

Regular Session Minutes—Select Board Meeting
In-Person Meeting
June 21, 2022

PRESENT: Chair Emily Mitchell, Clerk Bopha Malone, Shawn Hanegan, Edward Pierce, Margot Fleischman

ALSO PRESENT: Jeff Nutting, Lori Eggert

Ms. Mitchell opened the meeting at 3:07 PM.

22-128—Select Board Retreat: Jeff Nutting, Presenter

Mr. Nutting asked each member to introduce themselves and state how long they have been on the board and why they serve.

He shared his experiences in local government and his commitment to using those lifelong experiences to consult for other local governments. He mentioned that social media concerns, staff turnover, open meeting and public record requests, and COVID-19 are issues that all municipalities in the Commonwealth are grappling with. His role is to assist boards to transform from individuals to teams, and learn how to work as a group despite our different opinions.

Regarding what the Board hopes to accomplish, Mr. Hanegan discussed how the Board can get the word out and respond to the public efficiently and effectively. Ms. Fleischman hopes that the Board can form a cultural understanding of how to successfully work together. Although Zoom has its positives, meeting remotely has made it tough to form relationships. Mr. Nutting thinks that the Select Board Handbook is helpful in setting a code of conduct for how we operate, and that going back to in-person meetings would help us connect with each other and the public.

Mr. Nutting presented the Board Questionnaire with all the Board members' responses for discussion.

Board members discussed their roles and responsibilities in working with the Town Manager to set goals and policies, and help to advance them. They also talked about how they can effectively handle constituent services in a timely manner, keeping the chain of command in mind. When in doubt, consult with the Town Manager and the Chair for guidance.

In reviewing the Board's accomplishments over the past year, the Board is proud of the numerous ways that they have helped to improve people's lives. They examined what they could have done differently for the Minuteman Bikeway Extension Project. They talked about improving communication on this issue and hosting forums to allow residents to voice their concerns.

The Board has experienced a high level of skepticism from the public, and its effectiveness has been hampered by public perception. To be more effective, they discussed focusing on communications with the public and the value of productive disagreements, as well as times when it's critical to get consensus as a Board.

In discussing how the Town Manager can better support the Board, Mr. Pierce suggested that the Town Manager provide recommendations and share "why" on matters that are presented to the Board. The Board agreed that the Chair can discuss with the Town Manager to include as part of the Board's meeting packet materials.

In response to Ms. Malone's question, Mr. Nutting recommended 15 as an appropriate number of goals per year and advised reviewing them on a quarterly basis.

Regarding how the Board can better support the Town Manager, Mr. Nutting advised them to use comparatives from other towns regarding

staff turnover. This issue is universal in municipal government, and Bedford is not alone. Ms. Mitchell encouraged the Board to be more responsive when the Town Manager asks for input and to be mindful of her personal time, such as not texting and/or emailing her during her vacation, weekends, and late nights. The Board discussed how different generations view and handle this differently, and they agreed that Ms. Mitchell should connect with the Town Manager to see what boundaries she'd like to see and what's reasonable.

The Board reached consensus on four items: including communication strategies on the agenda for a future Board meeting, including self-check on the agenda in October to discuss how the return to in-person meetings is going, having the Chair connect with Ms. Stanton to provide recommendations on matters that are presented to the Board, and reviewing goals on a quarterly basis.

Materials: Bedford Select Board Questionnaire June 2022

Ms. Fleischman moved to adjourn. Mr. Hanegan seconded.

Meeting adjourned at 6:09 p.m.

Respectfully submitted by Bopha Malone