

TOWN OF WINCHENDON
BOARD OF SELECTMEN EXECUTIVE SESSION MINUTES
MONDAY, APRIL 24, 2017
4th Floor Robinson-Broadhurst Conference Room
109 Front Street, Winchendon, Mass.

Present:

Barbara Anderson, Chairwoman
Audrey LaBrie, Vice-Chairwoman
Michael Barbaro
Austin Cyganiewicz

Keith R. Hickey, Town Manager
Linda Daigle, Executive Assistant

Remote Participation:

Amy Salter

List of Documents Presented at Meeting:

- None
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Exemption No. 2 to conduct strategy sessions in preparation for negotiations with non-union personnel or to conduct collective bargaining sessions or contract negotiations with non-union personnel.

The meeting was called to order by Chairwoman Anderson at 8:45 p.m. The Chair announced that Selectwoman Salter would be participating remotely due to geographical reasons and that there was no one near her that could hear the discussion this evening.

The Town Manager asked to have this Executive Session this evening due to a call he received from the Department of Revenue, Tony Roselli and from Bernie Lynch about whether he might be interested in doing some regionalized managing, specifically with the Town of Templeton. He would manage both communities at the same time. He doesn't know the answer to that question yet and wanted to talk to the Board first and see if there is any interest into looking into something like this. It would mean more hours for him with him being in Winchendon three days a week and in Templeton two days a week and weekends if need be. He believes that regionalizing is something that communities should look at and explore and take a chance on occasion when it seems right. He told the Board he loves his job here and does not want to do anything to risk his employment here. He hasn't been looking around. He received a call because Templeton hasn't found a manager they feel competent with to handle the position. Templeton officials met with the Dept. of Revenue last week and they have a plan to get themselves out of what they are in and need someone to oversee the plan that has been formed and to implement it properly. He has spoken to people from the Dept. of Revenue who has seen what has happened here. Mr. Hickey said he hasn't done this here by himself and won't do it there either by himself. The Dept. of Revenue and Bernie Lynch thinks it's a good idea. Tony Roselli is also the Auditor over there and they have spoken about the position Templeton is in. Mr. Hickey believes he can do it. He is aware his lifestyle would change a bit, working much more than he is now. He would propose, if the Board is willing to have a conversation, to have a six month trial period where either community could back out. He suggested, if the Board wanted to pursue this, they would have a meeting with representatives for the Dept. of Revenue who supports this and would provide oversight in assistance in the process and make sure neither community is harmed by this as they see this could be a viable option for communities across the state. There would be a savings to the Town of Winchendon. If he works three days a week, his salary gets cut that much. He is not looking to hurt the Town financially or operationally and he doesn't know all the answers and he's not sure if he wants to go. He hasn't met with anyone from Templeton and doesn't know much but what he reads in the papers. They are going to end up November with a decent amount of free cash; they will have

deficit borrowing but once they untwist the financial records of the last three to four years, financially they are not going to have to deal with deficit borrowing. He complimented the Board, working with them has been the best and he loves it here. If it is not awfully close to this in Templeton, he is not interested. He wants this to succeed. Templeton has to want it to succeed. He hasn't had any conversation with anyone over there wanting to talk to the Board first. He is not quite sure how this will be broached. Templeton has had conversations with the Dept. of Revenue about regionalization. He's not sure if they are interested. What he is hoping to get this evening, if the Board agrees to pursue it, is to gather some information. He thought of potentially having a meeting with the Dept. of Revenue, the Board of Selectmen, Bernie Lynch and Tony Roselli all in the room and then at some point have the town of Templeton in the room.

What he sees is he has a cell phone and email. If he happens to be in Templeton and something happens in Winchendon, he will come back and vice-versa. He believes he can do the job as well as he is doing it now and not sacrifice the gains Winchendon has made the last fourteen months. He noted he was vague with listing on the agenda purposefully because he wanted the Board to hear from him first at this meeting tonight and not form opinions from a memo.

Selectwoman Anderson thought this was pretty impressive that the Dept. of Revenue, as well as Mr. Lynch, thought that much of him believing he could handle it. It reflects well on the Town and our Town Manager. Mr. Hickey stated he has worked for three or four communities with some places that you fit and some you do not; he feels like he fits here. It is a great situation for him and he is thrilled to be in Winchendon. He felt it was a compliment to be thought of that way by the Dept. of Revenue. He said he is successful here because everyone wants to be successful here. It's a great situation to be in. If Templeton is not the same way he would not want to be a part of it.

Selectwoman Salter felt that Mr. Hickey was more than competent to do it but cautioned that we are finally on the right track and she doesn't want to change anything. She resents the fact the Dept. of Revenue approached him with this idea and doesn't feel they are ready for anything like that right now. She was open to hearing what Mr. Lynch had to say. Mr. Hickey appreciated the comments and said his only rebuttal and only way he would want to do it, is for a six month trial period where either town would have the ability to back out if it didn't work.

Selectman Cyganiewicz asked about either community having the option to opt out. He wanted to know how that would work out. He likes the job Mr. Hickey was doing here and thought about him working three days a week and what if Templeton needed him more. Selectwoman Salter said we worked hard for what we are doing and didn't want to share the Town Manager. Mr. Hickey noted he would not leave Winchendon but it would be a quality of life thing for him to weigh in.

Mr. Hickey noted this has been done before in Lenox and Lee, Massachusetts but that it was fairly new. It was working there. They went through the Community Compact program and a study was done. There has been some changes in law. Mr. Lynch and the Dept. of Revenue feels this makes sense for certain parts of the state.

Mr. Cyganiewicz asked if the study to regionalize the Fire Dept. with Templeton through the Community Compact grant had been started yet. Mr. Hickey said it hasn't been started yet because he hasn't heard back from the Acting Town Administrator for Templeton until last week. They want to move forward. They hired a Fire Chief but told him if they regionalize, he may lose his job. There could be potentially other opportunities to regionalize different services. He mentioned we have school space; Templeton is looking to build a high school. This may be an option or it may not.

Selectman Barbaro was glad the Town Manager was approached. It shows his professional status. What we have done here together is great. The opportunity is here for us to do different things together. We are going to struggle sooner or later and if we can merge certain departments, split costs, get the most bang for our buck,

it's a good idea. He was open to the Town Manager pursuing and exploring the process for six months. He asked what days the Town Manager would be here. Mr. Hickey replied he would work three days here and two in Templeton and would work longer nights and weekends if the need be. He understands what they were all feeling and he will not allow himself to provide a lesser work product than what he has now. He has seen how things have turned around. He owes it to the community and the Board to not let this be impacted. Selectwoman Salter said she doesn't question that at all. She just resents the fact that we have come so far; we have a gold mine in you and people want to take part of it and why should we let them.

Barbara concerned about the impact on the Town Manager's office and how the impact would be on staff. Mr. Hickey replied that is all part of the study and he would not want to impact anyone negatively. There would have to be a system and a process in place.

Chairwoman Anderson questioned what is in it for the Town of Winchendon and how it could benefit us. Some creative thinking should be done

Selectwoman Salter strongly advised the Town Manager that he research the problems Templeton has. They have many and their problems are worse than ours.

Selectwoman LaBrie noted first and foremost, that the Town Manager raising this has not made her think any less of him or that he wouldn't give Winchendon the 100% that he is giving now. She would be cautiously agreeable; her life philosophy is to never say no to an opportunity until you have looked into it. She has some reservations she will hold to herself for the moment. She is very glad that they heard from him first and she is open to further conversations.

Chairwoman Anderson asked Mr. Hickey if it was a challenge he wanted. Mr. Hickey replied, "I don't know yet." He thinks if the situation was right, he would love the challenge. If they have an openness and willingness to want to make things right, he would like the challenge.

Speaking about what the next step would be Mr. Hickey thought to have a conversation with the stakeholders, not Templeton. The Dept. of Revenue thinks this will be a trend to look at in the future moving forward. How can we leverage this opportunity to help the Town of Winchendon. There are a lot of unanswered questions and asked if it made sense to have Bernie and the Dept. of Revenue and whoever you want there in the room to explain to us how the Lenox and Lee situation works, what do you foresee as some of the issues, what type of support would you provide to both communities moving forward to make this successful. Bernie has been around awhile and seen a lot. If you want him to come out free of charge, he would be happy to come out. Tony Roselli could also attend to give you some insight on Templeton. This is a new thought in how to move forward in municipal government.

Selectman Barbaro moved to allow the Town Manager to pursue the conversation going forward and to report back to them with more information as it becomes available.

The Board discussed whether talking with Templeton first or talk with the Dept. of Revenue and Mr. Lynch first or to have discussions simultaneously. They agreed that the next step would be for them to have a discussion about the plan with the Dept. of Revenue and Mr. Lynch first. Step 2 would be to see if the Board wants to move forward with this. Step 3 if the Board decides to move forward with this, then the Dept. of Revenue and the Auditor approaches the Town of Templeton.

There was discussion about whether or not Templeton should be asked if they were interested in this so not to waste time. The Town Manager offered to reach out to the Dept. of Revenue and Mr. Lynch and at the same time the Dept. of Revenue reaches out to the Templeton Board to see if they are interested in regionalizing but not tell them with what community. If they are interested, then go back out to them with a proposal. If Templeton is not interested and want their own Administrator, then we won't waste any more time.

Selectman Barbaro amended his motion and moved the Town Manager set up a meeting with the Board of Selectmen and for the Town Manager to ask the Dept. of Revenue if they could reach out to the Town of Templeton, keeping the Town anonymous, to see if there is any interest on their part. Selectwoman LaBrie seconded. By roll call vote of Selectman Cyganiewicz aye, Selectwoman LaBrie aye, Selectman Barbaro aye, Selectwoman Salter no and Chairman Anderson aye, the motion carried by majority vote.

The Town Manager thanked the Board.

Selectman Barbaro moved to adjourn from Executive Session into Open Session; Selectwoman LaBrie seconded. By roll call vote of all aye, the motion passed unanimously.

Selectman Barbaro moved to adjourn from Open Session; Selectwoman LaBrie seconded. By vote of all aye, the motion passed unanimously.

The meeting adjourned at 9:40 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,



Linda Daigle
Executive Assistant