

Shutesbury Select Board Meeting Minutes  
July 7, 2022 Hybrid Meeting Format/Town Hall

Select Board members present: Rita Farrell/Chair, Melissa Makepeace-O'Neil, and Eric Stocker  
Staff present: Becky Torres/Town Administrator; Linda Avis Scott/Administrative Secretary (remote)

Fire Chief Hiring Committee: Eric Stocker/Chair, April Stein/Personnel Board, Elaine Puleo/Fire Chief Study Group, Jim Walton/Finance Committee, George Davies/Former Firefighter, and Police Chief Kristin Burgess

Candidate: Leonard Czerwonka/Acting Fire Chief

Farrell calls the Select Board meeting to order at 5:04pm and reviews the agenda. Stocker calls the Fire Chief Hiring Committee, a Select Board sub-committee, to order at 5:04pm. All present in the room introduce themselves.

Fire Chief Candidate Interview:

Torres reviews the process to date: the Select Board appointed Fire Chief Hiring Committee members: Jim Walton/Finance Committee, April Stein/Personnel Board, Elaine Puleo/Fire Chief Study Group, George Davies/Former Firefighter, Police Chief Kristin Burgess and Eric Stocker/Select Board representative; advertising for the position, in the *Greenfield Recorder* and on the Mass Municipal Association website, occurred prior to the first committee meeting. Per Torres, six resumes and one inquiry were received; during the first meeting one-half of the resumes were reviewed; the second half were reviewed during the second meeting and a decision was made as to which candidates would move forward. The Committee planned to move two candidates forward however ultimately decided to move one candidate forward. Torres: availability and salary range were concerns; three candidates were from out of state with experience in urban departments; questions were sent to the five candidates who were not eliminated and out of these, only two sets of answers came back; two other candidates withdrew for personal reasons; tonight's meeting will continue the interview with the candidate. Stocker explains that he will ask candidate Leonard Czerwonka a list of compiled questions.

1. Why do you want to be Fire Chief? Czerwonka: it does not make sense to a chief who lives three to four towns away. Torres: Czerwonka is a Shutesbury resident with 18 years of Fire Department experience.
2. Strengths? Czerwonka: hands on experience with calls and care of equipment.
3. Weaknesses? Czerwonka: talking publicly.
4. How about administration, i.e., grant writing? Czerwonka: I will need help with this; maybe from within the Department. Elaine Puleo: will you need temporary help or could there be administrative help within the department? Czerwonka: I will need to see how it goes. Torres: for many years, a Fire Department clerk was on staff; this could be explored. April Stein: talking with people here (in this meeting) is a challenge; how about talking with colleagues? Czerwonka: it is fairly easy because they are familiar.
5. How are the current members of Department with your application? Czerwonka: they are supportive; I let them know about the application and they seemed pretty happy.
6. The Department has a favorable reputation here and in the region; will you be able to maintain this level of excellence? Czerwonka: he will try.

7. Are you available during regular hours? Czerwonka: at his regular job, he works out of town about 50% of the time. Czerwonka is asked how he would manage if hired to be the chief. Czerwonka: if hired, he would quit his other job.
8. Police Chief Kristin Burgess has seen Czerwonka work well with people on calls; he is very empathetic and helps people feel better. Burgess is concerned why he wants to be chief and asks him to dig deeper. Czerwonka: he would be bothered if someone lived 3-4 towns away and was unable to make calls. Stein: what about being chief is meaningful to you; acknowledges that it is hard to talk about yourself in public. Czerwonka: there are excellent people in the area. Stein: what about you? Czerwonka: I think I can do the job. Makepeace-O'Neil: when former Chief Tibbetts went on vacation, you were the person in charge; what did you enjoy about doing that? Czerwonka: it seemed complicated when I first started though I enjoyed doing it, especially learning how to operate the pump.
9. The Department is routinely understaffed, do you have ideas how this could be solved? Czerwonka: it is definitely a problem to have only a couple of people in town during the day; this is serious; more experienced people are needed; it takes about two years of training and observing calls to be qualified; he does not know the real answer; almost all departments have the same problem. Puleo asks about recruitment, especially women. Czerwonka cites Celebrate Shutesbury as a means for recruitment. Torres: the celebration will be back this year. Czerwonka to Puleo's idea about a training open house: people do come and observe trainings. George Davies: everyone is welcome to see what is involved. Czerwonka: you have to be 18, have a driver's license and a high school diploma. Torres: the age limit is 65. Czerwonka: currently, there are less than 6 firefighters and most leave town between 6-7am; calls are random, there is no real pattern; most are medical calls. Czerwonka to Farrell's question: all firefighters are trained as first responders. Torres: any paramedics in the Department can only function as first responders. Czerwonka to Puleo's question: first responders administer CPR and stop bleeding until EMTs arrive.
10. Puleo asks about working with the Police Department. Czerwonka: we normally do, it is nice to have the police presence; they show up at fire calls. Burgess: the officers are typically the first to arrive between 7am-11pm; she started working with Tibbetts to do mutual trainings and asks Czerwonka if he would want to continue this. Czerwonka: it was a first for us and we all thought it was great.
11. Burgess: sometimes, there are strong personalities in departments. Czerwonka will do his best to handle strong personalities.
12. Davies notes the challenges with the limited number of people on calls and asks Czerwonka to talk about mutual aid. Czerwonka: when someone calls 911 for a medical reason, the Amherst ambulance will get toned; when there is a car accident, both the Police Department and the Amherst ambulance get toned; if it is after hours, the State Police are toned; if there is entrapment, two fire departments get called. Czerwonka: for a structural fire, two towns get called; there are preset plans for each type of call and mutual aid goes both ways; we went to Orange for the mill fire where there may have been 15 towns present. Czerwonka to Puleo: we are called out of town about 10% percent of the time, 1-2 times a month; it could be for a fire or vehicle crash though not for medical calls as the ambulance will be on its way. Czerwonka to Stein: on mutual aid calls, one chief is in command, typically, from the town with the incident; the chief looks at what is happening and can call in other resources as needed. Stein: how do you see

- yourself in this role? Czerwonka: it will be tough; communication will be needed along with familiarity with the other towns.
13. To Farrell's question, Czerwonka reports that the Department keeps a record of calls. Puleo: at one point, we were getting call reports from the Chief. Czerwonka: we have had brush fires, chimney fires in the winter, and mutual aid calls.
  14. Burgess: admittedly, you said your weakness is trouble speaking with people, when you are the chief on the scene, do you see yourself telling people what to do? Czerwonka: I will be able to tell people what to do. Puleo: what is your gut feeling about being the incident commander for emergencies? Czerwonka acknowledges that he has no experience with the emergency management side of house however will work into it.
  15. Stein: Tibbetts created a model for how to be a chief and left big shoes to fill. Czerwonka will try to be the best chief he can and to do what Tibbetts would do; he has been with Tibbetts since 2005. Makepeace-O'Neil: what might you expand on what Tibbetts has bestowed? Czerwonka will try to the best he can; his number one priority will be to keep everything together; he does not plan to change anything; firefighters take time out of their days for training.
  16. Puleo asks about diversity training. Czerwonka would like have diversity training; he wants the Department to treat everyone the best we can. Burgess: diversity training is ever evolving and should happen regularly; as a trained instructor, she is willing to assist in training the Fire Department.
  17. Torres: Tibbetts was involved in outside organizations; is this an interest for you? Czerwonka plans to attend Fire Chiefs Association meetings.
  18. Jim Walton asks about making the case to the Capital Improvement Planning Committee for equipment requests. Czerwonka: he would be able to make a case for needed equipment; Tibbetts would review our needs with us, i.e., a fire truck suitable for rural situations because urban trucks do not carry water. Walton encourages Czerwonka to seek out resources to assist with grant writing.
  19. Stocker: Tibbetts did a lot of the mechanical work on equipment. Czerwonka: this is up his alley: he attended technical school and has experience with mechanical work.
  20. Farrell: if appointed, what is your vision for the first 90 days? Czerwonka: asking Tibbetts a lot of questions especially about paperwork; as a hands-on person, he is not familiar with the office side; he will ask Tibbetts "what would you do".
  21. Burgess: if you are hired, there is structure and a chain of command; how will you handle discipline? Czerwonka: I will see what really happened; would not want to go over the top on things; as chief, his goal is to have experienced officers; expects to have someone take on his prior role as lieutenant.
  22. Puleo: if you are not ready to be incident commander, would you be willing to have Burgess take this on for a period of time? Czerwonka: yes, if Burgess is more qualified. Burgess agrees to do so if the commander needs to be someone in Shutesbury.
  23. Torres asks about "ICS 400" training. Czerwonka: I will need to do this. Burgess: you left your military experience out of your resume. Czerwonka: I was in the Army National Guard from 1999-2205, one weekend a month, as member a mechanic and engineer unit; no deployment. Czerwonka to Makepeace-O'Neil's question about education helpful in being a chief: he took a leadership development course that will be helpful.
  24. Torres asks if Czerwonka has considered a deputy chief. Czerwonka: it has crossed his mind.

Czerwonka does not have any questions for the interviewers.

Stocker: the Select Board will make the final decision; a background check and reference check are pending. Stocker thanks Czerwonka for coming and wishes him success with whatever happens.

At 6:02pm, Makepeace-O'Neil moves and Stocker seconds a motion to adjourn the Select Board meeting. Roll call vote: Makepeace-O'Neil: aye, Stocker: aye, and Farrell: aye; the motion carries.

Puleo moves and Stocker seconds a motion to adjourn the Fire Chief Hiring Committee. Roll call vote: Puleo: aye, Stocker: aye, Stein: aye, Davies: aye, Burgess: aye and Walton: aye; the motion carries.

Documents and Other Items Used at the Meeting:

1. 6.18.22 letter "Shutesbury Select Board, Fire Chief Hiring Committee from Leonard Czerwonka

Respectfully submitted,  
Linda Avis Scott  
Administrative Secretary

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