

*BOARD OF SELECTMEN
MEETING MINUTES
Saturday, January 9, 2021
Pompositticut Community Center
509 Great Road
Stow, MA 01775*

ATTENDANCE: Chair Tom Ryan, Megan Birch-McMichael, Cortni Frecha, Jim Salvie, and Ellen Sturgis

Also in attendance was Town Administrator Denise Dembkoski

The Chair opened the meeting at 9am.

Chair Ryan read an opening statement that this special meeting was called to publicly interview candidates for the position of Police Chief. He thanked the members of the Police Chief Search Committee, Denise Dembkoski, Town Administrator, Select Board Members Megan Birch-McMichael and himself Tom Ryan, Zack Burns, resident, Fire Chief Joe Landry, Highway Superintendent Steven Nadeau, and Berlin Police Chief Tom Galvin. He then informed the public that there were more than 30 applicants and the Search Committee narrowed it down to three finalists. However, today there would only be two interviews, as candidate Edward Lee withdrew on Thursday. Chair Ryan then discussed how he envisioned the first hour working and how the interviews would proceed. The whole board then discussed the process and how they all felt the interviews and the initial meeting should play out.

Selectwoman Birch-McMichael would like to suggest that each Board member take a topic they are passionate about and ask all questions in that realm. The Board then discussed the questions submitted by Board members, the Town Administrator, and the public. They discussed the way the format would flow and who would ask what questions.

After a full discussion on the questions and topic, the Chair called for a short recess beginning at 9:56am. The Board returned from recess at 10:12am.

10:15am – The Board welcomed Richard Briggs, a Lieutenant from the Ashland police department and began his interview.

The Board asked Lt. Briggs questions pertaining to a number to topics, including community policing, leadership, police reform, use of force, and being a candidate from outside the Stow police department.

“Overall, I have a good reputation in the community – overall, I think in all my departments I’ve had a good reputation” - Briggs

The Board finished the interview with Lt. Briggs and went into a recess at 11:18am.

The Board returned from their recess at 11:30am and welcomed Stow Acting Chief Mike Sallese and began his interview.

The Board asked Acting Chief Sallese questions pertaining to a number to topics, including community policing, leadership, police reform, bias, use of force, and being an internal candidate from the Stow police department.

“I want to be part of the change in the Stow Police Department and I want to look back on police reform and know that I was part of it.” - Sallese

The interview with Mike Sallese concluded at 12:34pm.

The Chair then opened up the discussion to see what the Board had to say and to decide how to proceed.

Selectwoman Birch-McMichael is not in favor of voting today, she thinks it's important to get community input before the Tuesday meeting. She felt both interviews were of a different tenor than previous interviews and in a positive way.

Selectwoman Frecha would agree and wants some time to think this over and felt there were two solid interviews. And has asked how residents should provide their comments. Ms. Dembkoski said folks can email her at her email address and she will compile them for the Board on Monday.

Selectman Salvie stated that he agreed, both candidates were very qualified and he had some concerns when the third candidate withdrew, but he has no concerns any longer and will be ready to take a vote on Tuesday night.

Selectwoman Sturgis echoed the same statements of Selectman Salvie and said she was very concerned when the third candidate withdrew and thought about asking to re-open the search, but after participating in these interviews she is much more reassured.

Chair Ryan stated that he would be prepared to vote today, but since he appears to be outvoted, he will wait until Tuesday.

Ms. Dembkoski reminded the Board that they will be meeting at Pompo on Tuesday night as well, to allow all five (5) members to be present and still be safely distanced.

Hearing no other questions/comments, the Chair entertained a motion to adjourn. Selectwoman Sturgis made a motion to adjourn at 12:39pm, seconded by Selectwoman Frecha, and it was approved on a unanimous vote.

Respectfully submitted,
Denise M. Dembkoski
Town Administrator