

SUDBURY SELECT BOARD

SATURDAY, NOVEMBER 12, 2022

9:00 AM

TOWN HALL – LOWER LEVEL, 322 CONCORD ROAD

(Meeting can be viewed at www.sudburytv.org)

Present: Chair Charles Russo, Vice-Chair Janie Dretler, Select Board Member Daniel Carty, Select Board Member Lisa Kouchakdjian, Select Board Member Jennifer Roberts, Interim Town Manager Maryanne Bilodeau

Also Present: Bernard Lynch, Community Paradigm Associates, LLC; Town Manager Candidate Michael McCall, Town Manager Candidate Andrew Sheehan, Town Manager Candidate Gregory Johnson

The statutory requirements as to notice having been compiled with, the meeting was convened at 9:00 AM.

Chair Russo announced the recording of the meeting and other procedural aspects included in the meeting.

Call to Order/Roll Call

Select Board Roll Call: Dretler-present, Roberts-present, Carty-present, Kouchakdjian-present, Russo-present

Opening Remarks by Chair

- Hoped everyone had a good Veterans Day; thanked all Veterans and reflected on the sacrifices they make
- Fun road race yesterday; Town Staff was most helpful
- Thanked Community Paradigm Associates and the Town Manager candidates present today
- Thanked all who made this in-person interview happen today

Reports from Interim Town Manager

- Thanked all Veterans and their families

Reports from Select Board

Vice-Chair Dretler

- Echoed Veterans Day comments, and thanked Veterans for their service

Board Member Roberts

- Thanked everyone for a successful Election Day this past week including election workers, staff, public safety officers, and voters
- Echoed Veterans Day comments, and thanked Veterans for their service
- Thanked the experienced Town Manager Candidates for coming out to meet with the Select Board today

Board Member Carty

- Thanked all Veterans, and thanked SudburyTV for being here as well on a Saturday

Board Member Kouchakdjian

- Echoed all comments made; she noted this was a special day for her as well, to be meeting as a Select Board Member in the impressive Town Hall
- Selecting a Town Manager is one of the most important jobs for a Select Board Member, and it is an honor to be representing the community
- Thanked Mr. Lynch and his colleagues at Community Paradigm Associates for all their work.

Public Comments on items not on Agenda

There were no public comments

Bernard Lynch of Community Paradigm Associates to provide brief opening remarks and introduction of Town Manager candidates

Mr. Lynch confirmed he had spoken to each Board Member during the past week regarding the interview questions being posed to the Town Manager candidates.

Interview Town Manager candidate Michael McCall

Mr. Lynch introduced candidate Michael McCall.

Career Overview & Interest in Sudbury

Q - Mr. Lynch asked Mr. McCall about his interest in the Town Manager position and why he thought he would be successful as the next Town Manager of Sudbury.

A - Mr. McCall briefly described his background as a Town Manager, noting that he had been a Select Board Member for nine years; and several times as chair. He stressed that his purpose was to be a good citizen, effective community leader, and a steward of the environment.

Leadership & Management Style

Q - Board Member Carty asked about the communities that Mr. McCall had worked in, and how they might compare to Sudbury.

A - Mr. McCall provided detail regarding similar positions in the communities of Westford, Chelmsford, and currently Southbridge. He indicated that the community of Westford was most like the community of Sudbury. Mr. McCall confirmed his status as attorney, and his role as Alternate to the Joint Labor-Management Committee (JLMC), where he assisted with negotiations, mediation/arbitration of collective bargaining disputes.

Q - Vice-Chair Dretler asked the candidate about his work with climate change and DEI.

A - Mr. McCall stated he had initiated the municipal vulnerability program with the Southbridge Planning Department, and was involved in green initiatives via the Green Communities Grant program. Addressing the DEI aspect, Mr. McCall detailed that after the COVID Great Resignation period, and had the responsibility of significant re-hiring in all departments. He noted that 40% of the Southbridge population is Spanish speaking and

reflects the values and customs within the community of Southbridge. He stressed that DEI means being fair and inclusive.

Q - Mr. Lynch inquired about Mr. McCall's leadership and management style.

A - Mr. McCall mentioned that his style is inclusive and comprehensive, with frequent staff/departmental meetings and he strongly encouraged an open-door policy.

Q - Board Member Roberts asked the candidate how he manages to provide leadership, while encouraging department heads to manage their various departments.

A - Mr. McCall stated he was not a micro-manager, and provided his staff with guidance and pathways to success.

Q - Mr. Lynch mentioned possible changes in Sudbury, as they may come up; and how Mr. McCall would proceed.

A - Mr. McCall confirmed he would be meeting with all staff in the first 90 days of assuming the Town Manager role.

Q - Chair Russo asked about departmental changes that Mr. McCall had made.

A - Mr. McCall provided related detail, including the topic of compliance issues, and modifications made during the great COVID Resignation period in the Town offices in Southbridge.

Q - Vice-Chair Dretler asked Mr. McCall about future improvements he might make in Southbridge, and what his style was with interacting with Council Members.

A - Mr. McCall stressed that he was in constant communications with the Council Members. His next steps would involve securing a payroll specialist and a dedicated economic professional.

Q - Board Member Carty asked what the candidate perceived his most important role as Town Manager to be.

A - Mr. McCall responded a good public leader, a good steward who takes responsibility.

Q - Board Member Kouchakdjian stressed the importance of the Select Board having a very strong relationship with the Town Manager. She stated she would likely want to meet with the Town Manager on a monthly basis. She stressed that the town Manager's success is the Select Board's success and the community's success.

A - Mr. McCall explained Town Council meetings mostly occur weekly, and the Thursday night before the council meeting, the Chair and Vice-Chair meet with him for an hour.

Communication & Collaboration

Q - Mr. Lynch mentioned the numerous volunteer committees/boards and Commissions in Sudbury, and asked about Mr. McCall's experience with working with such town groups.

A - Mr. McCall stated he often attends various meetings of such volunteer groups in Southbridge; he mentioned amendments to the Southbridge Historical Commission demolition delay bylaw. Mr. McCall mentioned it was important that he attend various group meetings in Southbridge.

Strategic Planning

Q - Chair Russo mentioned several major planning documents in the Town of Sudbury, including; The recently completed Master Plan, the Comprehensive Wastewater Management Plan, ADA Plan, the Open Space Plan. Chair Russo asked the candidate about how to prioritize attention given to each of these areas.

A - Mr. McCall responded that in several areas, coordination and integration of several plans could be considered. He noted that integration would also help to advance certain planning areas.

Q - Board Member Kouchakdjian asked Mr. McCall how various boards, committees and commissions in town could be involved in capital decisions.

A - Mr. McCall noted that the Southbridge Capital Budget was modified, and encouraged residents to be included in the capital decision making process, and to interact with department heads as well.

Financial Management

Q - Mr. Lynch asked for Mr. McCall's input regarding keeping a community financially stable and viable.

A - Mr. McCall responded that a community should not necessarily spend what they do not have. He confirmed that he spends a lot of time with the Financial Director, examining receipts, state aid, and what might be going on at any particular time. He stressed that the goal is to maintain services in the community.

Q - Vice-Chair Dretler asked if the Town of Southbridge had a Mission Statement and/or Select Board Goals, and how the candidate might he help advance those goals.

A - Mr. McCall answered that Southbridge did not have an official Mission Statement, and his vision was to bring the Town of Southbridge up to speed and define goals. He mentioned his involvement with new trails in Southbridge, his work with Southbridge Economic Development Coordinator with securing of funding in the areas of vocational education, climate initiatives, and DEI aspects. He stressed that the mission and goals of Sudbury aligned with his personal goals.

Q - Vice-Chair Dretler asked Mr. McCall what drew him to the Town Manager position in Sudbury.

A - Mr. McCall indicated that Sudbury would be the capstone of his career, and he would be very excited to help direct a climate change initiative. He added that his contributions as an attorney have been significant for the towns he has worked in.

Project Management

Q - Mr. Lynch mentioned the candidate's work on a rail trail, new fire station, and airport in Southbridge. He asked if Mr. McCall learned particular lessons regarding project management.

A - Mr. McCall responded that listening and communication were of prime importance when considering project management. He also stressed the importance of various management tools, such as the hands-on approach. He detailed various aspects of each of the projects he had been working on.

Q - Board Member Roberts spoke of debt exclusions and capital exclusions; and asked how could this problem be addressed in order to bring additional capital into the levy.

A - Mr. McCall suggested a policy to ensure that a certain amount of the yearly levy would go towards capital, and to direct some free cash to capital as well. He stressed the importance of public outreach/education when a project does require more than what might be available in the levy.

Q - Board Member Carty reiterated a comment by Mr. McCall regarding not spending funds that the municipality did not have, with perhaps planning the particular goal or project in phases.

A – Mr. McCall provided further explanation regarding a long-range planning strategy.

Land Use and Development

Q - Vice-Chair Dretler asked what Mr. McCall knew about the MBTA Communities Legislation.

A – Mr. McCall understood that Sudbury was considered an MBTA Community and had knowledge about the associated zoning requirement. He noted that Southbridge was not being considered, but his hometown of Chelmsford was certainly being considered. Mr. McCall added that as a member of both the Chelmsford Planning Board and Conservation Committee for many years, he understood the importance of the legislation and mandates associated with the MBTA Community legislation.

Q – Chair Russo confirmed there are currently large capital projects in Sudbury, and asked about maximization of use and possible revenue for Sudbury when the project was completed.

A – Mr. McCall exemplified the Southbridge airport runway project and its possible extension to accommodate larger airplanes. He reached out to Amazon about use of the airport. He stressed the importance of maximization of use and added revenue for the community.

Q - Board Member Kouchakdjian asked about Mr. McCall’s style regarding conflict and conflict resolution; she exemplified the Fairbank Community Center, and interest brought forth by several resident groups.

A – Mr. McCall stressed that listening was key because people want their beliefs validated; and if you explain to people the reasons why something can or cannot be done, they are receiving an answer; though it may not always be the answer they want to hear, and some kind of compromise might be considered to come up with a better plan. In these instances, he acts as the ombudsman.

Personnel Management/Collective Bargaining

Q - Chair Russo asked the candidate about the handling of union contracts.

A – Mr. McCall responded that as a negotiator in the courtroom setting, he enjoys handling collective bargaining aspects in Southbridge and Chelmsford, as an alternate for the Joint Labor-Management Committee for the Commonwealth.

Q - Board Member Roberts inquired about the Comprehensive Wastewater Management Plan for Sudbury, and what could help mitigate some of those challenges in Sudbury, when comparing it to Chelmsford.

A – Mr. McCall answered that the situation in Sudbury is different than that in Chelmsford, when considering that much of the focus is in the commercial center of town. He recognized that Chelmsford received a significant amount of Federal funding early in the process. He noted that by introducing a wastewater plan in various parts of Sudbury, controlled growth would be more likely.

Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion

Q - Board Member Kouchakdjian asked about the importance of the Americans with Disabilities Transition Plan, and the goal to build a totally inclusive Sudbury.

A - Mr. McCall stressed the importance of making sure all new projects/buildings included a complete ADA plan, and remodeling of existing Town buildings should include ADA Transition modifications, to every extent possible, as well as the inclusion of green technologies.

Q - Interim Town Manager Bilodeau asked if Mr. McCall had been involved with an ADA Self-Evaluation Assessment, and the associated transition plan steps?

A - Mr. McCall responded not.

Q - Board Member Carty asked if the Board would find any negative commentary about Mr. McCall, if they were to perform a google search.

A - Mr. McCall mentioned a matter with DLR (Department of Labor Relations) and the JLMC before he became a Town Manager.

Q - Vice-Chair Dretler asked the candidate about the rail trail in Southbridge, and what was the status of that rail trail. Sudbury was currently working on several rail trails - the MA Central Rail Trail, the Bruce Freeman Rail Trail, and the extension of the BFRT - the CSX Line. She asked Mr. McCall what he would see as the related opportunities and challenges?

A - Mr. McCall confirmed he was a Select Board Member when the BFRT was being considered in Chelmsford. He stressed that the BFRT was viewed as a great opportunity for Chelmsford and its economy. He recommended added access off the trails in Sudbury to also advance the Town's recreation and economic growth, especially along Rte. 20. Southbridge was able to apply for a one-time grant, and procured additional liquor licenses for restaurant use, as well as construction of pocket parks in the area of the rail trail. His associations with State Legislators have been most helpful in seeking related funding, and he would hope to help Sudbury obtain creative funding.

Q - Vice-Chair Dretler asked Mr. McCall if he took the lead for the grant, the pocket parks, and the additional liquor licenses in Southbridge.

A - Mr. McCall responded the liquor licenses were 100% under his charge; he and the Economic Development Coordinator worked on obtaining the grants together, as well as implementation of the pocket parks.

Q - Vice-Chair Dretler asked if the pocket parks had been acquired.

A - Mr. McCall responded that land adjacent to the rail trail was acquired in part with some grant monies.

Select Board Members thanked Mr. McCall for presenting to the Board.

A brief recess took place at 10:31 AM.

Interview Town Manager candidate Andrew Sheehan

At approximately 10:33 AM, Mr. Lynch introduced Town Manager Candidate Andrew Sheehan.

Career Overview & Interest in Sudbury

Q - Mr. Lynch asked Mr. Sheehan about his interest in the position, and why he thinks he would be a successful Town Manager in Sudbury.

A - Mr. Sheehan stated he was drawn to Sudbury, he grew up in Acton, and knows Sudbury well. As a history buff, he stated he well-appreciated the significance of historical aspects in Sudbury, and Sudbury's commitment to open space.

Q – Mr. Lynch asked about Mr. Sheehan's related municipal experience.

A - Mr. Sheehan outlined his extensive experience including his 29 years in local government as Town Manager/Administrator, and nine years as Community Development Director in Chelmsford.

Q – Vice-Chair Dretler asked how Mr. Sheehan could help manage the changes/additions/staffing currently taking place in Sudbury.

A - Mr. Sheehan responded that he has been involved with sizable projects and related alterations, and noted that he worked on the first phase of the BFRT when working in Chelmsford as Community Development Director. Middleton had experienced vast changes including increased real estate taxes. Mr. Sheehan detailed his experience with seeking various grant options.

Q – Board Member Carty asked how Sudbury might benefit from Mr. Sheehan's experience in various communities.

A – Mr. Sheehan explained that job responsibilities of Town Administrator and Town Manager have become much more alike over time, and Town Manager responsibilities are more the norm, as is his role in Middleton.

Q – Chair Russo asked the candidate about distinct differences between Sudbury and other communities that he has served.

A - Mr. Sheehan responded that many essential pieces are in place including a strong bond rating and great staff; and the challenge would be to proceed successfully with capital projects.

Q – Board Member Roberts asked how Mr. Sheehan's background would help with the final execution of Sudbury's current plans/projects.

A – Mr. Sheehan indicated that he had extensive experience with finalization of community capital projects, considering his financial management experience.

Leadership and Management Style

Q – Mr. Lynch asked about the candidate's leadership and management style.

A – Mr. Sheehan responded that he did not have all the answers, but did know how to gather the professionals who do know particular answers. He stressed his collaborative management approach.

Q – Vice-Chair Dretler asked about the “pre-town meeting” concept for Sudbury, as mentioned by Mr. Sheehan.

A - Mr. Sheehan acknowledged that such practice was being used in Middleton for some time, and reflects an opportunity to discuss the warrant articles, and is used as an educational tool as well.

Q – Board Member Roberts asked what leadership would be provided to Town staff, as well as allowing staff to be empowered in their prospective areas.

A – Mr. Sheehan noted that coming into the position, everyone is viewed as “A” performance, and he would lead and advise as appropriate.

Q - Board Member Kouchakdjian asked about Mr. Sheehan’s current relationship with Select Board Members. She added that she would ask to meet with the Town Manager on a monthly basis.

A – Mr. Sheehan responded he is very comfortable with that relationship, though every Board has its own personality. In his current role, he talks with the chair on a regular basis, and stressed the importance of communication. He would start by meeting with each member individually, and strive to understand individual policy priorities. Mr. Sheehan indicated that he would hope to provide informal Town Manager updates at the end of each week as he does now.

Communication & Collaboration

Q – Board Member Carty noted the residents of Sudbury are highly involved and informed, asking the candidate what the most important aspect of the position might be.

A – Mr. Sheehan responded that being able to listen and effectively hear staff, the Board, and the community was most important. He stressed the importance of acting as an orchestral conductor, not as the one producing the music.

Q – Vice-Chair Dretler inquired about Middleton being a part of a regional school district.

A – Mr. Sheehan detailed various aspects of the Middleton three-member regional school system, with each of three towns in the regional system being somewhat independent and sharing a superintendent. The school budgets fall within the three towns. Middleton is also a member of the Essex/North Shore vocational school system. He stated he is a proponent of vocational education, and would help Sudbury in this effort.

Strategic Planning

Q - Mr. Lynch inquired about Mr. Sheehan’s goal-setting approach.

A – Mr. Sheehan stated that the goals of the Select Board and the Town Manager must be the same; and he would always share his ideas.

Q – Vice-Chair Dretler asked if Mr. Sheehan would help with the Board to establish a mission statement regarding values and goals, and asked if the candidate had related experience with setting a mission statement.

A – Mr. Sheehan responded that he would welcome the opportunity, but had not implemented such statements to date. He was involved with implementation of a branding statement – slogan-type statement for Lowell.

Q – Chair Russo stated the Town has many plans, and asked how Mr. Sheehan would prioritize those various plans.

A - Mr. Sheehan responded that if the Board decided to prioritize one plan over another, he would follow the direction of the Board. He noted that he would provide recommendations regarding various project timetables in consideration of budgeting.

Q – Mr. Lynch inquired about the related use of data.

A – Mr. Sheehan responded he had created a performance management program in Lowell, which the former Boston Police Commissioner started when in Boston. He provided related details.

Financial Management

Q – Mr. Lynch asked Mr. Sheehan about budget decision-making approaches.

A – Mr. Sheehan spoke of a no-gimmick approach, where recurring revenues support expenditures. He stated that free cash was a primary funding source when he started in Lowell, and he modified such practice in a beneficial way.

Q – Board Member Carty inquired about use of free cash for reoccurring revenue, and mentioned Sudbury’s proposed sustainability coordinator, and proposed budgeting for the transportation program.

A – Mr. Sheehan provided detailed explanation and explained a current SAFER grant award in Middleton, and provided additional specifications.

Q – Vice-Chair Dretler mentioned the Sudbury Transportation pilot program and mentioned budgeting aspects must be considered for the future. She asked how Mr. Sheehan would evaluate that aspect, and asked how that program could be operationalized.

A – Mr. Sheehan stressed the importance of inclusion in the Town budget, and to also consider all other grant funding/sources. He mentioned the possibility of specific stabilization funding - half from an existing budget and half out of a stabilization fund to reflect a specific period of time.

Project Management

Q – Board Member Roberts inquired about financial management as it pertains to capital, and mentioned the association with the DLS Report, which is the recommended approach to setting aside enough for capital and how to approach the challenge of getting more money for capital than the current tax levy.

A – Mr. Sheehan responded there was a place for debt within the operating budget, which is more difficult now with interest rates increasing. A yearly capital goal might start small with percentages, which might take some time. He stressed the importance associated with taking the long view.

Q - Board Member Kouchakdjian asked how Mr. Sheehan how he would advance such capital projects.

A – Mr. Sheehan confirmed that volunteers/committee members have to be included in the decision about such projects, and take advantage of the expertise/knowledge offered.

Personnel Management/Collective Bargaining

Q – Mr. Lynch asked about the candidate’s collective bargaining experience and his approach.

A – Mr. Sheehan replied he had not been an active part of collective bargaining for the first half of his career until assuming his role in Lowell. He elaborated on the FY09 local aid cuts in Lowell, which affected all municipalities in the Commonwealth, especially such towns as Lowell. Mid-term negotiations were performed for all unions in

Lowell at the time with some 49 layoffs. As a Town Administrator in Middleton, he has a good relationship with the bargaining units and acts as the lead negotiator in all the contracts.

Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion and Sustainability

Q - Mr. Lynch asked the candidate to address the DEI and Sustainability topics.

A – Mr. Sheehan exemplified his experiences in Lowell, which has an extremely diverse population. He noted that the work force was well-representative of the population. He noted that gender equity has been reflective in Middleton which was problematic when he started in that town. Mr. Sheehan stated he was looking forward to being part of advancements in the sustainability arena in Sudbury. He stressed the reality and seriousness of climate change, and planning.

Q - Board Member Kouchakdjian stated that Sudbury has changed over the past several years with a more diverse population. She asked Mr. Sheehan about the value of the ADA Transition Program in Sudbury, and if he had experience in this area.

A – Mr. Sheehan responded that he worked with the Institute for Human Centered Design in Middleton in 2020 and 2021, and that transition plan was adopted by that Middleton Select Board in mid-2021. Four primary buildings in Middleton were considered, and stressed the importance of those modifications.

Other Questions

Q – Vice-Chair Dretler asked how the candidate would help the Board run their meetings effectively and efficiently, and the interplay with the Board with creating the meeting agenda.

A – Mr. Sheehan confirmed that he had more than thirty years of experience in this area, and indicated there was no one right way of running the meeting process, and every Board has their preferences/personality/style. He noted that efficiency tweaks could be considered.

Q - Board Member Kouchakdjian asked the candidate how he deals with conflict and his conflict resolution style as it pertains to Boards, Committees/Commissions and staff.

A – Mr. Sheehan confirmed that he did not react prematurely and has a sense of what might really become an issue, and what will not. He cited an example at the Middletown Transfer Station and social media. He stressed managing with a global view, and not overreacting.

Q – Board Member Carty asked if there was anything negative about the candidate, what would it be?

A – Mr. Sheehan answered that sometimes holding on to projects can be a temptation.

Board Members thanked Mr. Sheehan for sharing his time and thoughts during the interview.

Lunch break

Chair Russo moved in the words of the motion. Board Member Carty moved in the words of the Chair. Board Member Kouchakdjian seconded the motion.

It was on motion 5-0; Kouchakdjian-aye, Carty-aye, Roberts-aye, Dretler-aye, Russo-aye

VOTED: To recess and return to the meeting at 12:45 PM

Interview Town Manager candidate Gregory Johnson

At 12:46 PM, Mr. Lynch introduced Town Manager Candidate Gregory W. Johnson.

Career Overview & Interest in Sudbury

Q - Mr. Lynch asked Mr. Johnson about his interest in the position and why he thinks he would be successful as the Town Manager of Sudbury.

A - Mr. Johnson stated as the Town Manager in Maynard, he is excited to get to the next level as Town Manager in Sudbury. He confirmed he has reviewed the Sudbury Master Plan and the FY23 Select Board goals. He stated that he would help with budget management, and help with building consensus, which he has done in Maynard, Westford and at the State level. He mentioned transportation issues, Camp Sewataro, and infrastructure concerns in Sudbury.

Q - Vice-Chair Dretler asked what Mr. Johnson would anticipate bringing to Sudbury?

A - Mr. Johnson stated his role is to execute a mission and advise on a day to day basis, similar to his previous municipal, state and military roles. He mentioned his effectiveness when dealing with department heads, boards/committees, the select board and the residents. Mr. Johnson spoke of efficiencies involved with Town Meeting.

Q - Board Member Carty asked about the similarities/differences between Sudbury and Maynard; and how that aspect could be a benefit when considering the Town Manager position in Sudbury.

A - Mr. Johnson responded that Maynard had less resources/staff when compared to Sudbury, so more is delegated to the Town Manager/himself. He recently appointed a Finance Director who he works with. One of his main strengths involves being accessible to staff and the community.

Leadership & Management Style

Q - Mr. Lynch asked what the candidate's leadership/management style looked like.

A - Mr. Johnson stated his focus includes efficiency, and exemplified town meeting. He stressed flexibility, and exemplified such modifications in light of COVID and outdoor Town Meetings, as well as flexibility regarding change in personnel; the hiring of all new department heads, and several retirements.

Q – Board Member Roberts asked Mr. McCall if he were to become the next Sudbury Town Manager, how would he help department heads to be empowered in their positions, while providing the leadership they need.

A – Mr. Johnson confirmed he enjoyed working with department heads who know their jobs very well, and would be happy to help them with continued success in their positions. Upon arrival in Sudbury, he would meet with each one of the department heads, in addition to other key staff. He stressed that it was key to provide all staff with the authority they deserve, as most have been doing their jobs for a considerable amount of time.

Q - Board Member Kouchakdjian asked the candidate how he viewed his relationship with the Select Board, adding that she would want to meet with the new Town Manager monthly. She inquired about his role at Select Board meetings.

A – Mr. Johnson commented that he regarded himself as chief of staff and works to have a level of familiarity with each Board Member’s goals and their specific aspirations. He endorsed a monthly meeting with Board Member Kouchakdjian, and would be in more constant communication with the Chair, setting the particular agenda and discussing various meeting priorities. The more interaction he has with the Board, the better informed the community will be. He stressed the importance of having the community be as informed as possible, and is proud of the relationship he has with his Board in Maynard. Board Members take the lead in any Select Board meeting, but he will provide direction or information at a Select Board meeting as the need arises.

Strategic Planning

Q – Board Member Carty stressed that Sudbury has a strong and vocal community, and asked Mr. Johnson what he considered the most important aspect of the Town Manager position is, while managing other aspects of the position.

A – Mr. Johnson responded that one of the most important aspects involves maintaining a long-term strategy, adhering to Select Board goals, and helping guide and advise the Select Board.

Q – Chair Russo asked Mr. Johnson how he sets priorities and mentioned Sudbury’s Master Plan, Housing Production Plan, Historic Preservation Plan, ADA Transition Plan, Comprehensive Wastewater Management Plan, Open Space Plan, Athletic Fields Plan.

A – Mr. Johnson stated that priorities are mostly driven by the Select Board goal setting sessions to start, and then determining how those goals might fit into the budget would require more collaboration with him. He noted that much priority-setting is cyclical in relation to Warrant Articles and Town Meetings.

Q – Vice-Chair Dretler mentioned approved mission and value statements, and would encourage the Town Manager to get involved with the Select Board to set a vision for the community. She asked if Mr. Johnson would be open to that opportunity.

A – Mr. Johnson responded in the affirmative, adding he would look forward to such involvement. He appreciated the fact that sometimes an initial vision concept might be changed/modified; he exemplified recent policy modifications by the Maynard Select Board, and he assisted in that effort.

Financial Management

Q - Mr. Lynch asked the candidate what his budgeting approach looked like.

A – Mr. Johnson mentioned the relativity of budgeting, and is generally conservative regarding budgeting. He mentioned the particular considerations of the school budget, free cash, and reserves keeping in mind the goals and needs of the Town.

Q – Mr. Lynch asked the candidate about financial forecasting in Maynard.

A – Mr. Johnson responded that due to staff turnover in Maynard, he has not worked with a finance director until recently. He noted that ClearGov is the platform he is utilizing in Maynard, which provides a transparent approach. He commented that COVID was instrumental in altering such projections.

Q – Mr. Lynch asked the candidate about the use of performance data in his decision making.

A – Mr. Johnson stated that he was more apt to utilize such data while working for the State, but felt it was not as applicable for the Town of Maynard in consideration of its size. He noted that public opinion and needs were very important in Maynard.

Project Management

Q – Mr. Lynch asked about improving the investment infrastructure and maintenance of capital assets in Maynard.

A – Mr. Johnson responded that a substantial investment in capital was made with the impending opening of the new fire station in Maynard. He acknowledged that the fire station topic presented a difficult discussion at Town Meeting regarding the associated debt exclusion. He mentioned the phasing of various projects in process in Maynard at this time, including a new elementary school, public works projects, stormwater management, and various renovations to aging town buildings. He mentioned the importance of realizing infrastructure opportunities when they present themselves.

Q – Vice-Chair Dretler mentioned the importance of keeping such projects on track. She asked the candidate for examples of how he might help Sudbury absorb a significant amount of change by maximizing opportunities and minimizing the associated challenges, via example that he has encountered in Maynard.

A – Mr. Johnson stressed the importance of outreach and educating the residents so they understand exactly what such changes might be, and to ensure that the “right people are at the table.” He gave credit to his Assistant Town Manager who helped him with the downtown business incentives in the midst of the pandemic, which reflected collaboration between his office, Public Works, Police, and the downtown businesses with outdoor dining services.

Q – Board Member Roberts mentioned debt and capital exclusions in Sudbury, and how to include more funding in the tax levy, as well as setting aside enough monies for capital. She asked Mr. Johnson about setting aside enough capital funding and including more monies into the current levy to not be as reliant on debt exclusions.

A – Mr. Johnson recognized that he has been more successful in that effort in some years, and not so much in other years. He added that larger projects likely required more long-term funding options. Mr. Johnson agreed that seeking DLS recommendations can be of benefit. He recommended starting small, with keeping a balance in mind.

Q - Board Member Kouchakdjian asked Mr. Johnson about the interaction/involvement between advancement of capital projects and interested town boards/committees.

A – Mr. Johnson responded that such interaction/involvement was very important to him, and he reiterated that any such project is the town’s project; he exemplified the Fairbank Community Center. Mr. Johnson stressed the importance of related contractors/project managers and their cooperation with boards/committees throughout the process.

Q – Mr. Lynch asked Mr. Johnson about his role in “driving” capital projects, especially the new Maynard Fire Station.

A – Mr. Johnson responded that the Maynard Fire Station project was not finalized when he became the Town Manager, and the process took approximately five years to complete. He spoke of the decision-making process and the old fire station.

Q – Chair Russo asked Mr. Johnson about lessons learned during his term in Maynard.

A – Mr. Johnson commented about the financial policies topic, and discovered that such a topic could not be covered in the same way in Maynard as it was in Westford, considering interactions with the Finance Director.

Personnel Management/Collective Bargaining

Q - Mr. Lynch asked the candidate about his collective bargaining experience.

A - Mr. Johnson confirmed he was involved in all collective bargaining aspects (6 units in Maynard). He noted that although the School Superintendent drives the school agreements, he is involved in weekly conversations with that superintendent. He noted that the Human Resource Director is always involved in those contracts, and sometimes labor counsel is also involved. Mr. Johnson emphasized that he strives for a collaborative and honest approach, noting that no two unions are alike.

Q – Mr. Lynch asked the candidate about motivating employees and holding them accountable.

A – Mr. Johnson credited the HR Director in Maynard for implementing “spirit week” as a morale builder/motivator, noting that he conveys the message that the town/residents are depending on personnel to do their jobs effectively. He stressed the importance of checking in with all the town offices, adding that there have been very few disciplinary issues while he was in Maynard.

Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion

Q – Mr. Lynch asked Mr. Johnson about his experience DEI work.

A – Mr. Johnson stressed DEI importance, noting the effort was a long time coming. He mentioned the importance of the best DEI staff candidates and the contributions they make.

Sustainability and Climate

Q – Mr. Lynch asked Mr. Johnson what he has done in this area, and what actions Sudbury might take.

A – Mr. Johnson responded that government can be the role model in this area. He stressed the importance of including town directives for developers in town. He exampled Green Communities Awards and confirmed that Maynard was already taking advantage of those awards when he came into the town. He added that the Maynard Sustainability Committee has recently been formed to help advance related incentives, and are recommending a community aggregation program, as already established in Sudbury.

Q - Board Member Kouchakdjian stated that the infrastructure must match the needs of the community, when considering DEI and ADA topics. She asked about Mr. Johnson’s experience with ADA self-assessments and such implementation.

A – Mr. Johnson mentioned the ADA legal obligation and beyond, and that he sought the kind of neighborhood that would make accommodation to all citizens, those with and without disabilities. He mentioned the complete streets program and sidewalks/crosswalk implementations. Mr. Johnson addressed aspects of the Maynard ADA

Commission, and the assurance that the Commission is provided with the tools they need to better advance the missions.

Land Use & Development

Q – Mr. Lynch asked the candidate about his experience in the area of land use and economic development.

A – Mr. Johnson explained his related studies in graduate school, and mentioned working for shared goals with developers. He detailed aspects of the Mill in Maynard, Maynard Crossing, and other commercial projects in Maynard. He mentioned the inclusion of the marijuana retailer in Maynard, as well.

Q - Board Member Kouchakdjian asked Mr. Johnson about the handling of conflict resolution.

A – Mr. Johnson stated he tries to be objective and listen. The first stop is usually the HR director, and he likes to be kept informed about particular conflicts. Mr. Johnson opined that such conflict at the Town Meeting/Select Board level is usually a display of passion about a topic, which can become extremely intense.

Q – Vice-Chair Dretler commented that in the case of Sudbury, acquiring land becomes the responsibility of the Town, as is determining the best use for the property. She asked Mr. Johnson how he would assist in this area.

A – Mr. Johnson responded that he would have related discussions with the Select Board in order to be productive. He concurred that he would put forth his recommendation, which would fit the goals and intentions of the Board as a whole, and would be the facilitator for those conversations. He stressed that Sudbury has a good supportive team, including the Planning Department, DPW, Facilities Director, etc.

Q – Board Member Carty asked the candidate about possible negative comments about him.

A – Mr. Johnson responded an example might include not being heard and not being firm enough with staff some five years ago.

Board Members thanked Mr. Johnson for sharing his time and thoughts during the interview.

Adjourn

Chair Russo read in the words of the motion. Board Member Carty moved in the words of the Chair. Vice-Chair Dretler seconded the motion.

It was on motion 5-0; Dretler-aye, Roberts-aye, Carty-aye, Kouchakdjian-aye, Russo-aye

VOTED: To adjourn the meeting.

There being no further business, the meeting adjourned at 1:50 PM.