



TOWN OF WARNER

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Select Board: Harry Seidel, Chairman
Alfred Hanson, Vice Chair
Michael J. Smith
Kathleen Frenette, Town Administrator

Select Board Public Work Session Minutes August 21, 2025 5:00 PM

I. Open the Public Meeting / Roll Call / Pledge of Allegiance

Chairman Harry Seidel called the meeting to order at 5:01 PM. 14:57

Select Board present: Chairman Harry Seidel, Vice Chair Alfred Hanson and Mike J. Smith.

The Pledge of Allegiance was recited.

Members of the public: Jon Noble, Amelia Gardner, Martha Mical, Chris Beauchemin, Elizabeth Labbe and Judy Newman-Rogers.

II. Select Board Business:

1. Building Inspector Vacancy

Harry Seidel explained there are four candidates for the building inspector position. Steve Reale, Anthony Mento, Nathaniel Burrington and Scott LaCroix. The Select Board discussed the candidates

Steve Reale has 8 years of experience in Franklin, NH as the Building Inspector where he worked with planning and zoning. He has knowledge of the electric and plumbing codes.

Anthony Mento has been an architect for 25 years. He has experience with commercial and residential building and fire protection codes. He has experience working with municipal and planning / zoning.

Nathaniel Burrington interested in being the Building Inspector assistant. He would like to be the Building Inspector one day. He needs to brush up on electrical and plumbing codes.

Scott LaCroix has 30 years of experience in construction, 7 + years in building inspection, zoning/planning and land use. Proficient in plumbing and electrical codes, reading plans and blueprints. He has a civil engineering degree. Certified septic system designer and installer. Previous municipal experience in the Towns of Raymond, Bow, and Chichester.

Mike Smith stated that the Town needs both a building inspector and a code enforcement officer. He explained that he likes that Steve Reale is a Warner resident and he is willing to do both. Mike Smith stated that Steve Reale and Anthony Mento work well together.

Harry Seidel stated that the Town would benefit from someone with municipal planning and zoning experience. He feels that Scott LaCroix is the strongest candidate.

Alfred Hanson questioned if the stipend is enough for Scott LaCroix. He stated that he appreciates that Steve Reale is a Warner resident and he is well qualified.

Mike Smith stated that he is leaning towards Steve Reale as his top pick. He spoke about the need for a compliance officer. He explained that he likes the experience of Anthony Mento but he does not want the compliance aspect of the job. Mike Smith explained that Anthony has a full time job in Concord and may not be readily available. He stated that Nate Burrington is local and could adjust his time. Mike Smith questioned if Nate Burrington is interested in the compliance aspect of the job.

Alfred Hanson feels that it is very important that the candidate be available when an inspection is needed. Mike Smith stated that he is deciding between Scott and Nate for the assistant. He stated that he is leaning towards Scott because of his compliance experience.

Mike Smith made a motion seconded by Alfred Hanson to hire Steve Reale as the Building Inspector and Compliance Officer. Roll Call Vote Hanson YES Seidel Yes Smith YES

Discussion on the motion: Harry Seidel stated that if this passes and the assistant is Scott LaCroix, Steve Reale will have an assistant who has more experience and knowledge. Mike Smith stated that Steve Reale was not asked to provide a resume. Harry Seidel explained that he had a conversation with Steve Reale today. He appreciates all the ways Steve Reale has stepped up to help the Town. Mike Smith echoed Alfred's comment about availability of the candidate. Mike Smith explained that Steve Reale is retired and would be available. Harry Seidel explained that Anthony Mento does have flexibility to be available. He would support Steve Reale and Anthony Mento.

Alfred Hanson suggested setting the rate of pay for Steve Reale before moving on the assistant position. Harry Seidel and Mike Smith both disagreed, stating that Steve Reale is aware of the amount of the stipend. Mike Smith explained that he is leaning towards Scott LaCroix as the assistant because of the compliance aspect of the job. He feels that the experience of Steve Reale and Scott LaCroix will complement each other. Harry Seidel explained that he is in favor of Anthony Mento as the assistant because of his experience with planning/zoning and his knowledge of the various codes. Mike Smith noted that Anthony Mento does not want to deal with the compliance aspect. Harry Seidel explained that Steve Reale would handle the compliance aspect as was stipulated in the motion. Harry Seidel spoke about Anthony Mento's commitment to the Town by volunteering countless hours. He stated that he is not doing it for the money. Alfred Hanson explained that there is the possibility in the future that the assistant would become the building inspector so he feels the qualifications should be very similar.

Mike Smith made a motion seconded by Alfred Hanson to hire Scott LaCroix as the Assistant Building Inspector and if he declines the offer it would be extended to Anthony Mentos. Roll Call Vote Hanson YES Seidel YES Smith YES

Discussion on the motion: Harry Seidel explained that he is leaning toward Anthony Mento because he has very similar qualifications as Scott LaCroix. He stated that Anthony Mento is not in this for the money, rather he is a Warner resident who loves the Town and wants to make a difference. Alfred Hanon stated that Scott LaCroix is interested in the compliance aspect and Anthony Mento is not. Mike Smith stated that the combined knowledge and experience of Steve Reale and Scott LaCroix is what Warner needs to reduce the issues that the Town has experienced in the past relating to building.

2. Auditor Selection

Harry Seidel stated that a resolution on this crisis is essential. He explained that the Select Board is considering two auditing firms. Harry Seidel reviewed the Town's purchasing policy; Section A: nothing within this policy shall be interpreted in a manner that prevents the Select Board from purchasing products and services for the Town of Warner according to the manner, policy or procedure that in their judgement at the time that they authorize a purchase is in the best interest of the town. Harry Seidel explained that he would like the Select Board to consider selecting an auditor. Alfred Hanson agrees and he would like to see a motion made to do that.

Mike Smith asked if the Select Board received and read the letter from James Sherman. Harry Seidel explained that he did read the letter and felt it was over the top and not necessarily that helpful. He stated that the point of view in the letter is not one that he subscribes to. Harry Seidel explained that the town does not

1 have the time to engage in a lengthy process as Mr. Sherman supports. He stated that the town's tax rate
2 deadline is fast approaching. Harry Seidel feels that it is vital that the Board make a decision.
3

4 Alfred Hanson stated that he did read the letter and his opinion is similar to that of Harry Seidel. He stated
5 that his first priority is what is best for the town. He explained that the Select Board are elected officials who
6 have an opportunity to make this happen for the town. Harry Seidel acknowledged that there is room for
7 improvement. He stated that the auditing will become less expensive. Alfred Hanson agrees that change is
8 necessary but the immediate situation requires the Select Board to make a decision.
9

10 Mike Smith explained that the Audit Search Committee (ASC) was formed and two firms have expressed
11 interest. He asked if the RFP was sent to anyone else. He stated that others have expressed interest. Alfred
12 Hanson stated that he has not seen any other letters of interest. Harry Seidel explained that according to
13 Robert Blake there are very few auditing firms that the Town can choose from. Harry Seidel stated that the
14 Town received two proposals that are very similar and given the crisis the town is in he is recommending that
15 the Select Board use Section A of the purchasing policy. Mike Smith stated that he does not see this as huge
16 crisis, he views it as a problem that the town is dealing with. He would appreciate a third bid. Mike Smith
17 stated that last year the Select Board agreed to change the auditing firm and now they are considering go
18 back to the previous firm. He stated that at the last Select Board meeting it was clear that those in attendance
19 did not want the Select Board to rush into something. Harry Seidel stated that if the Town does not make a
20 decision soon they will lose the opportunity. Mike Smith acknowledged that one of the proposals did commit
21 to starting on September 1st. Harry Seidel stated that he is asking to use section A of the purchasing policy to
22 allow the Select Board to make a decision. Alfred Hanson urged Harry Seidel to make a motion.
23

24 **Harry Seidel made a motion seconded by Alfred Hanson to use Section A of the Purchasing Policy that**
25 **is established to allow the Select Board to make a decision based on their judgement authorizing the**
26 **purchase of a service for an auditor given the two bids that have been received to date because it is in**
27 **the best interest of the Town. ROLL CALL VOTE Hanson YES Seidel YES Smith NO**
28

29 *Discussion on the motion:* Mike Smith reiterated that he feels they are rushing into this.
30

31 Harry Seidel asked Elizabeth Labbe (member of the ASC) to review the firms that the committee contacted.
32 She distributed the contact list of auditors that she reached out to. She recapped her conversation with
33 Bonnie Bachelder who indicated that if the Town's books allowed she would work within the timeframe.
34 Harry Seidel asked if it is true that she has not done a NH audit in 3 years, she has limited NH experience.
35 Elizabeth Labbe stated that is what is reflected on her resume.
36

37 Harry Seidel and Elizabeth Labbe recapped the basic cost proposal from Bonnie Bachelder; \$25,000 for lead
38 auditor \$12,500 for additional staff. \$37,500. If additional time is needed it will be billed hourly.
39

40 Elizabeth Labbe explained that she spoke to Tammy Webb from Vachon Clukay. She informed the Select
41 Board that Vachon Clukay has committed to prioritizing the MS 535 and Tammy has free time next week to
42 come to Warner. Elizabeth Labbe advised the Select Board that Tammy from Vachon Clukay has indicated
43 that they will bill at cost, \$34,860, but if the town's books are sloppy it will cost more. Alfred Hanson
44 questioned the hourly rate, Elizabeth Labbe estimated \$250/hr. Harry Seidel stated that the Vachon Clukay
45 letter mentions that the Town of Warner does have a few areas that improvement is needed. He suggested the
46 Select Board consider allotting money in the budget for training of the Finance Director to improve practices
47 and internal controls. Elizabeth Labbe stressed that Tammy Webb's priority is the MS 535 to ensure the tax
48 rate can be set in a timely manner.
49

50 Harry Seidel stated that the firm Vachon Clukay has audited Warner for 15 years, but the auditor Tammy
51 Webb who is a senior manager has not audited Warner. He reiterated that Tammy Webb has committed to

starting in Warner right away and she will prioritize the MS535. He stated that the range in cost between the two firms is similar in terms of cost.

Harry Seidel made a motion seconded by Alfred Hanson to engage Vachon Clukay to be the auditor for the year 2024 for the Town of Warner. Roll Call Vote Hanson YES Seidel YES Smith NO

Discussion on the motion: Mike Smith stated that he thinks this one of the largest mistakes this town has made.

3. Right to Know Review

Harry Seidel recapped the outstanding Right to Know (RTK) requests. He stated that the request from Annmarie Timmons is almost complete. He explained that he will be providing to Jody Sloane regarding the audit. He spoke about the RTK from Danielle Young that is extremely broad. He stated that legal advice will be needed to figure out how to fulfill the request, he believes the request needs to be narrowed. Mike Smith suggested compiling the information so they can have an idea of how much the request encompasses. He suggested asking the Town's IT Company to search the information requested. Alfred Hanson cautioned that the material may contain confidential information and the IT company does not have the authority to access it. The Select Board agreed that Harry Seidel will reach out to NHMA attorney Steve Buckley for guidance.

Mike Smith stated that James Gaffney has submitted a RTK. Harry Seidel explained that James Gaffney is looking for the fee analysis that Harry Seidel and Mike Smith used in adjusting the building permit fees. Mike Smith stated that he threw out his notes, Harry Seidel explained that he gave his notes to Mr. Gaffney. Harry Seidel stated that Mr. Gaffney said the information he received is not what he wanted.

Alfred Hanson requested that Harry Seidel provide a copy of the letter to Steve Buckley before it is sent. Mike Smith asked who submitted an RSA91-a request today, Judy Newman-Rogers stated Heidi Crozier submitted a request today.

4. Warner Village Water District Odor

Harry Seidel stated that there is no new news. Alfred Hanson urged additional communication with Chuck who manages the treatment plant. Mike Smith explained that he spoke to Chuck on August 13th and he will be meeting with Chuck on Wednesday August 27th at 3:30 PM.

III. Select Board Other Business

Alfred Hanson asked if the Select Board is ready to finalize the evaluation form. The Select Board agreed to vote on the evaluation form at the next meeting.

Mike Smith stated that the budget does include funding for the repainting of the Exit 8 sign. Alfred Hanson explained that the Board needs to vote to spend the money.

Mike Smith made a motion seconded by Alfred Hanson to authorize Tim Allen to remove the Exit 8 sign for repainting. Roll Call Vote Hanson YES Seidel YES Smith YES

IV. Non-Public Session (If needed, RSA 91-A:3 II (a,b,c,d,e,f,g,h,i,j,k,l,m))

None

V. Adjournment

Mike Smith made a motion seconded by Alfred Hanson to adjourn the meeting. Roll Call Vote Hanson YES Seidel YES Smith YES

The meeting adjourned at 6:30 PM

Respectfully submitted on 8/25/25 by Tracy Doherty