

## **MINUTES OF THE BOARD OF SELECTMEN**

April 20, 2022

Town Hall, 139 Main Street, Rowley, MA

10:00 a.m.

**MEMBERS PRESENT:** Chairman Cliff Pierce; Vice Chairman Deana M.P. Ziev (ABSENT until 6:25 p.m.); Clerk Robert Snow; Joseph Perry; David Petersen (Town Administrator Deborah Eagan; Assistant Town Administrator Amy Lydon)

### **CALL MEETING TO ORDER**

Chairman Pierce called the meeting to order at 10:00 a.m. He said the meeting is being audio and video recorded by Rowley Community Media.

### **PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE**

The Pledge of Allegiance was recited.

### **10:00 a.m. APPOINTMENT** Mark Emery for interview for Fire Chief position

Mark Emery was asked the following questions. A summary of Emery's responses are below.

Question: Please give us a quick overview of your career and tell us why the position of Rowley Fire Chief is the right next step for you.

Emery: He started in 1980 as a volunteer firefighter and became a call firefighter in 1981. As a call firefighter he worked his way through the ranks as Lieutenant and Captain, then moved to full-time status where he again worked his way back up to the Captain position. This is his third time serving as Acting Chief, and the next natural step is the Chief's position. He knows the history of the department and firefighting and thinks he will be a good fit to carry on the operations, with losing 2 top management employees. He can pass on his knowledge for the next 4 to 5 years.

Question: What are the three most important qualities a Fire Chief should possess?

Emery: Knowledge of firefighting and management of personnel. He has a lot of experience as the Chair of the Board of Water Commissioners and he has a calm, cool, collected disposition.

Question: There are major issues with attracting and retaining firefighters in the department – how will you address this?

Emery: He would like to change the screening process for applicants and to have someone from the department be more involved who understands young people. They have 6 people ready for the Fire Academy and they have removed the posting for call firefighters because it costs \$5,000 to \$6,000 including the gear to put them through. Eventually they will look at having coverage at night, and will look at payment via a stipend or per diem, like Georgetown, Newbury and Topsfield are doing. Now, call

firefighters only get paid if they respond, and there are options to try to address after hours issues, which need to be addressed sooner rather than later.

Question: You have done the Lieutenant and Captain jobs- what do you foresee changing moving into the Chief's role?

Emery: We need to establish the chain of command on each shift, and with the call force. The work needs to be distributed to different people, and check on them to make sure they are doing the work. Since he has been the Acting Chief, he has looked at the interests of the employees and put them in charge of duties that match their interests, such as training, maintenance, radio programming and fire prevention.

Question: If you are appointed as Chief, you will be assuming command of a department with a personnel crisis. You will have no command staff, a limited call force response to calls and the need to appoint at least 5 new firefighters. You will need to appoint a command staff. How will you handle these issues and provide for emergency response to calls for service at the same time.

Emery: He would like to advertise the positions and come up with a list of ten people. He would like to do the recruiting differently. The first screening team is fine, but for the final he would like to use out of Town and internal people on the team. He said the officer positions need to be posted and we will see who applies, but there are 2 well qualified internal employees. He said employees need to be cross trained on the bills payable and payroll processing. He said he will do what needs to be done to respond to calls, including riding the truck if he has to. He will sit down with the call force and find out why they aren't responding. He said at a recent call on Easter, 10 people responded, but you never know who will respond, and this is not unique to Rowley.

Question: Is there a laptop issued that integrates with the station software and when will the Chief be back.

Emery: The Chief has a laptop. The Chief's return depends on how his next doctor's appointment goes.

Question: Over your career there have been a number of crises. How do you see yourself dealing with crises and employees during a crisis?

Emery: When there is a bad call, there are avenues to get help, such as talking with Fire Chaplain Reverend Bob. There are support services available now that we didn't have in the past. He said when there is an issue it needs to be addressed right away, and he has intervened when employees from Action Ambulance have needed help from the critical incidence team.

Question: The Police and Fire departments have a friendly rivalry. How do you interact with the Police Chief?

Emery: Being located next door, the departments are very interactive and like to have each other involved. They are creating a joint police and fire memorial behind the stations, and he invited the Board to attend the dedication ceremony. He said public safety is a team and they all work together, each doing their own job and all roles just as important.

Question: What is your philosophy with regard to the relationship between the community and the Fire Department, and what could you do to foster a positive relationship?

Emery: The Fire Department is more out in the public now than it has been in the past. He would like more firefighters to hold child safety seat certifications as a lot of people stop by to get this done. He would like to have the staff in place to hold a child safety seat inspection day. He said he would like to be more public like Chief Dumas, and maybe work together on this.

Question: What do you believe will be most challenging for you, personally, in making the transition to management? How will you adjust?

Emery: He has already made the transition so far, by developing the budget for payroll, which has a lot of variables and he spent a lot of time on it. He said he will assign employees projects and check in on them, but be hands off and let them do their job, which hasn't been the case in the past. He said he won't be able to be everyone's friend, and he has had this role as a Water Commissioner.

Question: Without providing names, can you please give an example of a disciplinary issue you handled. Explain the incident and how you addressed the issue. Why did you choose this approach? What were the results?

Emery: There was an issue between two members of the Fire Department. He brought them each in individually to hear their sides and explained the disciplinary process. He spoke with Eagan regarding the options for discipline, and both were issued written reprimands which were put into their files. He said he has also been involved in termination discussions for Water Department employees in the past.

He started in cabinet making and carpentry but then applied for a position in the Water Department, went to school and got his licenses. He said when the position in the Fire Department became available he transferred because his first love has always been for the fire department, but he has kept his water licenses up to date. He said his licenses and Superintendent Gray's licenses are currently being used under special permission from the DEP. He said the Water Department has had issues finding employees, so he had the idea to hire laborers and train them. They now have four people getting their water licenses, this approach has worked, and they have only lost one employee with the licenses.

He asked if the Board could make a decision soon because there is a ripple effect with other positions, and many are in limbo waiting to see what happens. He said he is looking forward to hiring people and hopefully we will have some great candidates. Pierce said the Board will make a decision soon.

### **NEW BUSINESS**

#### **1. Discuss Fire Chief appointment**

Joe Perry made a motion to appoint Mark Emery as Fire Chief. The motion was not seconded.

Snow said Emery did a very good job, and he has a good handle on the Department with his many years of experience. He said Emery doesn't get flustered and he would be an excellence choice. Pierce said Emery's experience is amazing, along with his knowledge of the Town and the Water Department. Petersen said he is in favor of appointing Emery, but do it at an evening meeting so there will be more people there to celebrate. He said we need to do this soon since there are a lot of staffing issues at the Fire Department.

Joe Perry withdrew his motion and suggested that this be put on Monday's meeting agenda. Pierce said that is a good idea.

Deana Ziev left the meeting at 10:49 a.m.

### **EXECUTIVE SESSION**

To conduct strategy sessions in preparation for negotiations with nonunion personnel, Scott Dumas, and to conduct contract negotiations with Scott Dumas – G.L.c.30A §21(a)(2)

Chairman Pierce called for a motion to go into Executive Session for the following purpose:

To conduct strategy sessions in preparation for negotiations with nonunion personnel, Scott Dumas, and to conduct contract negotiations with Scott Dumas because an open session will have a detrimental effect on the negotiating position of the Board of Selectmen pursuant to State Open Meeting Law G.L. c. 30A, Section 21(a)(2) and to not return to open session.

Bob Snow so moved, Joe Perry second, all in favor – roll call vote: Bob Snow – aye; Joe Perry – aye; Dave Petersen – aye; Cliff Pierce – aye. Deana Ziev – ABSENT

Open session adjourned at 10:50 a.m.

Respectfully submitted,  
Amy Lydon  
Assistant Town Administrator

**ATTACHMENTS:**

1. Draft interview questions for Fire Chief position
2. Mark Emery's application package for position of Fire Chief
3. Meeting memo regarding New Business #1: Discuss Fire Chief appointment
4. Written Executive Session Motion