

TOWN of NEWTOWN
TOWN ADMINISTRATOR WORK GROUP
REGULAR MEETING, MARCH 20, 2023
COUNCIL CHAMBER, NEWTOWN MUNICIPAL CENTER
3 PRIMROSE STREET, NEWTOWN, CT

These minutes are subject to approval by the Work Group

MINUTES

PRESENT: Bill Brimmer, Ned Simpson and Maureen Crick Owen

ABSENT: Pat Llodra,

ALSO PRESENT: Herb Rosenthal, two residents and one member of the press

The meeting was called to order at 3:30 p.m. by Mrs. Crick Owen.

VOTER COMMENTS – None

ACCEPTANCE OF MINUTES

Mr. Brimmer moved to approve the minutes of March 13, 2023. Mr Simpson seconded.
All in favor and motion passes.

DISCUSSION WITH Former Newtown First Selectman Herb Rosenthal

Mr Rosenthal was First Selectman from 1997 through 2007. He feels the job of First Selectman has become more complex in what you need to know and what you need to be involved in. The town has grown. The state legislature is always adding new statutes and things to take care of. Newtown has been fortunate in having First Selectmen who had multiple terms, town knowledge and management skills. Mr Rosenthal's Father was First Selectman for 12 years, he for 10 years, and Mrs Llodra for 8. It's only by chance that there has been stability. When First Selectman, Mr Rosenthal had an executive assistant, secretary, human resources and economic development reporting to him. There were two people doing what Sue Marcinek covers today. His successor did not continue the executive assistant position. Concern is continuity. Town employees kind of wait people out. It's human nature. Thinking that a new manager will add wanted programs or drop unwanted things from the previous manager. This is especially true towards the end of terms. With less turnover in the office, more can be accomplished.

Mr Rosenthal thinks it would be a big step to go directly to a Town Manager. Town Administer could be a permanent thing or a step. Town Administrator would be a test. That person would do a lot of the day-to-day running of the town and First Selectman would be more of a big picture person, focusing on policy and general direction. If the town is thinking of going in the direction of a Town Manager, Town Administrator would be a good step. Charter Review Commissions have seemed reluctant to pursue this. If we had an Administrator and it worked well, after a few years the town could take it to another step, go back or keep the Administrator.

Mrs Crick Owen pointed out the Monroe went to Town Manager, then went back. When Mr Rosenthal was first elected Monroe went from Town Manager to First Selectman. He didn't know much of why that happened. Now Monroe has First Selectman and a council, no Board of Selectman, so it's more like a Mayor. Trumble is the same way, First Selectman and a council.

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Mr Rosenthal was asked about transition where a department head that used to report to the First Selectman, now reports to someone how reports to the First Selectman. Mr Rosenthal said the relation between the First Selectman and the Town Administrator will probably be different from one administration to another. It would be very important to have a very good job description. This Work Group can help in putting that together. Roles and responsibilities should be consistent from one administration to the next. For the Town Administrator, definition would probably not be by charter, but a Board of Selectman policy, or by ordinance so a new First Selectman doesn't come in and just change the job.

Simsbury had a Town Administrator; they ultimately went to a Town Manager. In a recent discussion with the current First Selectman, Mr Rosenthal heard that they preferred the First Selectman structure. Attributes of Town Administrator vis a vis Town Manager were discussed. Mr Rosenthal poised the question of whether Newtown would keep the BOS under a Town Manager structure.

Mr Rosenthal was asked what he is hearing from town folk regarding Town Administrator or Town Manager. He replied that he hasn't heard much. Asked about the question of why spend money for a new position, Mr Rosenthal felt that it is an important concern, but he has not heard people talking about it.

Mr Simpson, referring to slides from Wilton describing why they chose a Town Administrator included a number of references to giving the First Selectman more time for regional and State involvement. As both a past First Selectman and member of regional and state boards, he asked for Mr Rosenthal's perspective. Mr Rosenthal participated a lot in regional activities. He doesn't think the current First Selectman has the time to do as much as would be desired. Mr Rosenthal considered time on regional activities beneficial, learning from other town's experience, knowing about and at times influencing pending legislation. In his case he had more staff to enable him to spend time in regional activities.

Even Bridgeport has a Chief Administrator Mr Rosenthal said. The former First Selectman in Monroe became the Chief Administrator in a town with a mayor. So even a city with a much bigger population had an administrator as well as a mayor. For a Town Manager, Mr Rosenthal doesn't see having both a council and a BOS.

Mr Simpson asked about First Selectman spending time on economic development. Mr Rosenthal that is an important area where the First Selectman would have more time to spend. Frankly, he didn't think he spent enough time on it. In his time there was a full-time person doing economic development. This hasn't been the case under recent First Selectmen. Currently economic development reports to Land Use and has other responsibilities. Mr Rosenthal highlighted the importance of regular meetings with businesses. Something he did not do enough of. Mr Brimmer pointed out that a Town Administrator could do things like attend Danbury Chamber of Commerce and report back. Mr Rosenthal agreed. Adding that title is important in those settings.

Mrs Crick Owen conveyed what she had heard from Max Freidman at CCM who thinks our approach is spot on. He sees more towns going in the Town Administrator direction. Mr Rosenthal commented that Town Managers were concentrated in the Hartford area.

Mr Simpson asked about the characteristics and qualifications for a Town Administrators. Mr Rosenthal indicated that there is a Town Manager professional organization that may also have resources for Town Administrators. Types of training would be interesting. He knows a number

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of Administrators were previous First Selectman. Mr Rosenthal agreed that a public administration degree would be useful. He pointed out that U Conn has programs. He pointed out the municipal management is very different from business management. Considering background Mr Rosenthal believes a former First Selectman and someone coming out of a public administration degree program would find the Town Administrator a good career step towards Town Manager.

In closing Mr Rosenthal thinks the town is ready to move in a new direction. He agrees that having a town Administrator would make running for First Selectman more appealing to more people. A candidate could see that there would be someone to help them day one and throughout their term.

DISCUSSION WITH Ben Branyan, Town Administrator for Greenwich (via Zoom)

Mr Branyan has worked for the town for 12 years and had been the Town Administrator for Greenwich for 8 years under two First Selectmen. He has a master's degree in public administration. His career started in Stratford before moving to Greenwich.

Mr Brimmer asked about why he moved from school administration to municipal administration. Mr Branyan summarized his career path starting as Stratford Town Administrator. Stratford eliminated that role and Mr Branyan shifted to school administration, in Greenwich, as chief administrator with an eye to a superintendent position. However, he found that he missed the municipal side.

1. Are your lines of authority and responsibility clearly defined?

From a structural standpoint, lines are clearly defined. Mr Branyan provided his job description (Attachment A).

2. How are you supervised/evaluated?

Mr Branyan works for the First Selectman. There is an HR process for all MC (Manager Confidential) employees with an evaluation form to set goals with an end of year evaluation.

3. What process is used to determine your work priorities? Job description?

On projects Mr Branyan typically runs point. He and the First Selectman agree on who is doing what. Typical of municipal government, there is a lot of unplanned stuff that comes up. It's a matter of agreeing who picks up the ball. Mrs Crick Owen highlighted comments from Mr Knickerbocker, Wilton Town Administrator, about how he may identify projects or efforts and take them to the First Selectman. Mr Branyan said it was similar in Greenwich. Similar to the corporate world, the First Selectman is CEO and there is a Chief Operation Officer (COO). Mr Branyan's job description was recently updated to add the COO title. In part this was done to bridge public and private sector. People may not understand an administrator role but have a clearer idea of COO roles. Mr Branyan stated that of course he would never do anything that doesn't have the backing of the First Selectman.

Mrs Crick Owen asked about the transition to a Town Administrator structure. Greenwich shifted to the Town Administrator structure 18 to 20 years ago. Mr Branyan heard "what does this person do", "funding", "why do we need this person" when at the time he was working for the school system. That was just the break-on period. People quickly

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understood the value of the position. He hasn't heard those question in the past 8 years. First Selectman don't have to get bogged down in the minutia of local government. Both First Selectman he has worked with have been able to spend more time on constituent relations. Even with a population of 65,000+ it's still a small town. People calling want to speak to the First Selectman.

5. Do you have supervisory authority/responsibility over staff?

By charter, departments report to the First Selectman. The Chief Information Officer (CIO) and Community Development report to Mr Branyan. HR technically reports to the First Selectman, but Mr Branyan spends more time with Department Heads and HR then the First Selectman does. Mr Branyan typically talks to HR a couple times a day or more.

Mr Simpson asked about the CIO reporting to Mr Branyan. Mr Branyan described the town's hyper focus on cyber security. The CIO and Mr Branyan spend a lot of time on cypher security with their security consultants. Mr Branyan chairs a steering committee. These efforts get into the weeds of operations and technology. There are projects and updates, but it is the need for cross department coordination around cyber security that makes this relationship.

Mr Simpson asked about economic development position and responsibility. Mr Branyan replied that Greenwich is primarily a residential community, business and retail is fully built out. They have tried economic development positions but found it hard to justify the cost of such positions. There is not an economic development focused on building up the Grand List. Community Development focus on grants, not for profits, and community activities.

6. What challenges exist with the selectman/administrator model?

Mr Branyan suggested that setting up the bright line distinguishing responsibility is critical. He believes First Selectman do not want to be bothered with day to day activities.

Mr Brimmer's questioned how people react when there is a person inserted between their prior relationship with the First Selectman. Most department heads take the approach of just roll with it. Some people can perceive of it as a demotion, As time passes department heads come to understand that the Town Administrator is an ally. It's a more efficient process. Town Administrator can remove obstacles. Department heads can go to the First Selectman as needed. The length of employment of a Town Administrator helps the continuity and getting things done. First Selectman has their projects, Mr Branyan job is to get those priorities done.

7. What critical personal/professional attributes are needed for success in this administrator role?

Mr Branyan believes the job requires a "Jack of all trades and a master of none." Mr Branyan attributes his success in having a broad understand of municipal operations and as needed the capability to drop into the details. But still keeping a 30,000 foot level for a strategic standpoint.

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NEW BUSINESS

Work Group Records

Mr Simpson asked for the Work Group's advice on the level of detail in the minutes he has been preparing. Members appreciated the detail. A related question was whether to attach copies of all the materials that have been circulated to Work Group Members. For now, the title of circulated material will be included under in the minutes. Hard copy of these materials will be available in the First Selectman's office.

- Monroe government information from Karen Barnaska March 17, 2023
- From with Max Friedman of CCM
 - Selectmen v. Manager FOG 2006
 - *The Council-Manager Form of Government: Answers to Your Questions*. International City/Council Management Association, 2002.
 - "City-Manager Form of Government." By Osborne M. Reynolds, Jr. Chapter 3 in *Local Government Law, Second Edition*. St. Paul, Minnesota: West Group, 2001.
 - *Selectmen Form of Government*. Examples from Connecticut and Maine.
 - *The Three Basic Forms of Connecticut's Local Government*. By Frank Connolly. Chapter 2 in *Local Government in Connecticut*. Institute of Public Service, The University of Connecticut, 2nd Edition, 2001.
 - *Appendix A: Connecticut Municipalities by Form of Government*. By Frank Connolly. *Local Government in Connecticut*. Institute of Public Service, The University of Connecticut, 2nd Edition, 2001.
 - *Bethel Charter*, Article IV, "Board of Selectmen," Article V, "First Selectman."
 - *Cromwell Charter*, Chapter V, "The Board of Selectmen," Chapter VI, "The Town Meeting," Chapter VII, "The First Selectman"
 - Univ of NC-City Manager vs. Mayor 2021
 - ICMA Council-Manager 2007
 - CTCMA Model Practices for Municipal Governments, November 2010
- "Clinton to Replace Board of Selectmen with Town Council and Town Manager", CT Examiner, July 25, 2019

Meeting with Reference Towns, Newtown Department Heads and others

Mrs. Crick Owen described a tentative schedule:

April 3

- Jim Ritchie, former Superintendent in Plainville CT
- Bob Tait, Newtown Finance Director

April 17

- Fred Camillo, First Selectman, Greenwich, CT
- Wendy Mackstutis, First Selectman, Simsbury, CT

NEXT MEETING

Next Regular Meeting, Monday April 3, 2023, at 3:30 pm.

For the Work Group's May 4, 2023, meeting the Work Group will meet at 5:00 pm followed at 6:00 pm with a public hearing on consideration of a Town Manager or Town Administrator.

VOTER COMMENTS –

Laura Miller, 8 Diamond Dr, Newtown.

She is glad to hear that there will be an evening session. Ms Miller asked if there is some budget point or population point where towns shift to Town Administrator? She hears a lot about the difference between Town Administration and First Selectman, what is the

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remedy if they don't agree? Mrs Crick Owen described the Town Administrator and Town Manager roles relative to state statutes defining Town Manager, but towns having flexibility defining Town Administrator to meet their characteristics and needs. The Town Administrator would always report to the First Selectman.

Ms Miller asked about parameters for success of a Town Administrator? What would show success, to continue, or go on to Town Manager? Would Legislative Council be involved in setting those parameters? Ms Miller was asked if she has ideas for parameters. She stated that performance measures may include things that are not in either the Town Administrator's or First Selectman's control such as interest rates.

How much time does the First Selectman spend on HR. In her job it is an enormous amount of time spent on HR. She also expressed concern if department reporting is split between Town Administrator and First Selectman. It could become a two headed snake. Apart from adding a position, is consideration being given to extending the First Selectman term from two to four years? Ms Miller believes year one is learning getting your feet wet, year two becomes campaigning. If a new person comes in the cycle starts over. Ms Miller wonders if it would be harder or easier to fill a First Selectman if there is a Town Administrator? She can see that it would be easier because they wouldn't have to worry about the day to day. Additionally, Ms Miller wonders if Town Administrator would mean the elimination of the Board of Finance.

Motion by Mr Brimmer, to adjourn the meeting. Mr Simpson seconded. All in favor and motion passes.

The meeting was adjourned at 4:47 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,
Ned Simpson

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Attachment A Greenwich CT

TITLE: TOWN ADMINISTRATOR and CHIEF OPERATING OFFICER

Department:	First Selectman's Office	Job Code: 1006
Division:	Administration	Date Created: June 2021
Bargaining Status:	Unrepresented	
Grade:	MC 11	
FLSA Status:	Exempt	
Reports to:	The First Selectman	

Job Purpose:

Under the direction of the First Selectman the Town Administrator and Chief Operating Officer is responsible for the administration, coordination and planning of the general government functions of the Town. This includes all administrative functions relative to the daily operation of the Departments under the supervision of the First Selectman. He/She will evaluate and make recommendations regarding departmental operations, organization, budget and administration. The Town Administrator and Chief Operating Officer will recommend adoption of such measures, as he/she may deem necessary or expedient to facilitate and improve general government administration.

Duties and Responsibilities:

Serves as advisor and chief administrative officer assisting the First Selectman and the Board of Selectmen in managing the affairs of the Town.

Represents the First Selectman and the Board of Selectmen in the day to day operation and administration of all town departments and offices.

Assists the First Selectman with the development, submission and administration of the overall Town Budget, the review of each department's annual budget and comprehensive Operations Plan and the Capital Improvement Program.

Represents the First Selectman in the review and oversight of collective bargaining negotiations and their relative costs, confidential personnel issues, financial management and any other field of public administration commensurate with his or her knowledge and experience.

Assists the First Selectman in identifying and prioritizing Town needs and participates in the development and implementation of long-range plans, goals, objectives and policies.

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Provides liaison between the First Selectman and the various departments, boards, committees, task forces and community organizations as assigned.

1 Analyzes, interprets and reviews issues, policies, departmental operations and budgets, making recommendations and preparing statistical and narrative reports as directed.

Oversees and administers special studies or projects and such other duties as may be prescribed by the Town Charter, or required of him or her by the First Selectman.

Stays apprised of and monitors legislation pending in the legislature that may effect municipal operations and finances; secures policy direction from the Board of Selectmen and communicates same to congressional staff or lobbyists.

Required Competencies/Characteristics:

The successful candidate will be a strong, successful administrator with experience managing and problem solving in a dynamic, political, government environment. A strategic thinker with excellent communication and interpersonal skills necessary for dealing with an active citizenry, elected officials and professional colleagues in a frank and service oriented manner. A team leader with the ability to motivate others towards accomplishing future goals is desirable.

Education and Experience:

Bachelor's degree from an accredited college or university in public administration or a closely related field with 10 years of professional managerial experience, preferably in a municipal setting with authority for program direction, budgetary administration and supervision of professional staff. Master's degree in public or business administration preferred.

Experience working with multiple boards, elected bodies, and ICMA-CM are also preferred but not required.