

**Carver Select Board
Meeting Minutes
Central Fire Station Training Room
September 21, 2021 - 5:30pm**

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

Meeting called to order at 5:30pm.

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

Facilitator Mark Rogers led the meeting.

Establish Goals and Objectives for the Select Board: Mark is from Webster. He has had a corporate career leading teams, retiring several years ago and opened a consulting business as well as a coaching business. He is a master certified coach and has a Master's Degree in strategic leadership. He asked each Board member to introduce themselves.

Rogers spoke about 'thinking outside the box' and how people think they are doing that when in reality, people like their boxes. Opportunities can be missed this way. Having the ability to have a 'perforated box' may allow bad ideas to go out and bring in new ideas & be willing to experiment. What you can experiment with is how you interact with each other & employees.

Input from others- allow it to flow in and it does not have to stay, but it can be discussed. Personal growth as a group is never comfortable. Once the information is brought forth, then each member can decide what to do.

Each member was asked what they hope to get out of the meeting:

Bogart: Discussion in general to speak to each other

Belbin: Familiarity with the issues (goals and objectives)

Hewins: Unsure

Townsend: Insight on the goals and objectives

Hoffman: More communication

LaFond added – Clarity of expectations

Rogers stated that at least half of the draft goals listed have to do with discussion, clarification and communication.

He asked all members and LaFond to put 'dots' next to the goals and objectives they feel are most important. The goals with the highest amount of 'dots' were:

1. Continue to improve the communication path from the Town Administrator to the Select Board
2. Discuss Communication expectations with the Select Board members and Town Administrator
3. Encourage the maintenance of current positive morale and spirit of cooperation among town employees.

Discussion on communication and how often each member communicates with the Town Administrator. LaFond stated each member can contact him as often as they would like. Each member has a different communication preferential with the Town Administrator. Some members' communication weekly and others want to know if they are bringing issues to the Town Administrator or getting an update on what is going on from the Town Administrator.

Rogers suggested making a handbook for newly elected Select Board members. Hoffman stated that part of the problem is that they don't know what to ask. It may be unusual that 3 out of the 5 members have 2 years or less experience on the Board.

Belbin stated if he sends an email over the weekend while he is thinking of an issue, he does not expect a call back until Monday morning. Townsend stated that he appreciates the turnaround that LaFond gives when he has a question.

Hewins has been on the Board for 12 years and Townsend 4 years. The expectation is that a regular communication is helpful and they think reaching out to the Town Administrator regularly has been useful and helpful. Rogers pointed out that it is difficult to make a mistake in contacting the Town Administrator. If it did come to it, the Town Administrator would tell the member that they cannot have that particular conversation due to a potential Open Meeting Law violation.

Rogers asked what types of issues the Board feels the Town Administrator should communicate on. Hoffman stated that the Select Board should be communicated if an employee resigns.

Bogart pointed out that if the Town Administrator is updating one of the Board members on an issue, an email should be sent out to all members so everyone is informed on the all the same issues.

Rogers asked if their role is to focus on big picture things. Townsend disagreed to the point that each topic is a big deal to the topic they have an issue with.

Belbin thinks a Select Board member should know what is going on in the town and the way things are done in the town. Would like to be able to listen in on Department Head meetings.

Hoffman stated that when he did the Town Administrator evaluation, he found it difficult as he did not see the day to day interactions the Town Administrator has and also doesn't want to overstep his bounds.

LaFond stated the job description is in the bylaws. To the extent that Board members are going to employees there is a balance. Would that Department Head take away that the Board member is directing them to do things. LaFond asked where the line is from a call fire fighter to a part-time employee leaving to a long-time employee leaving- does the Board want to know on each of these or one over the other.

Townsend would rather over-communicate rather than under-communicate. At times there could be an issue in town that the Town Administrator may not know about. It is a two-way street and the Board may need to communicate to LaFond as much as they want him to communicate with them.

The idea a monthly update to the Board came up. Rogers stated that the Board should decide which departments and that it is ok if there is no write up from a specific department each month. He cautioned members that the dynamic can change at a Department Head meeting if a Select Board member attends.

Rogers suggested that when someone is elected to the Board that they are given a mentor. This may help with the communication issues.

Discussion on morale: Belbin stated that it depends on what department you are talking to. Some departments say it is great, others say it is ok and some say not so good.

Hewins stated that as a former employee she has seen both the good and bad morale. She thinks that the morale is good and that there are only a few outliers. She stated good morale is based on respect and trust and it is not done overnight. She has seen it there, has seen it disappear and has seen it come back, mainly due to who is the Town Administrator.

Rogers asked each member to write down one big picture goal for the town that is not on the list.

Rogers went through each suggested goal and objective:

1. Work with the new Finance Director and the Interim Town Administrator to maximize Plymouth County Cares Act and ARPA funds. Currently only broad guidelines have been given by the government. Once guidelines are given, the Board should set priorities.
2. Appoint a permanent Town Administrator. This is in process and a decision should be made soon.

3. Facilitate the updating of the Town's 2010-2015 Open Space & Recreation Plan and the 2017 Master Plan so that we are in compliance with the state and eligible for state grant funding. These are set to expire and committees need to be appointed to facilitate this.
4. Increase community outreach and engagement. The Town can facilitate community events. It is not only about resolving problems.
5. Increase residents' opportunities to join boards and committees. (part of community outreach)
6. Review town bylaws for updates. Some are outdated and they need to be reviewed and updated.
7. Select Board Chair and Vice-Chair duties. Roles should be outlined and passed along to future members.
8. Continue the Select Board Financial Management Policies. These policies have enabled the town to build and improve on infrastructure as well as keep the town in a financially stable place.
9. Work with the newly re-organized Capital Outlay Committee to prioritize long-term capital projects.

Rogers asked each member to write down what big take away they got from tonight.

Big picture items from Select Board not on the original goals and objectives list:

1. Affordable housing – the facilitator pointed out there were 2 votes for this
2. Make sure all officials know what their responsibility is
3. Build a new Council on Aging
4. Rt. 44 development project coordination
5. Lower commercial tax rate
6. Make people want to reach out when things are good, not just bad
7. Re-establish zoning by-laws to maintain rural feel

Most members took away that they want more communication.

Motion to adjourn at 7:30pm by Hewins, second by Hoffman.

Vote 5-0