

MINUTES OF SELECTMEN'S MEETING JUNE 15, 2015

Mr. Hevy called the meeting to order at 6 PM in the Senior Center with Mrs. Walter and Mr. Smith also present. Mr. Hevy informed the audience that this interview would be conducted by the Board of Selectmen, and the public was here only to observe. Resident Steve Cummings objected, stating that he felt the public should have some input into choosing the new chief.

Mr. Hevy thanked the members of the Police Chief Screening Committee: Dale Kiley, Andy Avedian, David Harris, Edi Hubacz and Anne Adams. He then introduced Police Chief candidate Randy Berg of Charlton. Mr. Berg also thanked the Screening Committee for their efforts. He noted that he has held many positions in law enforcement, and feels that his experience would be very valuable as chief in North Brookfield.

The Selectmen asked Mr. Berg a series of pre-determined questions as follows:

1. During your interview process, what did you learn about North Brookfield, and what are your impressions? (Eric)

Mr. Berg said that it was a very good impression; the Screening Committee was very thorough. He stated that he has done some background information on North Brookfield, and he likes that the position is a "working chief." He believes that the Police Department can have a positive impact on the lives of the residents. His goal is to work with all of the town departments to provide the best job that he can.

2. You have a very impressive resume which lists varied experiences. Can you tell us about some of those experiences, what you've learned from them and how they would help you in North Brookfield if you are selected as the next Chief? (Mary)

Mr. Berg stated that his experience in writing grants would be most important, along with his past experience in creating community partnerships and community policing initiatives. North Brookfield's budget is the second largest departmental budget, and he knows that School Choice affects everything. He praised the community support in funding the new police cruiser. He said that the new chief needs to be prudent and judicious in budgeting, but still provide the best services possible.

3. North Brookfield is proud of its Police Department's culture of professionalism and service to the people of the town. How will you preserve that culture, and maintain the link which exists between the town's people and their Police Department? (Bob)

Mr. Berg stated that he would have an “open” police department. He will be a working chief, not one hidden in the office. He said that he has discussed moving to North Brookfield with his wife so that he can become a part of the community. He believes that it is very important to be available and accessible to town residents. He would also like to open up the training room at the police department to other groups.

4. How would you keep yourself informed of activities in Town, and the impact that they may have on Public Safety and the scheduling of officers? (Eric)

Mr. Berg said that being accessible and involved in the community will ensure this. The Chief needs to make sure that scheduling of officers is appropriate at all times.

5. As a community, North Brookfield would value a Chief who is open to the concerns and opinions of others, and respects the values of small town life. For example, hunting is a popular sport in North Brookfield and many residents have firearms. What are your views on gun control? (Mary)

Mr. Berg stated that in 2008 the Supreme Court upheld the right to bear arms. He is an advocate of that right. As the issuing authority of permits, the Chief has an obligation to make sure people are suitable for a license to carry or FID card. Most circumstances that disallow permits are statutory, and the Chief has no authority to override. In very rare instances the Chief would have the ability to deny a permit, and even then the person has the right to due process in the courts. A chief needs to balance the rights of an individual against public safety.

6. Can you tell us a little of your experience with managing budgets? Although our Police Department budget is small (\$500,000) by comparison with others, it is a large portion of our budget. Given the town’s financial problems, how would you allocate resources within your budget? Could you work within those constraints? Where would you seek to obtain grants for equipment needed by the Department? (Bob)

Mr. Berg stated that when he took over as acting chief in Sturbridge, it was coming into the budget process. He is comfortable with budgeting. He would seek grants that would free up town money that could be used for his department or other town departments. He noted that the Police Department needs to upgrade radios soon, and he would seek grants funds for that. He has done some research and identified nine potential grant opportunities for the PD.

7. Many police departments regionalize services – work co-operatively - Can you explain any experience you have had in your other positions which utilized regionalization of services? (Eric)

Mr. Berg said that he personally does not have any experience, but as he informed the Screening Committee, he believes that the Brookfields are ripe for regionalization. They are all small towns with similar problems. He believes that serious consideration needs to be given to pursuing this. He would be capable of putting together a comprehensive proposal. It might not save a lot of money, but would provide better services to residents, and provide a career ladder for the officers.

8. In a small town Police Department, what do you think the most important role of the Chief is? (Mary)

Mr. Berg answered that the Chief needs to be a leader and a mentor. The Chief needs to lead by example and have integrity.

9. Will you describe your most difficult decision in the last six months? What was the outcome? (Bob)

Mr. Bert noted that last weekend he was on duty in Spencer and saw a group of teenagers leaving a house and acting suspiciously. He determined that it was an underage drinking party. There was a car that was trying to leave the scene, and the occupants were acting suspiciously. He had probable cause to search the vehicle, and found alcohol and a BB gun. The young people said that they would challenge his search of the vehicle, but he was able to diffuse the situation. The situation was ended peacefully, and no one was hurt. This was the best possible outcome for a situation that could have ended badly; the teenagers were all released into the custody of their parents.

10. As a new leader of the department, what will you be doing the first three months? How would you build consensus? What are your overall priorities? (Eric)

Mr. Berg reiterated that he will make himself accessible to the public, and gather input from the Selectmen and other members of the community. He would meet with the members of his department. He would also like to review policies and procedures, along with the collective bargaining agreement.

11. Why do you want to be Chief of Police in a small rural Town? (Mary)

Mr. Berg stated that he likes working in the small towns because he truly believes that the Police Department can have a positive effect on people's lives.

12. Police Departments and Law Enforcement Agencies across the country are finding it very difficult to attract qualified applicants. Discuss your approach to the recruitment and retention of law enforcement personnel. (Bob)

Mr. Berg said that he knows it is very difficult to retain officers, he knows that North Brookfield recently has experienced problems with retention. He believes in recruiting qualified personnel. He said that the department needs to offer training to try to enhance the officer as well as the department, which unfortunately does make the officer more attractive to other towns. He would like to look at non-monetary issues such as recognition in an effort to retain the officers.

Mr. Hevy then stated that in closing, we've talked about a lot of things tonight. It's only fair to ask if you have any questions for us, or would you like to make a closing statement.

Mr. Berg stated that he had no questions, but would like to thank the Selectmen and the Screening Committee for their time. He said that he wants to be the next Police Chief in North Brookfield. He believes that he has the skills necessary to do a good job. He can be a good role model, mentor, and trainer. He wants to be active in the community.

Mr. Hevy noted that the Selectmen still need to interview another candidate, but hope to make a decision within the next week or two.

There being no further business, at 7:00 PM Mrs. Walter moved, and Mr. Smith seconded, a motion to adjourn. So voted.

Respectfully submitted,

Leslie Scott Burton
Administrative Assistant