

FIRE CHIEF SCREENING COMMITTEE
MCAULIFFE HEARING ROOM, 17 COMMON ST, SOUTHBOROUGH
JANUARY 2, 2019, 8 A.M.

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SOUTHBOROUGH, MA

Present: Jason Malinowski, Janet Maney, Sam Stivers, Chief Paulhus. Absent: Chief Breen. The meeting was called to order at 8 a.m.

Minutes: The December 27, 2018 open session minutes were tabled.

Brian Duggan from MRI joined the meeting via conference call.

MRI Update: The Committee reviewed the Candidate Requirement and Challenge statement. Mr. Duggan noted that he had a call with Mr. Purple and Mr. Malinowski to discuss his thoughts right after the Committee voted to re-post. Those thoughts results in the memo that was being presented to the Committee. He has seen the market pool reduce over the past few years. He looked at how MRI could best provide feedback that the Town is looking for, and how that translates to attracting the best qualified candidates. Mr. Duggan walked through each of their five recommendations:

1. Market the posting as an external search. Mr. Malinowski does not mind marketing the position as an external recruitment because the meeting minutes state there are no internal candidates being considered going forward at this point. This fact is public record but the names of the two internal candidates are not going to be revealed.
2. Include information in the profile relative to the public safety project. MRI discussed how to best include information on the construction of a new building, showing that the town is investing in high quality public safety. The document will also list cost information so potential candidates can be aware of the Town's commitment to the department.
3. Feedback has been received that the salary posted was not competitive for the size and location of the community, so consider increasing the upper end of the salary range. Mr. Duggan and Mr. Craig noted the potential salary in Southborough appears to be a small increase [from current salaries] but the cost of living in this region would be a great deal higher. The feeling was that smaller towns were offering a better salary package, and allowing the Chief to live a greater distance away. MRI recommends adding approximately \$25,000 to the salary range. Mr. Malinowski agrees that Southborough is below other posted ranges. He hesitates to put a number out there, and prefers adding "salary negotiable." Mr. Stivers commented that if a candidate hits all the buttons it may convince him that he/she is worth more than \$150,000. Committee members generally agreed qualifications and chemistry of the candidate will weigh heavily on salary discussions; flexibility without locking people in was duly noted. Chief Paulhus advocated for letting the Selectmen contemplate this as the appointing authority. Mr. Craig said if worded properly, you could have some flexibility but an indication of recognizing the salary and residency issue. The Committee's discussion consistently reflected that \$125,000 did not attract the desired applicant pool the Town is looking for in their next Fire Chief. MRI suggested that a necessary number is very close to \$150,000 to attract quality people. All present agreed that adding "expected salary up to \$150,000 subject to negotiations, depending on qualifications" would be wise and the Committee will make this recommendation to the Board of

Selectmen. The Committee was reminded that towns not as desirable as Southborough are looking at paying in the \$140,000 range.

4. Emphasize department's history of stable long term leadership and the Town's interest in continuing this: MRI feels this is an advantage Southborough has in the department; long term tenure is a real asset. Candidates want a job where they can spend at least ten years or even retire from. The Committee completely agreed.

5. Clarify residency: Mr. Duggan heard concerns about the cost of housing when speaking to potential applicants. He also heard that more candidates would rather live in Southborough than a surrounding town but local housing cost and the time allowed to move was a negative factor. The time to comply was a more significant concern than the radius. Mr. Malinowski felt that with the right candidate, allowing more time to relocate should be strongly considered. Mrs. Maney advocated that if the Chief feels like they can do the job while residing at a greater distance from Southborough, shouldn't we let them decide? Mr. Malinowski further noted the Selectmen are split on this issue, and it is their decision in the end as the appointing authority. The Committee did not have an issue with allowing 18 months for relocation. The original description allowed residency in an abutting town or a town that abuts the town whose border touches Southborough [i.e. "two towns out"]. He noted it is an option to allow residency 15 miles from border to border. Chief Paulhus noted that boards and opinions can change and this issue should be crystal clear; consistency with the police chiefs requirements would be wise. He feels that qualifications are the primary factor, and residency is secondary and is a component of negotiations; he summarized that he feels strongly that the distance radius should be expanded in order to expand the pool. The Committee is focused on finding the right candidate first. Mr. Duggan noted this is key; whatever decision is made, the backing of the Selectmen is critical. [Ch 41, Sec 99A codifies to the 15-mile rule]. Mrs. Maney agrees with 15 miles or no restriction; Mr. Stivers advocates for the 15-mile rule. Mr. Stivers moved that the Committee ratify MRI's recommendations, as discussed today. Mrs. Maney seconded, the Committee voted 4-0 in favor. Mr. Malinowski will convey this recommendation to the Selectmen tonight.

Candidate profile: MRI summarized the new candidate requirement and challenge statement. Mr. Duggan noted this statement is a balance of integrating in the new public safety complex, details on the department, an overview of desired knowledge, skills and abilities, educational requirements and other criteria.

Mrs. Maney noted some grammar problems in first paragraph. Mr. Stivers had comments on repetition and lack of clarity which were illustrated in his red-lined version. The Committee agreed that a strong lead-in paragraph is important. There is a meeting posted for tonight; Mrs. Maney will work on these edits today and bring them tonight. The Committee will agree on the first two paragraphs during the meeting tonight. One final marked up document will need to go to MRI by the end of the meeting tonight. Mr. Stivers will send Ms. Hale his current, red-lined version to work from.

Mrs. Maney mentioned some items that she felt should be added or modified: strong chief information, the fact that the new public safety complex will be completed by Summer 2019, selected other wording in the paragraph. Mr. Stivers summarized his comments as well [which are in the red lined document], and are consistent with the Committee discussion today. It was agreed to also reference MGL, 48, Sec 42 which is the strong chief legislation.

Schedule: Mr. Duggan stated that re-posting this week is tough; he recommends that the new posting be advertised a week or so from now to get beyond the holidays and budget timeframes. The Committee wants to finish interviews by February 14; the Committee will then decide if they can go right to assessment, or if they need a second round of interviews. The assessment center could be first week of March, with final interviews with the Board of Selectmen around March 25th. Mr. Duggan recommends posting for 4 weeks so that the town gets a better response; although posting for 3 weeks is an option so the Committee can see how strong the applicant pool is. Mr. Malinowski suggested that MRI be directed to re-post by the middle of next week and close on February 8; meeting with the Committee to decide whom to interview can then occur to allow interviews during the week of February 25, then followed up by the assessment center; final interviews can occur the week of March 25 or the first week of April. This would conclude the Committee's work around April 11. Mrs. Maney asked that resumes be uploaded as they arrive so the Committee can review them swiftly. Mr. Malinowski noted that he would ask the Selectmen their preference given that the Committee's work would be done by March 11th on whether they wanted to entertain finalists the week of Town Meeting.

Revision to charge: The Committee charge expires on February 1. Mr. Malinowski will ask the Selectmen that it be extended until April 15 so the entire process can be concluded and he will suggest the charge be revised to add: "They shall be discharged upon the selection of a finalist." The Committee agreed.

Assessment Center: MRI confirmed that Committee members generally witness the assessment center. Mr. Malinowski recommended that the modified charge also include some language about who attends the assessment center and what their role is there.

Mr. Malinowski addressed background checks; Mr. Duggan told the Committee that MRI does an open source check early on. Typically, when an offer is made to a candidate, a more comprehensive check is done then. Mr. Malinowski asked if something could be done before the assessment center? Chief Paulhus likes including in the application form a question asking candidates to list "any other matters that may be of concern" that individuals may not have included elsewhere in their application materials. Mr. Duggan agreed to do an open source check and he will ask for any other disclosures in writing. If something significant becomes known later, then they [the applicant] would have falsified their answers. MRI will not do a full formal check until a conditional offer has been extended by the Selectmen.

Mr. Malinowski moved that MRI and Chief Paulhus begin preliminary screening on Candidates 1 and 2; Seconded by Mr. Stivers. This was approved 4-0. Mr. Malinowski will tell the Selectmen that none of the changes discussed today will bring back any candidates who have been screened out of the remainder of the process.

Minutes: The Committee voted 4-0 to approve the Executive Session minutes as edited for December 11, 2018 and December 27, 2018.

The meeting adjourned at 9:30 a.m.

Submitted by Vanessa D. Hale, Assistant Town Administrator.

Documents used:

- Candidate requirement statement
- MRI letter of December 29, 2018 to Chairman Malinowski
- Draft meeting minutes from December 27, 2018