjoy working here.

Bogart: Do you have any financial/professional relationships with someone who either lives in Carver or owns a business here?

Kelley stated no.

Belbin: Our town used to be a big cranberry industry (cranberry country motto); growers are getting out of growing and selling out to solar companies; their kids are not interested in the industry; what would you suggest to be a new motto for Carver?

Kelley stated: "Carver-moving into the future"

Townsend: What are your thoughts on Carver's public safety departments including Emergency Management?

Kelley stated he would be looking to the experts to run their departments and the role of the Town Administrator would be to make sure they are funded.

Townsend: Are you aware of the structure of the Emergency Management Departments?

Kelley stated he is aware of the set-up and has worked with this type of structure before.

Bogart: If hired, how would you know you were doing a good job after six months? What would you look for as benchmarks or signs?

Kelley stated he would confer with the Select Board and enjoys a 2-way conversation and would be engaging with town employees and the Select Board.

Townsend: What questions do you have for the Board?

Kelley thanked the Board members for the interview.

Kelley asked what issues would the candidate face in the first 60-90 days in the position?

Townsend stated each Board member would have their own concerns, but the main challenges would be Covid and the funding surrounding that.

2:15pm Rick LaFond:

Hewins: Why did you choose municipal government as your profession?

LaFond stated he grew up in a family that is service oriented. His parents were involved in the church and feels it was a natural place to go with a background in history. Government is a natural place to be when you want to help people.

Bogart: 'Rural Character' is a term often used to describe Carver. What does rural character mean to you?

LaFond stated that it is how you feel when you cross the town line – does Carver have a feel to it when you see it. Incrementally, the feel of the town can change. He was surprised at the look of some areas of Carver, building design, signage and stated the people of Carver need to be careful of what people think when they enter Carver. Trees, open space, agricultural and it is what you see when you drive down the street.

Bogart: How would you balance preserving rural character with commercial, industrial and residential growth?

LaFond stated that the Master Plan is a major tool in preserving the rural character. The residential tax piece, is a large part of the tax base. The town needs to decide what it wants and you cannot tell people what to do on their property if it is zoned appropriately.

Belbin: How do you handle appointments to committees/boards with multiple applicants for the same position:

LaFond stated properly advertising for the position is important, however there is usually not a choice. To the extent there is multiple applicants, the one with expertise to the committee they are applying for would be applicable.

If only one applicant and he/she differ, conflicts or publicly criticize your job performance, do you appoint?

LaFond stated he has done this in the past in Carver with the Finance Committee. He stated he does not have a problem with criticism and you find over a period of time your views come together.

Belbin: In your opinion, how many committees is too many for any one person to serve on:

LaFond stated he does not have a problem if there aren't other applicants.

Hoffman: What two things have you accomplished in your present job that you are most proud?

LaFond stated the first one is that he started in Carver right before spring town meeting and some financial matters were put off. The first year, the town was concerned about state aid and the town was held harmless. There was a net decrease of \$80,000 in assessments. The Town had projected about \$500,000 that would be coming from solar growth and there was no way that money would be obtained in time for the budget. Closing that gap was a smooth process and had everyone in agreement. The second one is that he was elected to be the chair of the Gateway Health Group. LaFond started this group which included about 6 districts and saved a lot of money for the town. It had been significantly neglected. They are looking to get a community back that had left and are looking to add one more community.

Townsend: How do you approach financial planning and budgeting as a financial management strategy?

LaFond stated financial planning begins one fiscal year ahead. A good revenue and expenditure forecast allows you to focus on things that matter and it begins with realistic long-term planning. The 10-year revenue projection doesn't help without a 10-year expenditure projection. He stated a more realistic approach is a 5-year projection.

Hewins: Can you give us an example(s) of how you saved a town during a national financial crisis?

LaFond stated at the time of the last recession in 2008 he was trying to reduce fixed costs. A transformer was brought in to North Carver.

Hewins stated we were going to lose 12 teachers that year - LaFond stated yes we saved teachers.

Bogart: The development of solar farms in Carver has exploded in recent years. What do you consider positives or negatives about having solar farms in a town like Carver?

LaFond stated that it is a benefit in terms of put developments at bay and to agriculture so that farm owners don't need to sell their property and the town benefits from the PILOT money. There are many that are not visible from the road which is also important.

Belbin: Our town used to be a big cranberry industry (cranberry country motto); growers are getting out of growing and selling out to solar companies; their kids are not interested in the industry; what would you suggest to be a new motto for Carver?

LaFond stated he does not want to give up on 'Cranberry Country'.

Hoffman: What are two things you feel you need to work on?

LaFond stated he needs to work on bringing departments together and facilitating more of a unit.

Townsend: What is your approach to capital budgeting?

LaFond stated the process used in Carver is standard and would have more people involved. Does not think it is ideal that the Town Administrator develop the capital budget, but rather it be created with departments and the committee so everyone is in agreement.

Having dedicated revenue to capital is important. Carver is set up to do this better than it has been in recent years.

Hewins: Why do you want this job in particular?

LaFond stated he was fortunate to be the first Town Administrator and his family was a part of him being here. He has worked with the best public officials and made him feel like he was part of this community, not just working for this community and he feels connected here.

Bogart: Do you have any financial/professional relationships with someone who either lives in Carver or owns a business here?

LaFond stated he has friendships with people from when he was here and those did not go away as well as previous employees. He stated he has no financial interest in Carver, other than employment.

Belbin: When was the last time you apologized publicly for making a wrong decision while doing your job?

LaFond stated he feels from time to time he could do a better job such as putting things before the Board earlier, but does not recall any major issues in which it was warrant it.

Hewins: What are your thoughts on Carver's public safety departments including Emergency Management?

LaFond stated government is boring and it should be kept that way. A good government is a well-oiled machine; it shouldn't make a lot of noise.

LaFond stated the way the departments interact are what makes it work. It needs to be supported or you will end up needing a full-time Fire Department. These departments need to be treated as if they are full-time employees which means investing in equipment.

Bogart: If hired, how would you know you were doing a good job after six months? What would you look for as benchmarks or signs?

LaFond stated you are doing a good job when people don't need to tell you that you are doing a good job. He stated that government is boring and should be kept that way and it is an indication that things are going well. The Board will have goals and objectives, but the quiet government is a sign that things are going well.

Townsend: What do you have for the Board?

LaFond stated that government is subject to negativity and it is different when you make a living doing it. Social media can be an asset, and the job is getting more difficult and the relationships need to sustain each other. He stated he has the expertise financially and

professionally. He believes in the democratic process and will work toward the long-term capital needs of the town. He works long days, early mornings, nights and weekends. He likes being a part of the community and attending events. He has the strength and principles to stand up for people, even to his own detriment.

Belbin thought of LaFond's new motto "it feels like home".

Motion by Belbin to table discussion on appointment of a Town Administrator for the next 14 days.

Hewins does not want a time limit put on it.

Belbin rescinded his motion.

Motion by Belbin to take no action and to postpone to a future meeting, second by Hewins.

Vote 5-0

Motion to adjourn at 2:55pm by Hewins, second by Belbin.

Vote 5-0