

**Town of Auburn
Board of Selectmen
May 29, 2018
Town Hall
5:00 pm**

Selectmen Present: James Headd, Richard Eaton and Keith Leclair

Also Present: Brent Lemire, Paula Marzloff, William Herman, Town Administrator and Nancy Hoijer, Recording Secretary

Call to Order – Pledge of Allegiance

Mr. Headd called the meeting to order at 5:00 pm and led with the Pledge of Allegiance.

Non-Public Session pursuant to RSA 91-A:3, II (c)

Chairman Headd motioned to go into non-public session under RSA 91-A:3 II,(c) reputation of persons other than a Board member.

Mr. Leclair and Mr. Eaton stated they did not wish to go into non-public session unless it was necessary and asked Mr. Lemire, who was present, if he had concerns with advising them concerning the Fire Chief's vacancy and potential considerations to filling the position of Fire Chief in public session. Mr. Lemire stated as he could not be certain what their questions might be, he advised that it should begin in non-public and when the meeting was reopened to the public the information could be recapped without risk of injury to anyone's reputation. Mr. Leclair and Mr. Eaton stated they did not wish to discuss prior employees, or name any names, this session was about moving forward, and it would benefit the public to know.

There was no second to the motion; the motion failed.

Mr. Lemire is currently a Selectman with the Town of Litchfield and a retired Fire Chief. He also has served as a Town Administrator and was the Business Administrator for the Manchester Fire Department for more than 30 years. He currently serves as the Executive Director of the NH Fire Chiefs Association. Mr. Lemire stated he was here to offer input on how possibly to move forward with the selection of a new Fire Chief, and to answer questions the Board may have. It was indicated the Auburn Firemen's Association should recommend someone for the position. Mr. Lemire stated State law governs how to choose the Chief and who is responsible.

Mr. Leclair thanked him for coming.

Mr. Lemire advised the Board should first have an idea of where they would like to go, and it would help to know the current structure of the department.

Mr. Herman advised the Chief's position was essentially a part-time position with "office hours" of 24 hours per week for which a salary or stipend was paid. But the Chief also responded to calls and performed details for an additional hourly rate of pay. The Department also includes two full-time positions, a Captain and a Lieutenant, whose hours are Monday through Friday days. In addition, there are approximately 35 or so call firefighters.

Mr. Lemire advised he should first point out that he was a friend of and had a professional relationship with the former Chief.

Mr. Lemire talked about the history of Litchfield where the voters had elected Fire Chiefs on an annual basis. He said Litchfield was only one of two municipalities in the state that had elected their Fire Chief. As the town got bigger and calls increased, apparatus got more significant and rapid growth was experienced with little or no commercial base. The first thing they did was to hire two full-time firefighters for week day coverage. One of his concerns had been with the school and not being able to get a truck there in 10 minutes. Mr. Leclair asked about their population, which Mr. Lemire responded was about 6,000 then, similar then to what you have now, but without the interstate Auburn has running through it. Mr. Lemire stated he was fortunate to have an employer who allowed him to leave for fire calls. Now the population is about 8,700 with many emergency medical calls and mature housing projects. They cooperate with Hudson, which is especially helpful with Hudson providing both dispatch and ambulance service to Litchfield.

Mr. Lemire stated he retired from being Litchfield's Fire Chief in 2001 after 24 years and Manchester in 2005. He then went on the Board of Selectmen. Issues manifested the change from an elected position to one appointed by the Board of Selectmen.

Mr. Lemire advised RSA 154 governs operational setup of a fire department. The BOS should appoint the Fire Chief and the Fire Chief appoints the members if that is the way it is set up in your charter.

Mr. Lemire advised as Executive Director of the Fire Chief's Association he knew of several skilled retired Chiefs who still wanted to work 24-48 hours per week. Mr. Lemire stated, "I can't tell you how well that's worked out for us."

Mr. Lemire stated it took roughly eight months to get everything running smoothly. It's helpful to listen, to have someone unbiased, issues need to be heard.

Mr. Lemire advised more recently the Board of Selectmen consolidated the position with Building Inspector, Health and Code Enforcement, and EMT inside the Fire Department. It was helpful to have a multi-certified person and it made overall sense when often you have to track down both the Fire Chief and the Building Inspector when there are issues.

Mr. Leclair asked how many calls they got each week. Mr. Lemire answered 4-5-day, 15-20 week.

Mr. Lemire stated a new fire station approved in March 2018 and how it had been helpful to get the firefighters to present the proposals. The vote was more than the 3/5ths they needed. "Since that time, we've had a full roster and good attendance."

Mr. Leclair asked how much turnover they had. Mr. Lemire answered that there was very little now. Three or four left initially, but after the first eight months the roster has been full.

Mr. Lemire advised for the Fire Chief search, they had put together a command staff of all the officers and then formed an interview committee and recommended that it's a good idea to include other communities if you are doing mutual aid.

Mr. Lemire advised to be careful with the setup and it was good to get input from members of the department provided it was understood the Board of Selectmen was responsible for running the town and making the decision. "The tail doesn't wag the dog."

Mr. Leclair stated that they would like to have a roundtable with the current department officers to gain their insights and input.

Mr. Lemire recommended the Board discuss whether they were looking to hire from outside or inside. Mr. Lemire stated input from others is great, but you must make the final decision.

Mr. Eaton asked about their budget. Mr. Lemire advised that they ran at about \$506,000 but that does not include the building and health inspector. Auburn runs at approximately \$350,000. Ambulance cost increases that to \$455,000. Their population is 8,700 and Auburn's is about 5,200.

Mr. Herman stated Auburn had 10-12 this weekend, which Mr. Leclair noted may have been due to the holiday weekend. It was estimated the department has three to four calls per day on average, including alarm activations, assisting the elderly, MV accidents, etc.

Mr. Lemire added despite his experience as a Fire Chief for many years, he is careful as a Selectman not to impose his judgment with the new Chief.

Mr. Lemire stated advertising was easy, but you needed to know where you wanted to be in five years, long term. As an example, Mr. Lemire talked about the hazardous materials and PFOAs with the river situation they had experienced in Litchfield.

Mr. Eaton asked about RSA 154-7, specifically how did Litchfield handle it when roads had to be closed for a hazardous situation. "Who was responsible to close the road?"

Mr. Lemire stated that during any hazard, the Fire Chief is in charge. It is the responsibility of the incident commander, in the event the Fire Chief isn't there, until the hazard is removed.

Sometimes, Mr. Lemire advised, it is a gray area and you must look at the circumstances and consult with legal. "Sometimes one thinks the hazard is bigger than it is or than the other does."

The Board thanked Mr. Lemire for coming in. Mr. Lemire departed the meeting at 5:43 pm.

Mr. Eaton asked about formally accepting Mr. Gannon's resignation. Mr. Headd suggested it should be announced formally next Monday. Mr. Leclair added that it could be put on the town's webpage.

Mr. Eaton advised he had gone down and talked with the fire station and the deputy chief would be handling everything.

The Board discussed whether they should hire from inside or outside, and it was unanimously agreed it was better to hire from outside and have someone who is unbiased.

The Board indicated they should meet with the officers of the Fire Department as soon as possible. Mr. Herman indicated he has them tentatively lined up for Monday, June 4th at 6 PM if that is agreeable to the Board. The Board was in agreement with that schedule. There was a unanimous sense it is important they know they will be part of the process.

Mr. Eaton agreed we should keep this as public as we can.

Mr. Leclair stated the minutes from the prior non-publics could be unsealed. Mr. Leclair noted he was concerned the minutes may include the names of certain individuals and how that should be handled. Mr. Herman suggested he could forward copies of the minutes to Town Counsel for review and Counsel could provide input to the Board about unsealing the minutes. The Board members were unanimously in agreement with that process.

Mr. Herman advised the Board has a meeting on June 6th at 5:00 pm with the Police Commission and Town Counsel to begin discussing upcoming contract negotiations with the Auburn Police Union.

Approval of Payroll for the Week of May 29, 2018 - \$45,492.05

Mr. Eaton motioned to approve the Payroll for the Week of May 29, 2018 in the amount of \$45,492.05. Mr. Leclair seconded the motion, with all in favor, the motion passed unanimously.

Consideration of Surety for Liberty Woods LLC, M/L #8-42, 58 Dearborn Road, Plan No. D-39482

Mr. Herman advised they had a bond due to expire on May 31st for the Liberty Woods development and the bank wanted to give an extension letter until August while they were looking overall at finances with their client. Most likely, after they've completed their process, they will give a one-year extension. Mr. Herman advised town counsel has looked over the letter and recommended the Board accept the proposed extension.

Mr. Eaton stated that he had been out there and there is still a lot of work to be done. He felt the Town should accept the extension of the letter of credit as presented.

Mr. Leclair motioned to accept the Irrevocable Standby Letter of Credit 2016-104 for Liberty Woods, LLC in the amount of \$176,572.00 with a maturity date of August 27, 2018. Mr. Eaton seconded the motion, with all in favor, the motion passed unanimously.

Adjournment

Mr. Eaton motioned to adjourn the meeting at 6:02 pm. Mr. Leclair seconded his motion, with all in favor, the motion passed unanimously.

Respectfully submitted,

Nancy J. Hoijer
Recording Secretary