

Shutesbury Selectboard Meeting Minutes
March 6, 2025 Hybrid Meeting Format

Selectboard members present: Melissa Makepeace-O'Neil/Co-Chair, Eric Stocker/ Co-Chair, Rita Farrell/ Co-Chair

Staff present and Guests: Gabriele Voelker: Interim Town Administrator, Gail Fleischaker, Tom Siefert, Elaine Puleo, Penny Kim, Michael DeChiara, Meryl Mandell, Adam Lamontagne, Hayley Bolton, Chief Burgess, Matteo Pangallo, Mary Anne Antonellis, Paul Lyons, Frank McGinn,

Farrell calls the meeting to order at 5:00 pm

Agenda Review: As posted.

Public Comment: None

General Business:

- I. INTERVIEW CANDIDATES FOR THE POSITION OF TOWN ADMINISTRATOR:
 - i. Farrell opened the interview sessions of Lamontagne and Bolton by disclosing that the hiring of the final candidate would be contingent upon successful background checks, reference checks, and negotiations.
 - b. Interview Adam Lamontagne for the position of Town Administrator:
 - i. Makepeace-O'Neil opened questioning by asking "Why did you apply for the position? Tell us something about yourself that we would not have learned from your resume. What three things are most important to you?"
 1. Lamontagne explained that both mental health and results are important to him. He liked the overall population size of Shutesbury being from the "Wild West" he explained.
 - ii. Farrell asked "Can you describe your approach to communication with and managing staff? Talk about what first steps you would take if you were hired as our new Town Administrator?"
 1. Lamontagne responded by saying he would want to look at the chart of accounts first, as well as the omnibus budget as opposed to the line-item budget, working with departments. He stated he has great relationships with the town departments working in town, and he would look at other ways in which we could accomplish things. "It's really hearing them out, hearing what they have to say. Sometimes you must have back and forth dialogue and you do not always agree." He made it clear that open

communication was important and that being a TA you must make important decisions.

- iii. Farrell asked, "What have you done in the past to strengthen a team of town employees while maintaining accountability from those same employees?"
 1. Lamontagne said he values department head meetings and always leaving his door open to individuals for help or assistance.
 2. He stated his job is to be the department head's source of support and be their agent.
- iv. Stocker asked, "Please tell us about your leadership style and then subset of that would be how do you build trust and effective working relationships with department heads and elected officials?"
 1. Lamontagne said he would like to do quarterly reports where the department heads would submit a quarterly report to the Select Board and as a result that would allow for dialogue between the Select Board and the departments. That would be his first step, and then the rest would be working with the department heads collaboratively before going to the board.
- v. Makepeace-O'Neil asked, "tell us about your experience with municipal finance, including budget prep and grant application and management."
 1. Lamontagne said he has done all of it. He has done budgeting, and a lot of stabilization financially. He does the whole budget for his town and drafts the warrant for the board. He has experience with grants and his favorite ones are community compact ones as he finds them easy. To follow-up Makepeace-O'Neil asked, "how do you manage the deadlines and the receipts and when you have to spend them by and all that?" He responded by saying that he utilizes notes for marking dates and uses a countdown calendar where the board is on the same page as the Administrator. Stocker chimed in and stated that the process here in Shutesbury is a little different where the TA works with the Finance Committee on the budget.
- vi. Farrell asked, "How would you plan to engage with community residents and community groups to understand their concerns? A follow-up to that is how would you address a contentious issue that has divided the community?"
 1. Lamontagne responded by saying he would do "coffee with the Town Administrator," where residents could schedule to meet with him in person to talk. He stated it's listening to the community and giving them a direct answer. An example he used to reiterate his thought, was when one of his board members in his town got upset with him over abandoned a run-down building and as a response, he worked to establish a demolition revolving fund and get special legislation from Governor Baker. He appropriated some

free cash into it, put it out to bid, and knocked it down. The building was sold, and was his demonstration of addressing a problem, utilizing tools, and thinking of effective ways to get a problem resolved.

- vii. Stocker followed up with, “Can you give us an example of a work-related problem that you have never encountered before? How did you educate yourself and involve other people who eventually handle this issue?”
 - 1. Lamontagne explained how he has had some issues with his regional schools and unsustainable million dollar increases. It was his job to establish a working group to explore options to deal with the situation. He went on to explain how it had received nasty feedback, but as the Chief Financial Officer it was an important decision for him to make for the Town of Templeton.
- viii. Makepeace-O’Neil asked, “So kind of negotiating collective bargaining, how would you describe your negotiation style? And then what are your strengths and weaknesses?”
 - 1. Lamontagne stated his strengths include negotiations and talking with people. His weakness would be patience. He loves Unions and it’s important to treat people at the table.
- ix. Farrell, “Can you tell us about a time that you moved your department? team forward? And is there anything you would do differently?”
 - 1. Being honest and transparent, he stated he could not think of an example at the top of his head.
- x. Stocker, “How would you measure your own success? What indicators would you look for in the first year? And what about in five years that they need? Would there be different indicators?”
 - 1. He stated he would like to create opportunities. Whether it is bringing in the cannabis industry or affordable housing. He wants new growth for the town and to keep finances down.
- xi. Makepeace-O’Neil asked, “how would you approach a large project which needs to be completed? Do you have any specific experience to draw upon with a large project?”
 - 1. He said he likes to work in small steps and have deadlines, meeting those deadlines, and having an achievable time frame.
- xii. Farrell created a hypothetical situation for Lamontagne to consider: “You’re elected board at a public meeting appears anxious, ready to vote on an important policy decision that you currently believe would be detrimental to the town. The issue had not been discussed previously. What would you do? How would you do it?”
 - 1. Lamontagne stated that when decisions like that must be made, thorough research needs to be conducted and that it would be his job to support the board and provide them with that information. Regardless of the decision, he would support them.

- xiii. Makepeace-O'Neil, "Can you give an example where you have had to make a decision that you personally disagreed with for the better of the town or larger good?"
 - 1. He likes to take his feelings out of the situation and separate his feelings from his job.
- xiv. Stocker, "So what would you do if a Select Board member were consistently trying to circumvent established procedures."
 - 1. He stated he would talk to the members, talk to the chair, and possibly create documentation such as an email.

c. Interview Hayley Bolton for the position of Town Administrator:

- i. Makepeace-O'Neil started the interview for Bolton by asking, "Why did you apply for this position, and can you tell us something about yourself that we would not be able to learn from your resume?"
 - 1. Bolton explained that this is the next logical step in her career path, as for the previous six years she has been the Senior Center Director for Amherst and Bernardston. It's been her goal to reach the position of Town Administrator, and she said she has been taking steps towards it by starting her MBA at Springfield College. She will also be finishing the MA Municipal Suffolk Leadership Certificate Program by May. She said her work as a director has built upon her experience that will mesh with the role of being a Town Administrator. She stated that information you would not know from her resume would be that she is the oldest of five children, she has grown up in a working-class household, and she is the first to go to college in her family.
- ii. Makepeace-O'Neil, "What three things are most important to you in a job?"
 - 1. She stated good communication, being surrounded by people that know the directions in which they want to go, long-term relationships, and decisiveness. She also mentioned she appreciates individuals and co-workers with senses of humor.
- iii. Farrell asked, "Can you describe your approach to communication with and managing staff?"
 - 1. She has hired all the staff that work for her at her other job, and she enjoys mirroring individuals, paying attention to what they are saying. She likes to use email or Teams Message, and she finds active listening crucial for effective communication. She went on to state that like you learn in kindergarten, you should treat people the way you want to be treated, and you should communicate with them with respect.
- iv. Farrell asked, "What would be your first steps if you were to be appointed as Shutesbury's Town Administrator?"

1. She stated in the first 30-60 days she would like to meet with as many community members and department heads as possible, to establish positive connections.
- v. Farrel, "Have you been in a situation where you had to do some intervention with your team to make it stronger and give us an example of that?"
 1. Bolton stated she has had experience in the past where she had to make the tough decision to terminate an employee, she hired due to memory retention and lack of skills being setbacks. She felt the employee did not meet her expectations and nothing she could do could potentially make the situation any better, even after countless assistance from her.
- vi. Stocker," What would you view as your leadership style and how would you build effective working relationships with department heads and elected officials?"
 1. Bolton stated she does not like to micromanage and important things to her include being creative, independent, and a self-starter. In the beginning she wants to learn from her surroundings, have a good rapport, make individuals feel like they can go to her and talk to her, and ultimately have an open door feeling for her office.
- vii. Makepeace-O'Neil asked, "Tell us about your experience of a municipal finance, including budget preparation, and grant applications and management."
 1. She is responsible for the budget for her Senior Center she directs. In Amherst she manages a \$400,000 budget on the town appropriated side and then another 3 to 4 hundred on the donations and grants side she must get. She has experience getting grants for modernization, new programming, meals programs, all of which involve working closely with state representatives. Her experience in Bernardston offered her the chance to work with an even larger budget. She stated one of her top priorities would be to work with the school Superintendent and get a handle on the school's budget.
- viii. Makepeace-O'Neil, "How do you go about managing kind of that behind the scenes of your applying for grants?"
 1. Bolton stated she tries to familiarize herself with grant cycles and make sure she sets enough time aside for those periods when they can be worked on. In the grant process she stated she is familiar with AI and uses it as a tool for her benefit, as it can help with the research and analysis processes. She also likes to use the "old school" method of writing in her planner as well.
- ix. "What buildings were you responsible for in Bernardston?"

1. Bolton stated she was responsible for the Power Institute, where the Senior Center was housed, as well as the Historical Society. She was responsible for making sure all the electrical bills were paid, maintenance of the kitchen equipment was conducted, as well as working with the Highway Department to clear out the driveway. She has experience contacting repairmen for building-related jobs and repairs.
- x. Farrell, "How Familiar are you with working with the overall town budget?"
 1. She stated she reads them and has a good familiarity with them. She is currently taking a class on finance that looks at budgets, making the best cuts, and submitting capital planning. She also has been responsible for doing a budget presentation to the Finance Committee for the town of Amherst.
 - xi. Farrell, "How you would plan to engage with town residents, community groups to understand their concerns."
 1. She said in Amherst they do a "Cup of Joe," which could be a possibility for doing here. She also thinks utilizing social media could be beneficial. She also enjoys doing open houses where community members can come in, ask questions, and listen to department individuals share their roles and big initiatives. She's big on the informal and has those kinds of discussions. A good balance of both formal and informal she enjoys.
 - xii. Farrell, "If there was a contentious issue that was seemingly dividing the community, how do you approach that?"
 1. Bolton stated you need to maintain your "cool," and be respectful despite the names you are called or what is said. You must create that culture of respect.
 - xiii. Stocker, "Can you give us an example of a work-related problem you've encountered you never faced before? How did you educate yourself on how to do with that?"
 1. Bolton shared how when working in Bernardston she wasn't as well-known as in other towns, and she got a lot of ridicules for being a young supervisor from her employees, and how her voice wasn't as important because of that. She stated she had to learn to advocate for herself, stand up for herself, and tell herself that she may be young, but she still deserves respect.
 - xiv. Makepeace-O'Neil, "How would you describe your negotiation style? What are strengths and weaknesses?"
 1. She has done mock collective bargaining. She is also stubborn she claimed, saying she uses that to her advantage when negotiating.

- xv. Farrell: "Give an example of a time when you had to move your department or team ahead on something that they might not have been really excited about, and how did you go through that process?"
 - 1. Bolton explained an instance when a non-profit group, the Friends of the Amherst Senior Center, were fundraising actively but losing money on their postage. She was the odd one out who stated they needed to change their course and transition online to make it make sense financially. This received some backlash and negative feedback.
- xvi. Stocker, "How would you describe your approach to the role of Town Administrator, and how would you measure your success in that role, maybe the first year and maybe five years into it if there was a difference in the way of measures?"
 - 1. The first year she said she would like to meet with people, get a sense of where the town is at, as well as analyzing the budgets and bylaws. She wants to see how we can make improvements to the town. In five years, she would like to come to some better agreement on the schools, how we plan to deal with infrastructure, and how we are going to address keeping individuals in their homes without over taxing them.
- xvii. Makepeace-O'Neil, "How would you approach a large project which needs to be completed. Do you have any specific experience to draw on?"
 - 1. She said you want to delegate, create a good team, set benchmarks, use Excel spread for tracking and time management, as well as checking in and re-evaluating. She would actively collaborate with the Select Board and Finance Committee. She also likes to have plan A, B, and Cs to fall back on.
- xviii. Farrell," So your elected board at a public meeting appears very anxious and ready to vote an important policy decision that you firmly believe would be detrimental to the town. The issue had not been discussed previously, what would be your approach with the board?"
 - 1. She said its context dependent, and she would like to be offered one last pitch if possible. She would offer her voice and see if it would offer any additional perspective to assist the Select Board.
- xix. Stocker, "What would you do if a select board member was consistently trying to circumvent established procedures?"
 - 1. She would have an honest, direct conversation and would not be scared to go to the State Ethics Board if it was bad enough. She wants the town's people to trust us.

VOTE: Makepeace-O'Neil makes a motion to adjourn the meeting at 6:16pm, and enter Executive Session for Reason #2, to conduct strategy sessions in preparation for negotiations with nonunion personnel or to conduct collective bargaining sessions or contract negotiations with nonunion personnel. The board **will** return to open session.

Stocker seconds. Roll call vote Stocker: aye, Makepeace-O'Neil: aye, Farrell: aye; motion carries.

- II. Return to open session to discuss who the board will offer the job of Town Administrator, subject to negotiations with the candidate:
 - a. 7:07pm Returned to public session.
 - b. The Select Board decided to move forth with Hayley Bolton, subject to reference checks, background checks, and negotiation of the contract. Hayley has stated she will accept the position.

- III. Meeting officially adjourned at 7:10pm

VOTE: Makepeace-O'Neil makes a motion to adjourn the meeting at 7:10 pm
Stocker seconds. Roll call vote Stocker: aye, Makepeace-O'Neil: aye, Farrell: aye; motion carries.

Administrative Actions:

Document and Other Items Used at the Meeting:

1. Bolton's resume
2. Lamontagne's resume

Respectfully submitted,
Brennan Mailloux
Administrative Assistant
Town Administrator/Select Board

** A full version of the 3/6/25 SB meeting is available to view on the Town of Shutesbury's YouTube page: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=4558kaZX2NA>

