

MINUTES OF SELECTMEN'S MEETING JUNE 18, 2015

Chairman Hevy called the meeting to order in the Senior Center at 6 PM. He welcomed Police Chief candidate Mark Smith of Belchertown. Mr. Hevy congratulated Mr. Smith on making it to this final round of interviews. Mr. Hevy asked Mr. Smith to introduce himself.

Mr. Smith explained that he has 20 years of experience in law enforcement, beginning as an auxiliary officer, going to part-time and then full-time. He has served as a school resource officer, a sergeant, a detective, and serves as the training coordinator for the Western Massachusetts Chiefs Association. He has extensive experience in training with nearly 50 graduating classes from the Reserve Intermittent Academy in Springfield.

The Selectmen asked Mr. Smith 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. Smith stated that the interview process confirmed his belief that the Town of North Brookfield is very similar to the Town of Granby, where he spent the majority of his career. North Brookfield cares about its police department, and he feels that there would be opportunities as a leader for him to continue programs that he originated in his other positions. He believes that there is a desire in North Brookfield for the police department to be involved with all entities of the town such as the schools and seniors.

- 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. Smith said that he has experience with community policing and he hopes he would have the opportunity to bring this to North Brookfield. There is a need for this type of program, he believes that it is essential for the police department and community to act as one.

- 3. North Brookfield is proud of its Police Departments 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)**

As he was researching North Brookfield, Mr. Smith said that it was obvious that the town supports its police department, as evidenced by the new police facility. He would like to have input from residents in determining the direction of the department. He

believes in an open door and transparency; he leaves his door open because he wants to hear from everyone.

Selectman Smith asked for specifics on how Mr. Smith would cement the relationship between the citizens and the police department? Mr. Smith said that he implemented a citizen's police academy and has received amazing feedback. Giving residents the opportunity to see how the police department works is a very beneficial tool.

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. Smith said that communication with the officers and the community is the key to knowing what is going on. It comes back to his open door policy. There may be a need to direct staffing to correct problems in specific areas or at specific times.

Mrs. Walter asked about social activities and events that would affect staffing, and Mr. Smith stated that is why police involvement in the community is imperative; it is very important for the department to attend social events in town.

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. Smith stated that this is very simple; there are laws that may preclude or prohibit someone from having firearms, other than that it is one's constitutional right. It has never been a place for opinion for Mr. Smith. An opinion cannot overrule a right.

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. Smith noted that every town has budget issues. His current budget in Hinsdale is \$230,000.00. There are plenty of grants out there, especially for equipment and technology. There are grants available for traffic enforcement, which would free up money for his department or another town department.

Mrs. Walter asked if Mr. Smith has written grants? Mr. Smith stated that he wrote the BPV (bullet-proof vest) grant in Granby, and others for 911 training for dispatch employees. In addition, he has experience in grant administration.

Mr. Hevy asked if Mr. Smith has experienced any challenges in managing his budget? Mr. Smith said that he did not have any problems this year. A lot of the budget issues are contractual with the unions, but there are ways to save money, perhaps by the use of part-time officers. There are sometimes unexpected challenges, but it is the Chief's responsibility to address this.

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. Smith answered that right now regional dispatch is a hot topic. Regional task units are a good way to get grant funds for mutual aid, especially in the smaller departments. He said that he is familiar with the trends toward regionalization.

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

Mr. Smith said that responsiveness and being accessible to the townspeople are important, along with involvement with the public. The Chief needs to be out in the public, and having an open door is essential.

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

Mr. Smith said that he has had to make some personnel decisions; the outcome was to put the department back on track. The decision was not difficult, but it needed to be done, and has changed the direction of the department in a positive way.

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. Smith said that he would like to get to know the officers and their families. He would like to get to know their concerns. Then he would like to get to know the residents. It will be an evaluation and a learning process for him.

Mr. Hevy asked about building consensus within the department, and Mr. Smith noted that he would bring ideas to his officers first, and then solicit input from the townspeople.

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

Mr. Smith noted that as a child he always wanted to be an officer in a city or a state trooper, but his town's DARE officer had a great impact on him. He knew that he wanted to be in a smaller town, and knew that he would thrive there because there is more contact with the community and the children. He knows that a small town is where he belongs.

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. Smith stated that retention comes down to getting to know the officers and what motivates them. Recruiting is made easier by building up the reputation of your department so that officers want to come and work here. Getting to know the officers is very important, let them be involved wherever their interests lie. For some people it may be about salary, but some just want to do a good job and want to be here. Those are the officers he wants to attract.

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

Mr. Smith asked what do the Selectmen expect from their Chief of Police? He said that he likes being out in the public and talking to residents. He believes that the interaction in the schools is very important. He likes to greet the school children every day as they are getting off of the school bus. It is imperative for the chief to be active and visible in the community.

Mr. Hevy said that he wants to see involvement with the schools and the public, someone who is active in the community. He wants someone who is able to talk to the kids and nurture them when necessary.

Mr. Smith stated that he was the school resource officer. He knows the value of being involved with the kids. This is the time to make a bond with the children. Mr. Smith said that being a police officer is about giving back; he does not want to ruin anyone's life, especially a juvenile.

Mr. Hevy asked about experience with junior police programs? Mr. Smith said that he does, he believes that it can be a very beneficial program. It gives the kids a chance to get to know the police functions, but especially good for them to see how the police officers interact with the town. His department has actually hired from the auxiliary unit because they had the opportunity to see how the officers interacted with the community. Mr. Hevy asked about the cost to the town, and Mr. Smith said that there was not cost, the officers were volunteers and purchased their own uniforms. He said that he would be willing to try something similar in the North Brookfield schools.

Mr. Hevy asked what would be the challenges with doing that, and Mr. Smith said that putting the policies and procedures in place would be challenging, along with advertising and vetting the candidates. Mr. Smith has experience with training, but something like that would require buy-in from the officers.

Mr. Hevy thanked Mr. Smith for his time, and told him that the Board expects 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