

Selectmen's Meeting Minutes 02/26/19

Town of Chilmark Selectmen's Meeting Minutes February 26, 2019

Present: Chairman Jim Malkin, Warren Doty, Bill Rossi. **Also Present:** Everett Poole, Jeffrey Maida, Judie Flanders, Graeme Flanders, Margaret Maida, Tamar Rogers, Howard Grimm, Susan Murphy, Jennie Greene, Chuck Hodgkinson, MVTV videographer Lynn Christoffers, news reporters: Landry Harlan and Rich Saltzberg, Melanie Becker.

Chairman Malkin convened the meeting at 5:00 pm in the Selectmen's meeting room.

Chairman Malkin said the first item was not anticipated: Deborah Mayhew would like to use the Community Center on December 7, 2019. Mr. Doty said that the issue is use of a small cook tent. All three selectmen agreed to approve this use of the Community Center.

Chairman Malkin said the purpose of the meeting was to conduct interviews for the two finalist for the position of Harbormaster: Robert Hunter Decker and Ryan Rossi.

Selectman Rossi said that because one of the candidates is his nephew and he will be recusing himself from the proceedings and the final vote. *Mr. Rossi left the table to observe from the back of the room.*

Chairman Malkin said that hiring the best candidates for town positions is one of the most important roles of the selectmen. He said that the town received six applications which were reviewed by a committee consisting of the Harbor Committee Chairman, Jeffrey Maida, Harbor Committee member Everett Poole, Harbor Committee Selectmen's Representative Jim Malkin and Jennie Greene as an observer representing the Human Resource Committee. Chairman Malkin said that the hiring process was done 'by the book' and in compliance with all state rules and the Human Resource By-laws of the town. He said that when it became apparent that one of the applicants was a relative of Selectman Rossi, they adopted a process that would not involve Bill in any way. He said the hiring committee interviewed four of the six applicants and recommended the two finalists to be interviewed this evening.

Chairman Malkin said that because Selectman Doty did not participate in the preliminary hiring process; Warren will be running the hearing tonight. Mr. Doty said he would be asking a list of four questions; the same four questions to both candidates:

- Tell us a few things about yourself and your recent employment
- What qualifies you to be the Harbormaster?
- Provide a situation with a conflict between two people and how did you resolve it?
- If you were Harbor Master and a transient boater was having a very loud party on their boat and the neighboring boats complained; how would you handle it?

Chairman Malkin brought in the first candidate; Robert Hunter Decker

Mr. Decker said that he served ten years in the Coast Guard and is currently working for Tisbury Towing and Transport as a mate on the tug Thuban in and out of the Port of New Bedford. He recently completed his Associates Degree and is also employed as a Court Officer at the Edgartown Courthouse. He said his Coast Guard work is most relevant to the Harbormaster position as is law enforcement work in the courthouse. He noted that in the Coast Guard he served as a heavy weather coxswains trainer. When asked by Mr. Doty why he left the Coast Guard he said that he was being reassigned to northern Michigan and he realized how much he loves the Vineyard and wanted to make a commitment to stay here. Regarding a situation of conflict between people he cited serving as court officer during sessions of divorce court and the importance of maintaining a calm presence that can defuse volatile situations. He said tries to listen, and let both sides know that they have been heard. In the situation of the noisy boaters, Mr. Decker said he has been in that very position while working for the Tisbury Harbor department in Lake Tashmoo. He said that telling them you need to turn down your music, you're disturbing your neighbors usually works; but your presence is the best deterrent. Asked what changes do you see needed in Menemsha; he said that the electrical problem and the aging harbor boat are both being addressed. He stressed the importance of inspecting the docks to stay on top of problems. He anticipated that trying to appease everyone's issues would be the hardest part of the job; and his approach would be to stay on top of everyone's personal needs.

Chairman Malkin then asked Mr. Decker the questions that he has for both candidates:

- After your first interview do you have any comments or questions?
- If selected what are the first six things that you will do as Harbormaster?
- What do you see as areas or issues in Menemsha that may cause problems?
- What are the conflicting interests in the harbor and how would you balance them?
- How would you define success in your role as Harbormaster?
- Why do you feel you are the best candidate?

Chairman Malkin and Mr. Decker discussed issues at the water pier given that boats should not be turned away from the fuel dock when seeking water. Mr. Decker asked, given changing state regulations, do you see the Harbormaster job changing and becoming more law enforcement. Chairman Malkin said they don't see the job changing but they will always comply with state law. The first things that Mr. Decker would do if selected are to sit down with Mr. Jason and review how he completes his budgeting and see his daily role, he would meet people, come to understand other departments such as the Fire and Shellfish Departments, he would look for possible safety hazards, look into taking classes required by the state, and familiarize himself with the rules and by-laws of the town. It was noted that he is a First Responder and has a 100 ton Captain's license. Regarding areas of Menemsha that might cause problems he said he would identify safety issues and work to understand the community's needs; he said Menemsha is a very unique and beautiful harbor and he knows that people don't want to see it change. He noted it is a working harbor and would deal with conflict between commercial fisherman and recreational boats by balancing everybody's interests. He stressed that shellfishermen and commercial fishermen, that's their livelihood and it needs to be carefully balanced with the completing needs of transient boaters. He would define success by a season where everyone remained safe, no injuries, staying fiscally sound and 'ahead of the curve' on maintenance. As to why he would be the best candidate; his two years stationed in Menemsha where he always stayed busy finding something to do, his experience and good connections in the maritime community and the true enjoyment he finds in helping people.

Mr. Doty stated that the actual vote will be taken next Tuesday, at the March 5th selectmen's meeting. The selectmen thanked Mr. Decker and he left the room.

Chairman Malkin left and returned with Ryan Rossi.

Mr. Rossi began by saying he is a 31 year old maritime professional with over sixteen years of experience. He lives in West Tisbury with his wife and two children. He stated that he is an effective communicator and an excellent leader. He referenced working at Larsen's Market and the three years he worked as a Wharfinger for the harbor department in Menemsha. He said that experience shaped his life direction and his decision to enter the Coast Guard. After ten years in the Coast Guard he is currently working for the Martha's Vineyard Shipyard in charge of the mooring department. He said he grew up in Chilmark and spent his childhood in Menemsha. In discussing how he would resolve conflict, he discussed a technique called LEAPS: listen, empathize, ask questions, paraphrase, summarize. He used this technique when conducting a dockside inspection of a boat's catch when the captain refused to answer questions or participate. Mr. Rossi responded, "Can you tell me why?" and the captain described an incident where his boat capsized in an inlet and he was very unhappy with the Coast Guard's response and subsequent response. Mr. Rossi said he could tell the situation was deescalating just by questioning and empathizing. Two weeks later the captain sent a letter to his commander saying that the experience had changed his opinion of the Coast Guard. He cited a training school in Leadership and Management that he attended in Charlestown, N.C. He said the most importance thing he learned was to identify why an individual isn't performing at the standard required. Is it a skills or ability issue? Or is the individual having a personal emergency? He said, "First I speak to them and try to reinforce the behavior that's expected and then I listen. If it's a skills issue I try to teach them by doing not, saying. If the issue is willingness, they just don't want to; that's when discipline is needed. I reiterate to that person how important their role is to the organization."

Selectman Doty said that Massachusetts is legalizing marijuana, how would you handle it if one of your employees was using marijuana before coming to work? Mr. Rossi said that would be unacceptable,; none of my employees will be under influence of mind altering materials while working under my supervision. He said he would speak to them, explain it is a safety hazard and they would leave work for the day; then he would inform and consult with the board of selectmen. In answer to Mr. Doty's question about what improvements or changes are needed in Menemsha, Mr. Rossi said first and foremost he thinks the Harbormaster needs to have an active presence in Menemsha, to do regular patrols and to always be easily reachable. He said that everyone needs to be treated fairly. He said there needs to be a maintenance list at the end of every busy season and that list needs to be completed, if at all possible, by the beginning of the next season so the harbor can focus on serving the public, not maintenance.

Mr. Rossi said he has been researching a marina reservation software system called Dockwa. He said he thinks it is a good fit for Menemsha if the town decides to take advance reservations and it would encourage more boaters to come to this great place we have. He acknowledged that

the decision to increase revenue would be made by all not just one. Mr. Doty asked what would be the hardest part of the job for you. Mr. Rossi said "That would be trying to keep everyone happy, which is likely not possible, but if the rules are enforced uniformly and everyone is treated fairly then when someone is done speaking to me they will know that I have done the right thing."

When Mr. Rossi asked what are the selectmen's priorities; Mr. Doty answered by saying that maximizing revenue isn't the priority, it's serving the community and preserving the commercial fishing fleet. In answer to Chairman's Malkin's question about what would be the first six things he would do; Mr. Rossi said get trained up, and he would like to adopt a better boat scheduling program, implement a maintenance program, he would work with the Town Accountant and Treasurer on budget issues, work closely with all other town departments to become a respected leader in this community, something he said would have to be earned, and lastly open a direct line of communication with the Board of Selectmen so everyone is on the same page and he would be a liaison with contractors who are working in the harbor. There was discussion about the issue at the fuel dock, Mr. Ryan said he fully understands the conflicting issues and he thinks the problem can be resolved diplomatically if the Harbormaster sits down with the local business owners and they have an open discussion. His definition of success would be preserving Menemsha as a safe family harbor and a commercial fishing harbor, finding the balance as a safe harbor where people can bring their families; also being on the docks every day greeting people with a smile; and training the people who work for the harbor so they enjoy their job. Chairman Malkin asked why are you the best candidate? Mr. Rossi replied he is a good communicator, a team leader, he is approachable, he pays attention to detail and he has organizational skills.

Selectman Doty said that the board will make their decision next week and vote on March 5th.
Mr. Rossi left the room.

Chairman Malkin asked the selection committee for comments. Jeffrey Maida, chair of the committee, said that after four selected interviews the committee had unanimously recommended Ryan Rossi. Mr. Poole agreed that the committee unanimously felt the Ryan Rossi was the best choice. Chairman Malkin asked Mrs. Greene if she was comfortable with the hiring process and she said yes.

Chairman Malkin adjourned the meeting at 6:34 pm.

Respectfully submitted by Melanie Becker, Treasurer, acting as clerk for the meeting

Approved: 03/05/2019