

**TOWN OF TRURO**  
**SELECT BOARD SPECIAL MEETING MINUTES**  
**August 12, 2020 at 8:00am**  
**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, Paul Wisotzky, Bernie Lynch, Sharon Flaherty, Denise Seager, Christopher Clark

Chair Weinstein greeted everyone and provided instructions on viewing the meeting. He stated that there would be no public comment during their deliberations. At the end of deliberations, he would give out instructions to call with comments.

Chair Weinstein declared the meeting open at 8:00am.

He announced that Mr. Paul Featherston withdrew last night because Mr. Featherston did not believe Truro was a good fit for him. There are now two candidates to deliberate over: Robert Wood and Sean O'Brien.

Chair Weinstein reviewed Charter Section 5.1.1 requiring the affirmative vote of at least four of the five members appoint a Town Manager whose terms of employment shall be set by negotiation and employment contract.

Search Consultant Bernie Lynch of Community Paradigm Associates recommended that the Board list the positive attributes of the candidates and then ask questions of each other and discuss. Then a roll call vote, member by member, will be taken. If there are not four votes, another round of discussions can be held and then the roll call vote can be taken again.

Member Rein started the discussion. She felt that Mr. O'Brien was very knowledgeable about Cape Cod issues, emergency response, wastewater management and culvert issues. He's tied into all of Truro's environmental concerns, and he's very personable. She thinks he has what appears to be good management skills. She added that when he talks about his staff, he lights up and has a positive attitude. She continued, stating that Mr. O'Brien has never been a Town Manager before, so there would be a large learning curve regarding tax rates, budgeting and revenues. As for Mr. Wood, Member Rein felt that he had an incredible amount of knowledge, since he was a city manager, and his answers were well thought out. She pointed out that Mr. Wood also discussed his shortcomings, which she appreciated. She felt he was very attuned to Truro's housing issue, which is one of the Town's main concerns. She liked his management skills and the way he relayed how he would work with Department Heads, the Select Board, and other Boards and Committees. She appreciates his willingness to travel halfway across the country and start a new life, and his tenure at his prior positions. Member Rein would like to find a Town Manager who's willing to potentially stay for decades. She felt that Mr. Wood had the skill set, and it would be a learning curve for him to understand the minutia of Truro.

Member Areson felt that both candidates were great. She stated that Mr. O'Brien has a tremendous amount of knowledge of environmental issues (which are so critical to Truro), wastewater, water quality, culvert repair and floodplain comprehension. He knows a lot of the players in Truro and is absolutely up to date on Covid and the Cape's response to it. Member Areson added that Mr. O'Brien is personable and seems calm. Robert Wood, she stated, clearly has the skills though he has never served in this form of government before. She pointed out that he's obviously a smart person and could probably learn fairly quickly. Her only concern is that he's not been to the Cape but pointed out that he clearly had done his research on Truro and she admires that. She is impressed with both candidates and thinks either one of them can do the job.

Member Worthington was next. She thinks Mr. O'Brien obviously knows the Cape, and Truro. He knows all the players, whether they are in EMS or management. He has a lot of humility and is very open, honest, and kind. He thinks highly of all the people he has worked with for many years and he does not need to get up to speed on anything as far as Truro. She admitted that he does have a learning curve when it comes to parts of the budget, taxes, et cetera, but thinks he is a quick learner and could do that very well. Member Worthington liked how he was able to point out things he'd need help with, yet at the same time spoke so easily about Truro, knowing what's going on with the Cloverleaf and what may be going on at the Walsh property. She felt he was strong on housing, economic development, and very knowledgeable as far as EMS goes and what might be coming down the road for Truro with Fire/Rescue. Member Worthington pointed out that Mr. O'Brien is extremely well versed in Covid issues, and she thinks that's very important going forward. She stated that she liked Mr. Wood a lot and feels he could do the job, but has some deficits. She pointed out that he is from Texas and does not know Truro at all. She is not sure how that would play out. Member Worthington said that she thinks he'd work well with any group of people and he obviously has a feeling for the housing issue and is aware of the culvert issues.

Member Reed thought Mr. O'Brien was a strong interviewee. She liked his innovation when he talked about addressing key issues. She added that when he talks about staff, he lights up, and he has good relationships with Truro's staff already. He has strong regional knowledge, he's very personable, and is very knowledgeable about our environment, public safety and emergency preparedness. She felt Mr. Wood showed her that he embodies the highest standards of integrity and respect and has the experience and professionalism to lead staff and operations while also being fiscally proficient. She feels he'd bring a lot of accountability and transparency to the process, and he has over two decades of local government management. Although he's from Texas, he talked about housing, the Herring River, and erosion. Member Reed thinks he understands the role of the Select Board and sees a separation between policy and management, which she thinks is important. She feels he'd be a strong choice for Truro and believes he'd do everything possible to build trust, unify the team and learn to be successful in areas where he would require growth.

Chair Weinstein felt that Mr. O'Brien's accessible and open personality was apparent in his willingness to hit the ground running in the first thirty days by talking with people (albeit having to be in this electronic format, which keeps people, unfortunately at arms-length). He brings three decades or more of experience working in our county government, which puts him in close contact with all of the important players in the community, other select boards, administrative individuals, the county staff and the Cape Cod Commission. Chair Weinstein felt Mr. O'Brien has a really strong understanding of EMS services and has a wealth of knowledge in the public health arena. He also exudes friendliness. His smile shows a lot about who he is as a person, as does his willingness to work with staff members and other people that he would subsequently be in contact with. Chair Weinstein then noted that Mr.

Wood's professionalism deserved high marks. He has longevity in his employment history, which is important to Chair Weinstein. His responses to questions about what the top issues are facing the Town were spot on. Mr. Wood brings years of managerial experience and he understands the role and the ethical responsibilities of management. He found Mr. Wood to be open and personable, with a large dose of humility and kindness. Chair Weinstein also feels that Mr. Wood sounds as though he has a serious commitment to the democratic process and will engage both staff and community members. If Mr. Wood were to be selected, the Town would be in good hands, but Chair Weinstein feels both candidates bring strengths, and they both have some holes in experience which makes the Select Board's choice a hard one.

Chair Weinstein requested that his colleagues state their first choice candidate.

Member Rein stated that she is leaning toward Mr. Wood due to his experience in government and working with tax revenue and budgets. Mr. O'Brien does not have that knowledge.

Member Areson stated her first choice at this point is Mr. O'Brien due to his experience with the Covid pandemic and the environment, as well as his knowledge of the housing issue. She feels that any shortcomings Mr. O'Brien has, such as budgeting and revenue, or labor negotiations can easily be learned at the elbows of the Town Accountant, the Assistant Town Manager, and our Labor Counsel.

Member Worthington's first choice would be Mr. O'Brien. She feels he is the perfect fit for Truro. She pointed out that both candidates have areas that they need to get up to speed on, but the areas that Mr. O'Brien needs to get up to speed on are practical issues he can learn. The areas which Mr. Wood needs to get up to speed on only come from spending time on the Cape around Truro and are not learned easily or quickly. Member Worthington feels that Mr. O'Brien can get up to speed with the help of staff and many other people he can reach out to on the Cape. She added that he has longevity and is not going anywhere. She also mentioned that many Department Heads reached out to her from Truro and neighboring towns stating what a great person Mr. O'Brien is.

Member Reed agreed with many of the comments her colleagues have made, however she feels that Mr. Wood far surpasses Mr. O'Brien as the choice and candidate for her, simply because he has managerial experience. She feels that Truro needs someone with managerial experience who can guide us through Covid. Because of Covid, she doesn't feel there is time to get a Town Manager up to speed in important areas such as finance and municipal management. Member Reed finds Mr. Wood to be the stronger candidate.

Chair Weinstein agrees with everyone regarding the strengths and weaknesses of both candidates. He stated that Mr. O'Brien would not be his first choice because of his lack of experience with contract negotiations, lack of direct experience with Truro's specific housing issues, and lack of experience with municipal budgeting and the relationship between tax revenue streams and the tax rate. He feels that Mr. Wood has more experience in that area. Chair Weinstein noted that Mr. Wood was the only one candidate who stated he'd reach out to Town Manager Palmer during the transition period. Chair Weinstein felt to leave out the Town Manager during the transition was a striking inadequacy. While Mr. O'Brien doesn't need a primer on anything that Truro and the other fifteen towns in Barnstable County have been facing with Covid, Chair Weinstein appreciated that Mr. Wood talked about the differences between the state responses to Covid in Texas and in Massachusetts. Mr. Wood is Chair Weinstein's first choice.

Chair Weinstein pointed out that there were two strong voices for Mr. O'Brien and three voices of varying passion levels for Mr. Wood. Member Worthington added that Mr. O'Brien is up to speed on Covid and that he's heading the response for the County. Member Areson agreed with Member Worthington, noting that Covid is one of her major considerations because it will make it more difficult for Mr. Wood to get to know the staff and the community. Mr. Wood does have municipal and budgeting experience, but again she thinks we have a very strong team in place that can help Mr. O'Brien get up to speed. Member Worthington continued, stating that Mr. O'Brien's experience is deep, and he does have managerial experience. She reiterated that she heard from many citizens, staff, fire chiefs, and police chiefs, about Mr. O'Brien, and that makes a difference to her.

Member Reed stated that she heard equally positive remarks from Truro staff and Department Heads about their positive interactions with Mr. Wood. Member Reed pointed out that if they decide not to select Mr. O'Brien, he will still be on Cape Cod and he'll still be working with the county. If they select Mr. Wood, they will have both him and Mr. O'Brien in the county. She added that Mr. O'Brien has significant things that he will need to learn on the job. He does know a lot about Covid from a public safety and emergency preparedness perspective, but she didn't hear at all about how that would impact staff, budget, and revenue. Member Worthington stated that Mr. O'Brien did mention all of those things in his interview yesterday. Member Reed stated that his answers were not to her satisfaction.

Member Rein concurs with Member Reed. Mr. O'Brien has an incredible skill set, but we'd still have him at the County level. If Mr. Wood is hired, she feels Truro will have the best of both worlds. Member Rein stated that Mr. Wood is the stronger candidate in many other facets of the job.

Chair Weinstein shared that he received feedback from someone that was favorably pre-disposed to Mr. O'Brien because of his local connections. This person also said that they were comfortable and impressed with Mr. Wood because he seemed dedicated to democratic principles and dialog and that he was interested in fostering community engagement. This individual was the only person that spoke about the fact, in a positive way, that Mr. Wood was not a micro-manager. Chair Weinstein agreed with Member Rein's comment that if the job were offered to Mr. Wood, then we'd have the best of both worlds because Mr. O'Brien would still be at the helm in the County dealing with Covid. Member Worthington stated that Mr. O'Brien, if not offered the job, would be at the County doing a magnificent job and that she didn't get the comparison. She added that she's worked with a lot of town managers, police chiefs and fire chiefs, and cautioned that you are taking a big chance to bring somebody from the other part of the country into a place like Truro.

Member Areson noted that Mr. O'Brien may have a small department, but he also works with town managers and health agents and agencies throughout the fifteen towns in the county. She thinks Mr. Wood is terrific, but it is a risk to bring somebody here who has never set foot on Cape Cod.

Member Reed stated that Chief Calise was an example of choosing a candidate from outside of Massachusetts who has done exemplary in his role. She does not feel comfortable being prejudiced against someone from Texas as a reason to not consider them. She believes Mr. Wood has the capacity to feel as much at home in Truro as everyone else has. She added that he also has town management experience and can learn the culture. She would much rather see the learning curve of learning the culture rather than learning how to be a town manager.

Member Rein stated that she respects the views of all her colleagues and feels that each of the candidates in the end would serve Truro. She still feels that Mr. Wood brings more knowledge to the greater issues of being a town manager and he has a broader scope to help him hit the ground running. She feels both candidates are strong, but that Mr. Wood is the better choice for the town at this moment.

Member Reed shared that she felt it was important that Mr. Wood talked about civic engagement and building consensus, especially around contentious issues. He also mentioned that in his first thirty days, he'd do a lot of listening, which is important in building trust and relationships.

Chair Weinstein thinks it's important that the person who is hired to be a manager brings managerial skills to the job. In his mind, Chair Weinstein believes Mr. Wood will be a quicker study because he has, for instance, negotiated contracts.

Member Worthington clarified that it is a big learning curve to come from elsewhere and understand a town like Truro. Member Areson stated her strong preference for Mr. O'Brien and feels the Board is talking in circles.

Member Rein wanted to refocus on the candidates' qualities in the interviews and less about geography. She mentioned that in the interview with Mr. Wood, he discussed the Town Charter and about the separation between policymaking and management, which she thinks the Board can lose sight of. The Board continued to discuss the qualities they liked in each candidate.

**Member Reed made a motion for Robert Wood as the next Town Manager and to authorize the Chair to begin contract negotiations.**

**Member Rein seconded.**

Chair Weinstein opened the floor again to discussion.

Member Areson believes that they have two strong candidates. She is prepared to go along with this motion to reach consensus because they do not want to start the process over again. She would also like to make sure that if the Chair is beginning contract negotiations, that the entire Board is consulted before, or during, this process so that they can weigh in on portions of the contract.

Member Worthington stated she's grateful to everyone's work on this and will go along with the vote even though she would prefer Mr. O'Brien. She added that her preference is in no way to say that Mr. Wood cannot do the job. She hopes they are making the right decision.

Chair Weinstein put the motion to a vote.

**Member Rein-Aye**

**Member Areson-Aye**

**Member Worthington-Aye**

**Member Reed-Aye**

**Chair Weinstein-Aye**

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

Town Manager Palmer suggested the Board schedule an executive session as soon as possible to discuss the terms of the contract before a final offer is made. A decision was made to hold an executive session on Friday, August 14, 2020 at 10:00am.

Chair Weinstein opened up the public comment section of the meeting.

Denise Seager wished to commend everyone for a wonderful job, and she feels they have made an excellent choice.

Christopher Clark seconded Mrs. Seager's comments.

Chair Weinstein moved along to the Consent Agenda.

Member Worthington asked if the Governor's new guidelines about numbers of people gathering outside affect the vineyard request. Town Manager Palmer stated that that she queried the Department of Public Health because of a similar question from Payomet. She is very clear that fifty is the limit on the number of people that they can have, and that's what they are asking for on their application.

**Member Areson made a motion to approve the consent agenda as printed.**

**Member Rein seconded.**

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

Member Worthington wished to make a comment. She wanted to acknowledge the very tragic death of Skip Childs this past week. She stated that he was a long-standing member of Truro's Fire and Rescue Department and also on the Fire Department for many years in Provincetown. He worked for the Seashore as a mechanic, and he and his wife, Margie, were integral parts of our Fire and Rescue community for many years. She continued by saying that he was the kindest, most generous person you would ever meet and that he would literally give you the shirt off his back. Chair Weinstein added that Skip helped him setup beehives, and it is a tragedy not only for his wife and family, but for the community. Chair Weinstein also mentioned that Skip was, at one point, the Chair of the Planning Board, and he met that obligation with even-handedness and kindness.

Town Manager Palmer reported that Payomet asked if they could be considered a drive-in-theater. Health Agent Beebe reached out to the Department of Public Health and who clarified that to be a drive-in theater, Payomet would have to show movies and people would have to stay in their cars. Payomet has to meet the fifty-person capacity limit as well. The Department of Public Health will not allow Truro to give Payomet a waiver, or an exception, to the Governor's Order.

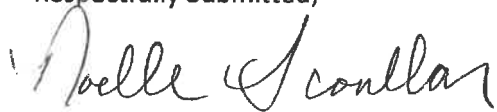
Member Areson mentioned that the Board had approved a host of dates and asked if they planned on going forward with their entertainment, given the fifty-percent reduction in the number of people they're allowed to have. Town Manager Palmer was not sure and said she would ask Health Agent Beebe to check with them.

**Member Areson made a motion to adjourn at 9:52am.**

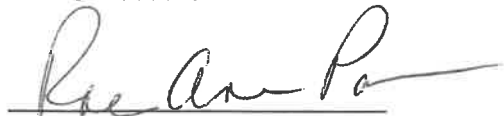
**Member Rein seconded.**

**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

