

## **Interview Process for Applicants to Appointed Boards, Commissions and Committees Summary of Responses compiled by A. Friedman, April 2, 2013**

### **Question**

In Hinesburg we interview applicants for our various Town Boards, Commissions and Committees during open session at our Selectboard meetings. I have received feedback from some applicants (or potential applicants) that the interview process itself is intimidating because the camera is on and it is a public interview – a bit like a US Senate confirmation hearing.

Please share how your community interviews applicants to appointed boards, commissions, and committees.

**Milton** - This is exactly how we do it, although we do not intend to intimidate. Our meetings are televised and if you want to be considered for a position you have to show for an interview. If you are going to serve on a public board, it is something you will have to get used to.

**Norwich** interviews in a public session.

**Vergennes** - The only interview process we have for boards, commissions, and committees is for the Development Review Board(DRB) and Planning Commission(PC). We have a standing five-member nominating committee comprised of the chair and vice chair of the DRB and PC and myself as City Manager/Zoning Administrator/PC Clerk.

The **Town of Colchester** interviews candidates for all its Board, Commissions and Committees in executive session before the regularly scheduled Selectboard meeting. At the end of a regular meeting, the Board returns to Executive Session to discuss the applicants. Comes out of Executive Session, now late at night, and votes publically their appointments. Cameras have packed up and are gone.

**Lyndon** - Our Board conducts all of these type interviews in open session.

**Wilmington** - Our Select Board interviews all new candidates and any incumbents that are up for renewal that the SB wishes to interview.

If the **Barre Town** Selectboard decides it will interview candidates it meets with the applicants during the pre-meeting PILOT session. PILOT is open to the public and sometimes people attend. The camera crew usually is in the room setting up but the camera isn't on.

The **Brattleboro** Selectboard warns and convenes a "special meeting" prior to their regular meeting with the purpose of interviewing candidates. The press and public could come early but they rarely choose to do so.

In **Richmond** we only interview candidates for Planning Commission and DRB, and it has been in a public meeting which is taped and televised. I agree that this can be intimidating.

**Northfield Town** - Wish we had that many interested parties. In the rare case we do, each sends a letter of interest and a resume/Bio. They are interviewed in open session. SB may require Deliberative Session, following which the appointment is made in open session.

A number of years ago **Shelburne** interviewed candidates in executive session and made the appointments in open session. After discussion and conversation with the Town attorney, the Selectboard decided that in general, there was no justification for continuing that practice. If there is a piece of personal information that a Board member wants on the table, that is done preliminarily in executive session.

While the process may be intimidating for some, the public has a right to know who is doing the people's business.

**Shaftsbury** does as Hinesburg does – interview potential candidates for Planning Commission, DRB, and other Town Officer positions in open session (on camera)...Selectboard discusses appointees in Executive Session...makes appointments afterwards in public sessions.

The DRB is also given an opportunity to meet beforehand with candidates and make recommendations about said candidates to the Selectboard. Planning Commission is also afforded the same opportunity.

Potential candidates state this 2-tiered process is 'a bit much'. And the volunteers are not exactly streaming endlessly through my door.

#### **Johnson Town:**

Interesting. We do not have a formal process but are looking to develop one. We have Hinesburg's policy as well as half a dozen others, so hearing this perspective gives me something to think about. I assume the camera is on because all the meetings are taped? I actually thought the Hinesburg Policy was pretty good. We will probably not be quite as extensive in our approach.

Up until the past few years our Selectboard always interviewed people for vacant positions, through an informal process. We would advertise the vacancies and ask for a letter of interest. Recently we have had such a hard time finding people to serve on boards and commissions that we have taken the first live body through the door, frankly without a lot of thought about their qualifications or interests and generally no interviews. Individual board members would beat the bushes to try and find someone willing to serve, bring their name forward and they would be appointed. We rarely had more than one candidate to choose from.

We just went through a situation where we needed several Planning Commission members. There was a feeling among some of the Selectboard members that this informal process of individual Selectboard members soliciting potential candidates might be perceived as trying to stack the deck on the makeup of the Planning Commission. That is what started our interest in developing some sort of uniform policy. I think a policy is a great idea, but I understand the need for balance between discouraging interest because the process is intimidating and seeking a good cross section of views and interests.

Duncan

**Essex** interviews the candidates in open session; however, it discusses their decision in closed session. The final decision is then made in open session. The camera is rolling during the interview and some people have been noticeably nervous but the Board discounts it during their evaluation process.

**Williston** - We currently use the same process that is used in Hinesburg. I've never heard any complaints but I agree, the process can be intimidating.

**Swanton Village** just recently interviewed for a Planning Commission seat, and it was in open session with no camera. Introduction of the person chosen to the Select board and Trustees was in Open Meeting with cameras.

**Underhill** has applicants send their application into the commission or committee and they contact and interview at their open meeting, then if the majority votes to recommend, the chair brings them to an open Selectboard meeting and introduces them and gives an overview of their qualifications and the Selectboard may ask additional questions and then appoints.

**Waterbury** interviews in open session with the camera on. Hasn't been a problem to my knowledge.

**St. Albans Town** - Our process for filling positions on our various boards and committees starts with asking the people who currently sit on those boards or committees if they are interested in continuing to serve. Then, we place ads in the local paper and on our website. Once we have interested parties, we ask them to attend a Selectboard meeting so the Board may ask them some questions. Yes, it's a public meeting and yes, the camera is rolling but, the Board does their best to make the potential candidates as comfortable as possible.