**Meeting of the Board of Selectmen February 9, 2021**

**Phone: 669-224-3318**

**Access Code: 220-595-605**

**Executive Session – 6:30 p.m.**

Chairman Patricia Riley called the meeting to order at 6:30 p.m. in the Donald McKinnon Meeting Room at Veterans Memorial Town Hall, located at 558 South Main Street. In addition to Chairman Riley, Selectmen Joseph Pacheco and Richard Schiavo were in attendance, along with Town Administrator Graham Waters, Treasurer/Collector Michael King, and Attorney Ted Pietnik. Selectman Pacheco made a motion, seconded by Selectman Schiavo, to enter into Executive Session in accordance with Massachusetts General Laws, Chapter 30A, Section 21, to discuss strategy with respect to collective bargaining or litigation if an open meeting may have a detrimental effect on the bargaining or litigating position of the public body and the chair so declares. On a roll call vote, Mr. Pacheco, Mr. Schiavo, and Ms. Riley each voted “I” to go into Executive Session.

**7:00 p.m. Regular Meeting – with Remote Public Access**

Chairman Riley called the open meeting to order at 7:00 p.m. in the Donald McKinnon Meeting Room at Town Hall. In addition to Chairman Riley, Selectmen Joseph Pacheco and Richard Schiavo were in attendance. Ms. Riley announced, “Pursuant to Governor Baker’s March 12, 2020 Order Suspending Certain Provisions of the Open Meeting Law, G.L.C.30A, §18, and the Governor’s 2020 Order imposing strict limitations on the number of people who may gather in one place, this meeting of the Raynham Board of Selectmen is being conducted with the Public Body members in person at Veterans Memorial Town Hall and with the general public following the proceedings remotely. Every effort has been made to ensure that the public can adequately access the proceedings as provided for in the Order. For real time access, residents can join the live broadcast on the Raynham Channel, use the “gotomeeting” online feature, and/or call in using their phone. The Town will post a record of this meeting on the Town’s website as soon as we are able. Also in accordance with the Executive Order, other town officials and staff participating in the meeting and in attendance include: Town Administrator Graham Waters and from the Board of Assessors William Lewis.” Ms. Riley also announced, “This meeting is being recorded, and, for the record, we are returning from executive session with nothing to report at this time.”

**Pledge of Allegiance -** Ms. Riley led the Board in the Pledge of Allegiance and called for a moment of silence for John Montagano who recently passed away. A World War II veteran, Mr. Montagano served for many years as the Town’s Veterans’ Service Agent and he and his wife, Pat, served the community in many ways.

**Acceptance of the Minutes**

Ms. Riley asked for a motion to table the minutes of the Selectmen’s meeting held on February 2, 2021. Mr. Pacheco made a motion to table, Mr. Schiavo seconded, and Ms. Riley made it unanimous.

**Department Heads & Committees – attendees online**

1. **Ed Buckley, Highway Superintendent – Monthly Report**

Mr. Buckley called in to join the meeting and he reported that highway crews were out treating the roads. There have been nine events this year. Six have required plowing and three required salting only. The current total for the Town is about 24 inches of snow for this winter. Mr. Buckley thanked his staff for all the hard work. Mr. Buckley has submitted a request to spend over the $50,000 amount originally budgeted in snow and ice funds. Mr. Pacheco made a motion to approve the request, Mr. Schiavo seconded, and Ms. Riley made it unanimous. Mr. Buckley continued, “In COVID-related matters, we have had some staff out, but now everyone has returned, and the three new hires have been a tremendous help so far. In December, the department did a two-week litter campaign. They collected several hundred bags of litter on the main roads in Town and they put the message board out to remind everyone to keep Raynham clean. The two new rapid flasher signs have been installed, one on Pleasant Street and the other at Colletti’s Market, and there is a button to engage the system, so there is no delay. The new catch basin truck has arrived.” Mr. Buckley also reported that his department has applied for two different grants. The Board thanked Mr. Buckley and his department for all of their hard work.

1. **Matt Tanis – Health Agent**

Mr. Tanis called in to join the meeting to give an update on the vaccine. He explained that the state and the cities and towns are at the mercy of the Federal Government and he does not anticipate any more than 100 doses at a time, and that may include the second dose. He did set up a clinic that was held yesterday for those people 75 and up and it filled up in 30 minutes. He hopes everyone is patient. Mr. Pacheco said he has received many calls and he emphasized that the town is not lacking a facility to administer the vaccine. It’s lacking the vaccine to do it. The Gillette Stadium is available and still has 700 doses available. It’s not for the Town’s lack of trying. It’s the lack of sufficient vaccine available. If those eligible to get the vaccine call the Board of Health office, they can be put on a waiting list.

**Appointments**

Ms. Riley said a request was received to appoint Kristin Merlino to the Raynham Cultural Council. Mr. Pacheco made a motion to appoint, Mr. Schiavo seconded, and Ms. Riley made it unanimous.

**Completion of Old/Continuing Business**

1. **Credit Card Policy and establishment of a Town Credit Card**

 Mr. Waters said, “I sent out a draft today.” Mr. Pacheco said he approved of the credit card use procedure as outlined and that it is restricted to department heads. He made a motion to approve, Mr. Schiavo seconded, and Ms. Riley made it unanimous.

**New Business**

1. **Meeting with the Town Accountant Search Committee**

Mr. William Lewis, who chairs the Search Committee, was in attendance to address the Board. He explained, “This is the most frustrating search I’ve ever been involved in in my career. The number of applicants out there is very tight. When we started out, it was an Accountant/Budget Manager that we were looking for. That didn’t work. We dropped the Budget Manager and we still didn’t get many applicants. Then we increased the salary and we still didn’t. We did have a number of applicants who are private industry but with no municipal experience. Then the committee came down to three potential applicants, interviewed them and decided to send two, maybe three, to the Board. One of those applicants didn’t show up for the appointment. One applicant was an outstanding applicant, is a Town Accountant in another community, and resume is terrific. The interview went terrific, and the next day the applicant withdrew. Then we had a third applicant who had some experience and works for another Town. This person is a business manager for a large department in a city and that is the one that we wanted to put forward. That is why we only had one. What I would recommend is the applicant that we put forward has some experience and I talked to the consultant that is helping with the accounting and he would be willing to stay on and work with her. We should also appoint someone else as the Finance Director and they could work together. I read over the DLS report and that’s what they are recommending.” Mr. Schiavo said, “Is this the type of thing we should be taking up in Executive Session?” Mr. Lewis said, “I believe that we should engage a company in that search. The Town of Norwood is looking for the same thing and is offering $175,000 - $180,000 for a salary. We still have the interim Town Accountant here. This job is much more than he originally thought it would be and my concern is that he is going to get burnt out and leave.” Mr. Pacheco said, “I want to thank Mr. Lewis and the Committee. The candidate that they are recommending bringing forward was a candidate we had all along and after the expense of going back out to repost at the expense of the taxpayers and increasing the salary, we’re only back to where we started at the beginning. A couple of weeks ago, I said I feel like we are shooting from the hip and that it showed we were in a position of weakness, and here we are right back to where we started, having it posted up to $105,000, and, if you ask 5 out of 6 people, they would say that’s a very good salary and yet we still only have one candidate. My personal opinion, and I would whole heartily implore my two colleagues, is to go back to the Finance Director/Town Accountant position because that is what the majority of towns do, pay a little more and get someone the entire Board is comfortable in bringing on, someone who has the credentials. That, quite frankly, is where we are right now. This position is critical to the Town function and finances and we owe it to the taxpayers to get it right, not just out of necessity, but what the Town needs.” Mr. Schiavo asked, “What would be the mix of responsibilities that you would like to see?” Mr. Pacheco said, “To me, a large part of it is the budget. We have been talking about it for three years. We are a $40m enterprise and there is no singular figure who manages our budget. We have a volunteer Finance Committee, who does a phenomenal job. They don’t get paid and they have their own professional obligations outside of this. For a $40m enterprise, they shouldn’t be doing the Town Accountant’s functions. Norwood is significantly larger than us. They have their own school district and an airport. Those are things that this candidate would not have to handle. In Raynham, we could increase it from the $105,000, but I don’t think it would be anywhere near $175,000. In Taunton, the budget person makes about $106,000 - $108,000, so there are comps out there closer to us that are more in our price range. We have to get this right.” Mr. Schiavo said, “This position would cover budget, accounting and have direct interaction with the Finance Committee and Capital Planning Committee. The Town Administrator did an average of what the pay was.” Mr. Waters said, “I did a survey of 19 other towns. Some had the Town Accountant position and some had the Finance Director/Town Accountant position, and I segregated those out.” Mr. Pacheco said, “If you reference the DLS report, the vast majority of Finance Directors were Town Accountants, so we are not going down an untraveled path.” Mr. Lewis said, “The Town Accountant, Finance Director and the Treasurer/Collector would work together, so you would have a three-person finance team.” Mr. Pacheco said, “I think that our Treasurer/Collector would be a complement to, not subordinate to.” Mr. Schiavo said, “I think we need a Finance Director to coordinate the budget effort.” Mr. Waters said, “We have approached Mr. Laviolette about putting in more time and the answer is no, and I believe that he is ready for the Town to have this position filled.” Mr. Pacheco asked about the Abrahamson Group. “We’ve engaged them,” he said. “Could they step in and fill the void?” Mr. Waters replied, “They could. I can reach out to them and see and fill in the four days a week that Chris is not able to be here.” Mr. Waters also noted, “In several of the surrounding towns, the average salary is $121,000. The low is Hanover at $108,000 and the high is Bridgewater at $139,000.” Mr. Pacheco noted that the population of the community would factor in to the salary. Mr. Schiavo said, “I would recommend that we get a recruiter, and they could also give us an opinion of what the salary range should be.” Mr. Pacheco made a motion to move forward with the Finance Director/Town Accountant position and explore the option of getting a recruiter. He added, “I do know the Collins Institute does that. My recommendation to the Board is that we first reach out to them. They would be in a better position to speak to the town’s strengths and weaknesses. They have seen the Town reports, and being under $10,000, legally we don’t have to go with an RFP.” Mr. Schiavo seconded for discussion and added, “If this does not work, it would be in our best interest to let the person who is a potential candidate understand that we will cycle back to them.” Ms. Riley called for a vote on the motion and it passed unanimously. Mr. Waters said he would redo the posting for next week’s meeting.

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1. **Safer Grant**

Mr. Pacheco explained that Fire Chief Bryan LaCivita could not join the meeting because of an emergency, but he is asking for approval to apply for the Safer Grant for two additional Firefighters. Mr. Pacheco said, “The Chief confirmed today that it is a 100% match for all three years. This would allow the department to get up to the same number for each of their shifts and I support this. It would increase response time, decrease on-duty incidents, and provide a better response to our residents and businesses. I would ask the Board to give permission to the Chief to move forward with the application that is due in March.” Mr. Schiavo seconded and Ms. Riley made it unanimous.

**Town Administrator’s Report**

In his report to the Board, Mr. Waters said, “The committee has met to go over the applications and the Town has received a healthy number of applicants who are highly qualified. There are several applicants who don’t have a certification or are in the process of getting a certification. The Town Moderator would like to speak to the Board.” Town Moderator John Donahue called in to the meeting to address the Board. He stated, “There is a very deep pool of applicants, but the requirements include the certification and the committee is asking if you would loosen that up a bit and make it preferred as opposed to required. They should be able to achieve that certification within a year.” Mr. Pacheco said he would agree “as long as it’s a condition of employment that it’s done within a year, and as long as they have been in the field and are experienced practitioners because I’m not willing to go with someone who has not been a practitioner.” Mr. Schiavo said, “I support the suggestions that have been made.” Ms. Riley called for the vote, which passed unanimously. Mr. Donahue added, “The least experienced candidate has 7 years and the highest has 26 years.”

Continuing with his report, Mr. Waters said, “The two positions, the Council on Aging Clerk and the Permitting Clerk, will be advertised as soon as I work with the departments on moving these openings forward.”

Mr. Waters also reported, “The next regularly scheduled Board of Selectmen’s meeting will be held on Tuesday, February 16, 2021, at 7:00 p.m. in the Don McKinnon Meeting Room in Town Hall, 558 South Main Street, Raynham, Massachusetts. The public will be able to participate via the GoToMeeting platform or by watching the RayCAM channel on Verizon, Comcast, or a recording posted later on YouTube.”

**Performance of Administrative Duties**

Mr. Pacheco motioned to approve the Town of Raynham Payroll and Invoice Warrants dated February 9, 2021, as submitted, Mr. Schiavo seconded, and Ms. Riley made it unanimous.

Mr. Schiavo then made a motion to approve the Police Department Payroll and Invoice Warrants dated February 9, 2021, as submitted, Ms. Riley seconded the motion and Mr. Pacheco abstained. Ms. Riiley asked for a roll call vote. Mr. Schiavo said, “I”, Mr. Pacheco abstained, and Ms. Riley said, “I”. It was so voted.

**Adjournment**

At 7:45 p.m.,the Board voted to adjourn the meeting.

Respectfully Submitted,

Janet Murphy, Recording Secretary