

April 3-0

SELECT BOARD MINUTES - January 20, 2011

Present: Selectmen – Dave DeHerdt, Doug Field, Norm Russell
Assistant Administrator – Mary Fitz-Gibbon

Meeting called to order at 7:00 PM

Minutes – none

DeHerdt began the meeting by saying that at last night's meeting the Board mistepped in voting to go into executive session, a violation of the open meeting law. To correct that we will disclose what was discussed as soon as those minutes are available. He is also sending a letter to the AG's office explaining what was done and the steps taken to correct that. He went on to say that the purpose had been to discuss the salary range and the full-time vs. part-time possibilities. Also they wanted to talk a bit about the commuting issue. The issues discussed could have been held in open session.

Secondly, the session needed to be posted 48 hours in advance, and it was not. He apologized for the mistake. To take this a step further, Russell said apparently the issue has to do with the definition of personnel. Because the person hasn't been hired yet, technically, the person isn't personnel. He found this a bit frustrating because it seems like salary is something that should be discussed prior to hiring.

D.D.
He wanted to thank the Greenfield Recorder for pointing out the error. Council for New England Newspaper Press association sent a letter expressing concern.

Appointments:

Gold Cane - Present - Honey Boyden

Honey was present to return the Gold Cane, which she said her mother had been proud to have had. Her mother recently passed at the age of 98.

Liquor permit: Present - Judy Hamilton – Outdoor alcoholic service for the Frozen Face-off. DeHerdt said the Lake house has an extended services permit, but it is his understanding that that service has to be controlled. The area where it is served has to have one way in and one way out so the alcohol doesn't leave the premises.

Hamilton wasn't sure how that could be done. She said the reason she wanted to do this was to avoid people having coolers of beer, which is illegal. She thought this would be a way to make it legal. She wanted to serve near the rink that's right in front of the Lake House. The morning events would be held at the areas further down the ice, with the playoffs being held in the afternoon in front of the Lake House. A suggestion was made that she contact the ABCC so that she doesn't get into trouble. It was also noted that she would need to designate an area with temporary fencing where the alcohol could be contained. She will submit an application to the Board (the licensing authority) next week.

Interview: Present – Scott Minkler

Minkler introduced himself as having been grew up in Turners Falls, where he played football. He attended Westfield State College, where he received a degree in Criminal Justice. He is 31 years old, married and has one daughter (1 ½ yrs old) he currently lives in Northfield and commutes to work in Lincoln, ME, where he is Chief of Police. He would like to get back to Massachusetts to be closer to his home where he could see more of his daughter. He is looking for a safe community in which to raise her.

His work experience includes several brief positions. He began as a reserve officer in Bernardston while at Westfield; worked about a year before going to the academy in Agawam. He didn't want to stay in western Mass so he moved to the Cape and worked as an officer in Chatham for a short time; returned to the western part of the state where he worked briefly in Hubbardston before joining the Northfield department. Gary Sibilia, the chief was going to be retiring and there would be an opportunity for him to become a Sergeant. When Sibilia retired he became acting chief, with expectation of becoming chief. However, that did not happen, so he took the police chief position in Lincoln, ME The department there consists of 6 full-time and 12 part-time officers. He has been in that position for a year.

DeHerdt began the questioning by mentioning the Town's recent experience and reminding that it had no desire to go down that same path again. Asked how he would prevent this, Minkler said he would hire new trained educated people. He said he was big with pride. He said he expected to be very open with the officers and the public; after all he would be driving a billboard (referring to the plainly labeled police vehicles).

Asked about what he would do in the first 90 days, he responded that he was already familiar with dispatch, the DA's office, and the court system. He would become familiar with the Town and the department's policies and procedures. He plans to live in town. He would need to learn the town, learn the roads, business owners, etc. He would begin the process of staffing levels, bringing in some reserve officers, possibly requiring refresher in-service training, which he could use himself. He would be walking into the position cold so there were several things he would need to do: 1) review personnel folders, 2) review policies and procedures, 3) learn where things are in the office – like computer system, 4) become familiar with on-going cases, 5) look into cases that are backlogged.

Field asked him about his experience working with and in the schools. He could bring himself. His reply was that the DARE program wasn't needed. He would look for grants. He mentioned getting pamphlets on gun safety for second graders. When he first began his career he played basket ball with kids for ten minutes at recess. He thought parents who threatened their misbehaving child with arrest by a police officer were creating problems for the future. He thought the emphasis should be on teaching parents and kids that the police are there to help people. He related his own experience as a kid of being allowed to sit in a cruiser.

Russell asked about traffic control, specifically, speed traps. Speed is a big issue in communities; usually half the population wants speeders stopped, the other half says let them go. He likes the Massachusetts system of giving written warnings. His goal when stopping someone is to have that person thank him. He's not about speed traps. The state does issue incentives to departments that issue tickets and warnings. In a small town the acquisition of equipment such as a radar unit is welcome.

DeHerdt said given the economic times there is concern about departments getting toys rather than useful equipment. What would you do to determine what is necessary? Minkler replied that he would need to take an inventory of what the department has; he would be frugal, purchasing only necessities. He said, "We need cruisers to do our jobs, but we don't need \$500.00 evidence kits as State Police have them. "

Field asked about his experience in working with emergency services. He said in Ashfield the services have to work together. Minkler said, "We're all here for the same reason." In Northfield the various emergency services don't work well together. Russell added that usually the police are the first on the

scene; what background did Minkler have? Minkler said he was certified in CPR and first aid. His training was just to react. He told of saving two lives. It still gives him goose bumps.

DeHerdt asked Minkler what was unique about small towns. He said it was the connection with the community. In Chatham with 40,000 people, for example, he couldn't tell who anybody was. He is able to be out and about; he misses small towns. DeHerdt said there's a fine line between friend and police chief. Minkler responded, "Don't take my kindness for weakness."

Russell asked about the handling of domestic situations. Minkler said they were the most dangerous part of an officer's job. He has been on many domestic calls. He said the law in Massachusetts states if there has been physical contact you "shall arrest." Maine has a provision that the complaint be checked 48 hours later.

When asked how he would handle a complaint against an officer he said he would ask for it in writing (he assumed the department had forms). The form is a confidential document that no one except the chief sees. He might investigate it personally or he might ask a neighboring chief to investigate.

DeHerdt asked where Minkler expected to be in five years; the response was "in Ashfield." He's moved around a lot, but that's because he was young and single. Now he's married and has a daughter. He wants a safe place where he can raise his daughter. He thought Northfield was the small community for him. But when he didn't get the chief's job, he was hurt. Then he began to hear there might not be enough money for a sergeant, so he looked to Lincoln, ME. He said his wife works in Keene; he anticipates she would continue to work there.

Russell pointed out that Ashfield was going to stay a small department. Minkler said he liked that. Northfield only had two full-time officers. He found it difficult to balance the schedule of the Lincoln department. He liked the idea of a small core department. It would be easier to manage.

Although Ashfield is small it is very diverse educationally, financially, ethnically. On diversity issues Minkler said he deals very well. When he went to Chatham he had a rude awakening. There he ran into people who said they couldn't speak the language. In Lincoln he is finding many financially depressed areas, homes in foreclosure and at the same time upper end homes in another part of town.

Questions were asked about use of force and intimidation. In many towns, as a police officer, you're the only armed individual. Minkler said he felt the uniform itself, his size, the use of his voice, and the tool on his belt were all things that could intimidate people.

The question was asked about a part-time position vs. full-time. Minkler said he was open to either. He preferred full-time, but would consider whatever was best for the Town. His main thing was to get into a small community.

At 8:00 the meeting was suspended so that Minkler could talk with people and have a tour of the station conducted by Officer Wilder.

Back in session, a review of reasons for going into executive session were quickly reviewed along with note that Minkler should be advised of the probationary period and a pre-employment physical, which they had advised Droney about. Background checks need to be conducted. DeHerdt said he thinks State police will do for a nominal fee. The Board will find out what is needed to do this. If everything is in

order the by next Wednesday, a decision will be made. A discussion was held about where to contact the State Police a call to Chief Walker in Shelburne would know where to call.

Persons present had some questions about why Minkler did not get the position of chief in Northfield. Field thought that town was in a similar position as Ashfield and wanted to find someone from out of town.

Field reported that he has received a conference call from the Emergency Management Department advising of a snow storm bringing 5-8" followed by very cold temperatures of -5 to -10° on Saturday. Fitz-Gibbon asked about the emergency shelter should the power go off. Field said the fire station will be set up and if the need is great enough Sanderson will be opened. The Town doesn't have cots, but there is a state owned mobile trailer that could be accessed and brought to town that has 200 cots.

Field said there is surplus military equipment available. He's going to start looking for a desk for Mary and a 10 watt for the Water district. He named towns that have received equipment.

A motion was made, seconded, and voted to adjourn at 8:40 PM.

Respectfully submitted,
Priscilla Phelps