

## **TOWN OF TRURO**

### **SELECT BOARD WORK SESSION AND REGULAR MEETING MINUTES**

**August 11, 2020 at 5:00pm**

**Remote Meeting Via GoToMeeting**

**Members Present:** Chair-Robert Weinstein, Vice Chair-Kristen Reed, Clerk-Susan Areson, Member-Janet Worthington, Member-Stephanie Rein

**Members Absent:** None

**Others Present:** Town Manager-Rae Ann Palmer, Assistant Town Manager-Kelly Clark, Paul Wisotzky, Bernie Lynch, Sharon Flaherty, Paul Featherston, Sean O'Brien, Robert Wood

Chair Weinstein called the meeting to order at 5:00pm. He stated the purpose of the work session was to prepare questions for the Town Manager candidates. Search Consultant Bernie Lynch of Community Paradigm Associates also provided the Board with questions specific to each of the three candidates. Chair Weinstein asked each Select Board member to think about which questions they would most like to ask. He also would like to discuss the possibility of holding public comment at the end of the interviews as he thinks it would be disruptive to conduct public commentary during the interviews.

The Board Members each volunteered to ask specific questions. They also determined that they would ask the questions specific to each of the candidates as follow ups to the relevant assigned questions.

Mr. Lynch suggested saving public comment for the end. Member Areson agreed that having public comment at the end was best.

#### **Town Manager Candidate Interviews**

Chair Weinstein called the remote meeting of the Select Board to order at 5:30pm. He stated the meeting was being held remotely and gave instructions to view the meeting or send comment during the meeting via email. He informed the public that there would be a designated time at the end of the meeting where he would provide the call-in information for the public comment period.

Chair Weinstein welcomed the first candidate, Mr. Paul Featherston, to the meeting and asked him to introduce himself.

Mr. Featherston stated he has been in the local government sector for twenty-seven years. He's worked in Connecticut and grew up in New England, except for the last twelve years. He has been an Assistant and a Deputy City Manager for communities of about 100,000 over the last couple of years and has served as an Assistant County Administrator for a community over 700,000 outside of Chicago. He stated that the position of Town Manager is a great opportunity for him to return to New England, where his family and friends live. It would be a great opportunity to continue the work of Town Manager Palmer.

Chair Weinstein explained that the Board had ten questions. Each of the Board members chose a couple questions to ask, and they would do so in numerical order.

Member Worthington asked question one, which was "Based on your research about Truro, what would you define as the top three issues facing the town right now?"

Mr. Featherston stated that one of the top issues is Covid. It is challenging every community across the country. He spoke of the impacts of Covid on a summer destination community like Truro and on balancing safety with the economic impacts. Another issue Truro is facing is housing. Housing prices create a dichotomy of the people that can afford to live here part-time, but also the ones that want to live here full-time. The third issue Mr. Featherstone believes is related to the second issue is; what does the Town want to be twenty years from now and how do you get there?

Member Areson asked for Mr. Featherston to elaborate on how he would go about approaching these three issues. He responded that the Town should focus on visioning and aligning projects with the plans for the community. He noted that he would like to pursue combining resources and create incentives for people to provide the housing the Town is looking for. To approach Covid, Mr. Featherston would like to sit down and really understand how it's impacted Truro. He'd have conversations with emergency management and try to connect with other communities to maximize resources.

Member Worthington asked, in trying to do a twenty-year plan for the community, how would Mr. Featherston go about getting input and who would he get input from? Mr. Featherston stated that it would be a twenty-year vision that the Select Board has, and that would be part of a retreat process. The Select Board would bring its feedback from the community. They would use any resources out there, including the comprehensive plan. They would then have a facilitated conversation about what they, as a Board, have for that vision. The Board would identify their priorities over the next three to five years, and then staff would work to develop action plans for that, with specific timelines. It is built upon what the Select Board brings to the table based on conversations with constituents.

Member Rein asked question 2, "In your first thirty days on the job, how will you prioritize and allocate your time?" Mr. Featherston would prioritize working on the transition with Town Manager Palmer and connect with Assistant Town Manager Clark and the rest of the Department Heads to learn what they are working on. He'd like to meet one-on-one with the Select Board in order to start building relationships. He would like to do the same with Department Heads. Mr. Featherston wants to minimize, as much as possible, some of the things that can fall through the cracks and make sure he establishes communication lines. He would like to start planning an assimilation process where there's good conversation between departments and himself about expectations, needs, desires, worries, fears, etc. The same process would go for the Select Board and the community.

Member Rein continued by asking; "Besides the Town staff and the Select Board, who else would you be reaching out to as a way of learning about our community?" Mr. Featherston stated that in every community there are formal and informal key figures. He'd work with some of the Boards, Commissions, and Department Heads to identify the formal key figures early on. Then he'd try to get to know some of the informal key figures, because some of the informal influencers are just as important, if not more important, to start building relationships and lines of communication. He would ask Boards and Committees, the Select Board and Staff, to identify who the stakeholders are.

Member Reed asked the third question, "What do you see as the most pressing issues related to the environment, as well as climate change, facing the Town of Truro and the Outer Cape?" From a climate environment perspective, Mr. Featherston thinks erosion, water quality, and water treatment are very important, especially because most citizens are on wells. He noted a resiliency study completed by the City of Cambridge to look more than twenty years forward about the issues they are facing and what the climate's going to do. He thinks Truro would be one of the communities most impacted by the environment because of our close relationship and partnership with it.

Member Reed followed up with, "What experience will you bring, and what will you need to learn about, related to climate change?" Mr. Featherston responded that each community has different values and different impacts when it comes to environmental and climate issues. He said he would try to learn the specifics, and the data supporting it.

Chair Weinstein asked the fourth question, "In June 20, 2021 all three collective bargaining agreements will expire. How will you approach the contract renewal process?" Mr. Featherston articulated that he would start building some relationships with the unions within the first thirty days of his starting his position. He would read over the contracts and make sure he understood any of the issues. He'd assess what type of opportunities there are for the Town, and he'd watch the economy for what the Town can afford and what is a fair wage for the Town employees. He would like to see if there were any opportunities to do intraspace, where you focus on the interests. If you have common interests, then you can focus on different options to address those issues. He's not a huge fan of extensions, but depending on the economy, and the issues, there may be some type of discussion to be had about whether this is a year to not change much and extend the contract or otherwise. Mr. Featherston would also try to see if there's a way to stagger the expiration terms of those contracts so that all three don't come up at once.

Chair Weinstein asked the second portion of the question. "what experience do you have working with labor unions?" Mr. Featherston replied that in Connecticut, he served as the Director of Human Resources where he was responsible for the negotiation of the contracts. In another community he served as the Personnel Director where he had to process all grievances and most of the disciplinary actions (including, in one community, the Board of Education, non-certified teachers). In his twelve years as a Deputy he has always supported human resources, so he's either been the chief negotiating representative for a community, or he's served on a team.

Member Worthington asked the fifth question: "The ongoing Covid-19 pandemic has profoundly affected the way municipal government functions. How will you manage Truro's ongoing response, including the implications it has related to municipal services, revenue, tourism, and public health."

Mr. Featherston replied that he would work to identify the data to see how operations are running. How much of the operations are remote, and how much are in person? He would look at the access points to the public to make sure they are safe as possible for the public and employees. He feels it would be important to create a plan. He would also like to look at service levels and make sure we're capable of providing them. There is no reason a community should continue to pay for services we aren't able to provide. He'd work closely with emergency management and neighboring communities to identify what is the best plan to keep the Cape viable as a destination, but safe for residents and visitors.

Member Areson asked, "Can you talk to us about your management and communication skills, and what your approach is in working with direct reports balancing the need to train, develop, and support, while at the same time, setting performance standards and requiring accountability?"

Mr. Featherston stated that the most important asset the Town has is its employees, because they are the ones that produce and provide the outcomes and the services in programs. He thinks it's important to invest time and effort into making sure the organization is an employer of choice. Not necessarily the top payer, but the best environment for people to work. He is a big planner; he likes to be clear about plans. He is a believer in the visioning process. As a manager, he thinks training, development, and support of direct reports is critical.

Member Reed asked the seventh question: "As you know, Truro has an affordable and attainable housing crisis. What is your experience with addressing a housing crisis and working to develop community consensus around projects and solutions?"

Mr. Featherston replied that he has worked in several communities that have a similar crisis. In Boulder, part of his suite of services was a Housing and Human Services Department. One of the things he dealt with, both on the planning and housing side, was the affordability. He's also worked in communities where they look at ADU's. He stated that ADU's are not the only solution. There is no one way to fix affordable housing. You need a toolbox of multiple resources. Another approach he was involved in was looking at, and acquiring, property. A town he worked with did an analysis of occupied/unoccupied vacant land to see if they re-used it, or combined their services, would that create some viable workforce housing. As for community engagement, Mr. Featherston believes that having a planning process, as opposed to specific projects, gets people more engaged in the concept and the value. He thinks it's important for staff to create an engagement and communication process that maximizes people's information and their ability to provide input, so they feel as though they are being heard.

Chair Weinstein followed with, "What will your approach be to working with the Select Board? In your experience, what are some best practices you have related to supporting and working with the appointing and policy setting body?"

Mr. Featherston's approach would be first, to build a relationship individually and collectively as a group. He is a big believer in retreats. He feels that a significant retreat of elected officials, every two years, and then a check in the interim years, is important. It produces great relationship building, and some great planning visioning and goals. From a communication perspective, he believes it's important to make sure the board (as a whole) receives the same information. Town Manager reports are important. He also thinks it's important to create a work plan for the Board to help them understand when priorities and goals are coming before them, and to modify and change when necessary.

Member Areson had a follow up question. "This is somewhat related to the Select Board. While answering these questions, you've talked a lot about planning, envisioning, and three years out and a twenty-year plan, etc. You have had some jobs where you've stayed for a shorter, or longer, period. Do you have a sense of how, specifically, how long you might remain in place in Truro to follow through with this planning and visioning you've been talking about?"

Mr. Featherston replied that it's hard for anybody to say. His plan is always to go someplace and stay as long as he can. He thinks that's one of the most challenging things about being a manager. You just never know when the rug is going to be pulled out from under you. It's always his intention to stay as long as he can.

Member Areson then requested, "Tell us about your financial management skills and what your experience is creating budgets for municipalities with an eye toward meeting service needs, while, at the same time, managing tax burden and budget growth."

Mr. Featherston explained that except for two or three years, finances have been in his suite of services. As a manager, you're responsible for the bottom line and making recommended budgets and overseeing the implementation of that budget. His financial management skills are focused on data and driven by the data. He's worked hard to develop data trends, both in the revenue and expenditure side. He also likes to watch the monthly budget reports and have conversations with the finance staff and report back

to the Select Board on a regular basis. From a budget making perspective, Mr. Featherston stated he's been involved in the budget making process (either as a manager or deputy assistant) his entire career. He continued by saying that performance measurement in government is incredibly hard. It's doable, but it takes a lot of time, effort and dedication. There are so many other things that departments, directors and staff need to do during the day that it just makes it harder.

Chair Weinstein wanted to drill down a bit on a question related to collective bargaining. "Thinking about Truro specifically, how would you determine our revenue estimates, for instance, or look to controlling fixed costs, and consequently a way that you would approach allocating resources for future expenditures, while at the same time, complying with the financial policies set forth in the goals and objectives of the Select Board?" Mr. Featherston stated that it's important to look at trends in Truro and across the Cape. As for allocation, he feels it's important to identify what the fixed costs are. He suggests identifying the items the Town has to purchase and then making sure the Town takes advantage of every type of purchasing option.

Member Rein posed the question, "Municipal Government provides services. What is your approach to customer service?"

Mr. Featherston's approach to customer service is to continually look at and evaluate and provide feedback loops. Customer service is not just externally facing, it's internally facing as well. He feels that training is important. We get so accustomed to the way we provide the service that we don't look at ways to enhance or change it. A lot of customer service has to do with information. People just want information. How do you make sure your website maximizes the access to the information that they want? He added that it's important to allow people to engage in conversations about how they experience the customer service, in ways that it either met or exceeded, or didn't meet their expectations. Mr. Featherston thinks community surveys (every three years) allow you to get a statistically valid insight into how the community's receiving your service.

Member Rein stated that Mr. Featherston pretty much answered the second portion of the question, which is; "What are some best practices that you have, that you will bring to Truro?" Mr. Featherston responded, stating that one of the most successful things he's seen customer service wise, is doing peer training on a regular basis. He's put together customer service teams where there have been secret shoppers where they would provide feedback in a constructive way.

The next applicant was Mr. Sean O'Brien. Chair Weinstein welcomed him to the meeting. He asked Mr. O'Brien to introduce himself.

Mr. O'Brien stated that he currently serves as the Director of the Barnstable County Department of Health and Environment. He has been with Barnstable County for thirty-three years. He lives on Cape Cod. He stated that this position would be a next step for himself and his growth as a manager. For the last three years he has been running a rather large department, and over the last six months has been managing a response to a public health outbreak. He feels his experiences, whether they be environmental, management, or budget, would all benefit and help the Town of Truro.

Member Worthington asked: "Based on your research about Truro, what would you define as the top three issues facing the town right now?" She also asked for Mr. O'Brien to elaborate on how he would approach each of the issues.

In his research of the Town, Mr. O'Brien believes the number one issue is affordable housing. Truro has a very low percentage, around two percent, of affordable housing within the community and he knows

the State level is around ten percent. He thinks the Town has done a great job with the Cloverleaf development and looking at the Walsh property as well. He would also look into ways of trying to develop specific housing for first responders, etc. He had begun working with the folks over at the Housing Assistance Program to find ways to expand housing availability to professional people who work within his communities. The next thing he would look at would be economic development, expanding town centers, expanding areas that may be able to host business. When looking at economic development, you must consider working from home (especially with Covid). When looking at expanding those areas you have to look at broadband initiatives. Thirdly, he believes there are some issues with EMS right now and concerns as to whether the Town may have an ambulance service or not. Mr. O'Brien's experience would be to bring people to the table to discuss what may work and what may not, for example a private public partnership or expansion of EMS.

Member Reed had a follow up question. "The second part of the question has to do with elaborating on your approach. You gave some examples: first responder housing, broadband, regionalization. Did you want to build upon any of those?" Mr. O'Brien finds that one area he has a lot of expertise in is collaboration and getting people together at the table and discussing what the necessities are, whether it be building a project or a program. With housing, he'd try to bring people together including organizations that already exist, such as the Housing Authority and Habitat for Humanity. He suggested perhaps getting assistance from the Cape Cod Commission, or the Housing Assistance Corporation to try to find grants.

Member Rein asked, "In your first thirty days on the job, how will you prioritize and allocate your time?" The second portion of the question is; "Besides Town Staff and Select Board, who will you be reaching out to as a way of learning about our community?"

Within those thirty days, Mr. O'Brien would like to sit down with the Board and develop a plan, and also see what the Board feels are priorities. He would also like to meet with the staff and the people already working in Town. In addition to meeting with the Select Board, he would like to meet with other Boards in the community so that people know who he is. Those first thirty days he would also want to meet the citizen organizations. He really would like to meet the Climate Action Committee, because if there's one thing that links all the Towns and Barnstable County, it's environmental issues, groundwater preservation issues, as well as wastewater issues. Another group he'd want to meet immediately would be the Walsh Property Committee because that's going to be an important part of Truro's future.

Member Areson wanted to know how he would accomplish meeting with a lot of people during Covid. Mr. O'Brien stated it would be a lot of wearing masks and electronic meetings. He also had an idea of holding a Friday morning, standing electronic meeting, where citizens could come in and ask the Town Manager questions.

Member Reed asked, "What do you see as the most pressing issues related to the environment, as well as climate change, facing the Town of Truro and the Outer Cape?"

Mr. O'Brien stated that the lack of a public water source, or limited access to a public water supply would definitely be an issue. We can get drinking water from other areas, but we have to preserve the resource that we have. In order to do that, we need to look at wastewater. He added that looking at no salt use on the roads because that has the potential to increase sodium levels. That has to be weighed with public safety as well. Mr. O'Brien continued, stating that for the emergency management and climate change end of things, a lot has to do with culverts and the changes we're seeing in stormwater.

Member Reed asked the second portion of her question. "What will you need to learn more about?" Mr. O'Brien stated he'd need to learn more about pre-disaster mitigation requirements, and the grants that go along with it, the certification, etc.

Chair Weinstein asked, "In June 20, 2021 all three collective bargaining agreements will expire. How will you approach the contract renewal process and what experience do you have working with labor unions?"

Mr. O'Brien stated that in Barnstable County they only have two labor unions, so his experience with them is pretty much nil. It is not something he's had to deal with in his career as his department is a non-union shop. He would look at it as a challenge. He has started reading over the Green Book, which is a document developed regarding collective bargaining. He added that he does work with a lot of fire chiefs and police chiefs and they have offered some assistance when it comes to collective bargaining. He's willing to take any courses that may be involved, and also willing to sit down with Labor Counsel as well.

Member Worthington posed, "The ongoing Covid-19 pandemic has profoundly affected the way municipal government functions. How will you manage Truro's ongoing response, including the implications it has related to municipal services, revenue, tourism, and public health."

Right off the bat, Mr. O'Brien would review policies and procedures that are already established. He would look at people working from home and see how to maintain services. He'd want to make sure the Town has the right personal protective equipment for when staff is in. Another section to look at is EMS and making sure we have the supplies that we need for EMS to be able to respond to emergencies. Another important thing to look at would be to evaluate the fees coming into the Town and then discussing whether certain areas need to be cut back. Mr. O'Brien feels that until a vaccine is produced, social distancing and staggering of work shifts must be continued.

Member Areson. "Can you talk to us about your management and communication skills?"

Mr. O'Brien sees himself as an innovator. He tries to look at different ways of doing things that may be more efficient. He is a strategic planner he always looks ahead. He stated he is very much a team manager. Any successes he's had with Barnstable County have always been with a team. He states it's very important to him to make sure that there is a team atmosphere when it comes to Department Heads and the employees in Town. He added that the citizens are part of the team as well.

Member Areson asked the second portion of her question. "What is your approach to working with direct reports, balancing the need to train, develop, and support them while at the same time setting performance standards and requiring accountability?" Mr. O'Brien stated that he does that at his department. He does annual evaluations on sixty percent of his staff. He has a very good working relationship with his division heads, primarily because they are treated as a team. Mr. O'Brien uses evaluations as a coaching opportunity as well so they can succeed in their positions. He has hired and fired employees. He would hold staff meetings within departments, but also staff meetings with Department Heads. He likes to visit different departments and buildings to check in and see how everyone is doing.

Member Reed posed, "As you know, Truro has an affordable and attainable housing crisis. What is your experience with addressing a housing crisis and working to develop community consensus around projects and solutions?"

Mr. O'Brien admits he has not had much direct experience in dealing with a housing crisis, except for his years working in Provincetown. In that position, he worked with developers for affordable housing. What he does have is experience dealing with agencies like the Housing Assistance Corporation. He has the ability to bring collaboration to groups and bring people together to discuss different projects and priorities. He acknowledged there would be a learning curve when it comes to developing housing programs but feels he could adjust. Mr. O'Brien added that there is much that deals with collaboration and he wouldn't shy away from things he doesn't have much experience with.

Chair Weinstein asked, "What will your approach be to working with the Select Board? In your experience, what are some best practices you have related to supporting and working with the appointing and policy setting body?"

Mr. O'Brien has a lot of experience working with different Boards of County Commissioners, Boards of Health, and also with the Committee he runs; the Regional Emergency Planning Committee. He stated the first thing he'd like to do is sit down and outline expectations that the Select Board would have of him in regard to communication. He wants to be sure he's communicating the way they need him to. He feels that keeping the Select Board in the loop with issues going on within the town via email is very important. There may be times where a phone call is necessary.

Member Reed asked a follow-up question. "The Truro Town Charter envisions a separation between policymaking and management which is the basic tenet of public administration. How will you act to ensure that these lines are maintained?" Mr. O'Brien stated that if there is something that the Board has asked him to do, and he cannot do it (in the Charge as Town Manager) then he would respectfully say he cannot do it. He feels it's one of those situations where it's important to make sure that those divisions are happening between administrative and executive.

Member Areson followed with, "Tell us about your financial management skills and what your experience is creating budgets for municipalities with an eye toward meeting service needs, while, at the same time, managing tax burden and budget growth."

Mr. O'Brien states he's had a lot of experience in budgets. He's worked on a division budget for over ten years and has worked on a department budget for approximately five years. The budget at the County, for the Health Department, is about four million dollars. He constantly goes through an evaluation process. They start in October, where he'll meet with the staff to determine needs for the annual operating budget. He will also look to see what is needed in terms of capital. Mr. O'Brien added that he has experience looking at, and developing, salaries. In addition, he has oversight over a forty-five-million-dollar septic loan program. A part of that fund offsets a portion of the county budget because they use the administration fees to manage the staffing that goes along with it. He's also had experience in managing a twenty-five-million-dollar grant.

Member Areson followed up on her question by asking; "How would you approach getting to know the ins and the outs of municipal budgeting?" Mr. O'Brien stated he'd need to learn about taxes and tax ceilings. He knows the Town uses MUNIS and he's familiar with it, but he would have a slight learning curve, and is willing to learn.



Member Reed wished to do a follow up question as well. "Can you speak on the subject of municipal budgets, determining revenue estimates, allocating resources for expenditures and complying with financial policies?". Mr. O'Brien stated he was very familiar with financial policies. He could sit down and review the policies that the town and the state have. As for revenue estimates, he thinks a lot of that would be reviewing what was had over the years past and also taking into consideration issues like Covid. When it comes to allocating resources, he would review previous budgets and previous allocations in harmony with the employees working in town that have gone through it.

Member Rein inquired, "Municipal Government provides services. What is your approach to customer service? What are some best practices that you have that you will bring to Truro?"

Mr. O'Brien stated that as much as he can during Covid, he'd like to keep an open- door policy, especially with the citizens here in Barnstable County. He is always returning phone calls. He would want to make sure that there are ways for people to be able to reach out and speak to him as a Town Manager. He'd like to establish office hours, but also hold seminars, or opportunities, where people can sit down and talk about issues in town. He also mentioned that he wants to make the taxpayer happy, as they are who pay his salary. Mr. O'Brien stated that customer service at the county is different than the town, but the area where he saw the most customer service was in the laboratory. The desk staff at the front of the laboratory occasionally deal with irate customers. He is a firm believer of de-escalation training.

The next applicant was Robert Wood. Chair Weinstein welcomed him to the meeting and asked him to introduce himself. Mr. Wood stated he's been in local government in Texas for just over twenty-one years. At this point in his life, he is an empty nester, so he has some flexibility in where he works. He wants to stay in local government management. The East Coast was a general area he wanted to look at. He finds Truro interesting because there are a lot of big issues and projects happening. He thinks it would be an exciting time to be in Truro and be a part of identifying what Truro's vision is, whether that's in areas of affordable housing, what type of businesses will be in Truro, or how to protect the environment.

Member Worthington began, "Based on your research about Truro, what would you define as the top three issues facing the town right now?" She also asked for Mr. Wood to elaborate on how he would approach each of the issues.

Mr. Wood stated that housing seems to be a huge issue in Truro. When you have a situation where the average or the median income in the area is fifteen percent lower than the statewide average, but housing costs are thirty percent over the statewide average, that causes a problem. He asked the question, "What do you do about housing without negatively impacting the environment and the beauty of the area?" He thinks the way to address it is to try to balance two issues, the environmental issue and the housing issue. Clearly, you will have an impact on the environment when you build anything. You need to weigh the pros and cons and try to find a mix that people can live with. He feels that the environment and the housing are two of the top issues which seem to be competing in some ways. Another one of the issues Mr. Wood keeps running across is how to balance the needs of the permanent residents vs those who live here part time. He recalls hearing that there was an organization that had been formed, perhaps informally, to try to have those two groups start talking to one another, rather than shouting. Mr. Wood feels there are a lot of ways that the Town can help that discussion take place.

Member Rein inquired, "In your first thirty days on the job, how will you prioritize and allocate your time?"

Mr. Wood believes there are a couple of categories in which things need to be done. He'd want to get to know the Department Heads very quickly. His plan would be to have someone who's at Town Hall set up something so he could meet them on the first day. Department Heads can get him up to speed on issues that are going on in town and especially any urgent matters that need attention quickly. Meeting with Town Manager Palmer would be a high priority item. He would also want to get to know each of the Select Board members to understand their priorities and important issues. Mr. Wood would meet in a formal setting with the Select Board to talk about priorities and projects, to learn what projects the Board wants him, as a Town Manager, to prioritize and what are issues and roadblocks for certain projects. As a second phase, he'd want to meet community leaders and members of the public, whether that's at the county level, in other towns, or members of the public.

Member Rein stated that he touched upon the second portion of her question, but she'd ask it in case he wished to elaborate. "Besides the Town staff and the Select Board, who will you be reaching out to as a way of learning about our community?". Mr. Wood stated that the common theme in all the groups he mentioned wanting to meet is that there is a lot to learn. He would do a lot of listening and a little bit of talking, mainly to ask questions to learn more about the community issues and proprieties.

Member Reed then asked, "What do you see as the most pressing issues related to the environment, as well as climate change, facing the town of Truro and the Outer Cape?"

Mr. Wood stated that being in Central Texas, he doesn't have a lot of experience with the coast, because there is no coast in the Central Texas area. Based on what he's read, restoring some of the saltwater marshlands is a high priority. He added that there is also the erosion of the shoreline, which looks like it's being addressed in a number of ways. Mr. Wood continued, stating that glacial melting is causing the sea levels to rise, and in a town like Truro which has seashore on both sides, that will be a big impact. He added that sea level rise will impact things like the river restoration project. If we open areas that are currently dammed or affected by a dike, what does that do to the floodplain? What does that do to those living along those areas? He mentioned other environmental issues he'd discussed with Department Heads was about having to improve many of the culverts that were installed years ago without true engineering studies. Even if they were done with engineering studies, conditions have changed. Climate change, different weather patterns, and sea levels will impact that.

Chair Weinstein questioned, "In June 20, 2021 all three collective bargaining agreements will expire. How will you approach the contract renewal process and what experience do you have working with labor unions?"

Mr. Wood said that Texas is not known for being a union state. Unions are not as prevalent as they are in other parts of the country. He does have a lot of experience in negotiating contracts, but not specifically labor contracts. In his last city, they did an informal bargaining, or informal discussions with the police officers as a group, but it was not something which was mandated. He stated he would rely on Town staff that have done that sort of work in the past. He would also work with the town's attorney that works on labor type issues and contract issues. Mr. Wood added that he's really good about talking to other Town Managers from other communities to get their advice and learn from their experience.

Chair Weinstein asked if he could elaborate on some specific experiences that would enable or help him going forward to the collective bargaining agreements for Truro. Mr. Wood stated that one specific issue he worked on was the city's retirement plan. The city was part of the Texas Municipal Retirement System and employees wanted to improve or increase the city's contribution to the system. He carried that message to the City Council for discussion. The Council was happy to increase the city's contribution but did not feel that all the responsibility should be on the city. They suggested that part of the increase come from the employees. Mr. Wood brought that suggestion back to the employees. Some employees liked the idea and other employees did not. They went back and forth and got the issue worked out.

Member Worthington asked, "The ongoing Covid-19 pandemic has profoundly affected the way municipal government functions. How will you manage Truro's ongoing response, including the implications it has related to municipal services, revenue, tourism, and public health?"

Mr. Wood thinks Truro and other municipalities are very lucky to be in Massachusetts and not Texas, where they have had a terrible response at the State level. He continued, saying that not only has the State government not done things well, they actually took away a lot of authority that cities and counties had to regulate and deal with the virus situation. The State took away the ability for cities and counties to require masks and to do stay at home orders and other emergency orders. He feels that in Massachusetts, the State government has been more vigilant and thoughtful about their approach. Mr. Wood asked the question, "How do you keep the town staff healthy?" There are essential services provided by the Town that no one else can provide. They need to be kept healthy and steps need to be taken to protect them both on the job, and also encourage them to do things when they're not at work. Encouraging employees not to do things that would put them at greater risk because you can easily have a situation where a lot of the town staff could get sick and it would be difficult to provide important services to the community. Looking out for the health of staff and the community is huge. He touched upon air filtration systems in community buildings, installing equipment and using technology. People working from home was another item Mr. Wood discussed. He said that people have figured out a way. They don't necessarily need to live in New York or a huge urban area to work. They can live by the beach and work from home. That could have a huge impact on towns.

Member Areson asked a follow up question. "You touched upon Municipal Services and Public Health on Covid, but I'm curious about how you might approach evaluating the effect that Covid has had on our Town's revenue and the tourism industry and business industry in Truro." Mr. Wood has looked at different towns and it looks like there have been vastly different experiences with revenue all over the country. He stated he's more familiar with towns in Texas, but some have seen very significant drop offs and reductions in revenue and are in bad financial situations, whereas others had their sales tax go up significantly. One of the first things he would do would be to sit down with Town Manager Palmer, and anyone on staff that's involved with finances to look at the different revenue streams and try to see how they're being impacted and how they've been impacted already. He suggests using that information to come up with some ideas and projections for how they might be impacted in the future. All those different revenue streams are important, whether it's property tax or other taxes and fees assessed by the Town.

Member Areson continued, "Can you talk to us about your management and communication skills?"

Mr. Wood stated that he likes to communicate with people, it's one of what he thinks are the two most important parts of being a local government manager. He's not easily excitable. Remaining calm is a

very important part of communication. He added that everyone is learning lessons from Covid-19 that will help in communicating with people, whether that be through social media, email, etc.

Communication between departments is also important, because the goal is to make the community a good place to live. People need to remember that even though they might work as a police officer, or in the DPW, they might do things that are not in their regular job duties just to help make things work. The only way Mr. Wood feels that can happen is if you have Department Heads talking to each other, and working together, asking each other for help.

Member Areson asked the second portion of the question. "What is your approach to working with direct reports, balancing the need to train, develop, and support them while at the same time setting performance standards and requiring accountability?" Mr. Wood stated that it's a delicate balance, because both things are important. People should have the opportunity to learn new things and try new parts of the job they may not have done before. He feels it's important to let people grow so they can step into leadership positions as positions ahead of them are vacated. He likes to talk to direct reports about what they are trying to accomplish and what are the parameters they have to work within. Within those boundaries people can be creative and come up with solutions. At the same time, he stated there has to be accountability. Parameters can be set, and he will check in with them periodically, and he expects the direct report to check in with him any time they need to. He likes to help the person work through the issue rather than giving them an answer or telling them what to do, because they don't learn anything that way. Mr. Wood sees his job as being a support person, for all of those people, to make sure that their jobs are getting done.

Member Reed asked, "As you know, Truro has an affordable and attainable housing crisis. What is your experience with addressing a housing crisis and working to develop community consensus around projects and solutions?"

Mr. Wood stated that back in the city he worked for, there was a housing shortage. They did a number of things to try to address this. They worked with property owners that had dilapidated structures on their properties, which was also a code enforcement and a neighborhood beautification effort. They worked with code enforcement to get those structures torn down which then freed up lots where housing could be built. They also looked for individuals and non-profit groups to let them know that the lots were available. They obtained home grant money that allowed the city to build ten or twelve homes that replaced the same number of dilapidated and sub-standard structures. Mr. Wood mentioned that they worked with some non-profits who experimented with different types of housing which were a bit less expensive to construct. He does not think there's a silver bullet for housing issues, but more of a combination of programs. You need to find a solution without having too much of an impact on the environmental side, because you will lose support from the community.

Chair Weinstein followed with, "What will your approach be to working with the Select Board? In your experience, what are some best practices you have related to supporting and working with the appointing and policy setting body?"

Mr. Wood thinks there are certain things that make sense in most towns and cities, and those are some of the standard things such as the Town Manager's report that goes to the Select Board and is also made available to the public. Depending on the needs of the community and the communication styles of the Select Board perhaps periodic emails can go out. He tries to communicate, using the methods and means that make the most sense.

Member Areson asked a follow up question. "You've worked in Texas, and if you were to move to Truro it would be a form of government that's very different. How would you go about learning the role of the Select Board as an executive board and town meeting as the legislative body?" Mr. Wood agreed that it was different. Town Meeting is not even a form of government that exists in Texas. He stated he would take advantage of Town Manager Palmer to learn the specifics about Truro and how things work there, the history, and lessons learned that she's already been through. He loves to read and would find things that talk about the form of government and read minutes from past town meetings to see how those function. He stated that he's very good about taking advantage of networking opportunities.

Chair Weinstein asked, "Our Town Charter envisions a separation between policy making and management. It's a basic tenet of our public administration. How would you act to ensure that these lines are maintained?" Mr. Wood stated that they probably knew that that's also a basic tenet of professional management so that there's definite agreement and overlap between the code of ethics that he has to follow and what the Town Charter specifies. He continued, saying that there's the policy side and then there the management or taking the policy and enacting that. There is an administrative and a policy side. Clearly, the Board is in charge of the policy part, although there is a hitch in that. Typically, the Town Manager would be expected to help with the policy side, as far as providing and discussing options, and the pros and cons of different approaches. However, the decision is made by the Board. Once the Board makes that decision, his job as the Town Manager would be to go back with the staff and work to implement that policy. He thinks there is a pretty clear line, but that sometimes there are some areas that overlap. He feels the best way to deal with that is to talk about it. One thing he's seen in some cities and towns is they will have a workshop or work session where the Town Manager and the Board have this exact discussion to come up with an agreement.

Member Areson asked, "Talk to us about your financial management skills, and what is your experience creating budgets for a municipality with an eye toward meeting service needs, while at the same time managing tax burden and budget growth?"

Mr. Wood stated that he did not go into city management or local government to be a finance officer or budget officer but that's what he ended up doing. In his first two positions he did not have a finance officer or budget officer. He created spreadsheets and tracked all the spending and revenues and did projections. He added that he's comfortable in a role where he's not the one running the spreadsheet but involved in making sure that the Board's priorities and desires are reflected in the budget. Mr. Wood then laid out how he likes to start the process with the Board.

Member Rein inquired, "Municipal Government provides services. What is your approach to customer service? What are some best practices that you have that you will bring to Truro?"

Mr. Wood stated that the last job he had, in Westlake Hills, he got because they had a customer service problem. People were not being treated well when they went to City Hall. They weren't bad people working there, they were good people who had been told to do the wrong thing. Once it was explained to them what they should be doing, they didn't have any problem providing good customer service. He stated that anyone going to any town hall should expect that they are going to be treated professionally, with compassion, and with respect. That doesn't mean they will get everything that they want, but they will be treated properly. Mr. Wood thinks that providing services is what the whole point of the town organization is. If you're going to provide those services, they should be provided at a very high level.

At this point, Chair Weinstein opened up the public comment period.

Member Areson asked Town Manager Palmer if she had received any emailed questions. Town Manager Palmer stated she had not. Chair Weinstein asked Assistant Town Manager Clark if there were any call-in questions. Assistant Town Manager Clark stated that she did not have any outside callers.

**Member Areson made a motion to adjourn the meeting at 8:54pm.**

**Member Reed seconded.**

**So voted; 5-0-0, motion carries.**

Respectfully Submitted,



Noelle L. Scoullar



Town Manager Rae Ann Palmer

Under the Authority of the Truro Select Board

