Meeting of the Board of Selectmen held on Wednesday, February 9, 2022 beginning at 5:30 pm in the Selectmen's Conference Room, Town Hall.

Members Present: William Rosenblum, Chairman, Antonio Goncalves, Manuel Silva, Derek DeBarge, and James Gennette

First Order of Business: The Pledge of Allegiance

Visitations:

Town Administrator Interviews
5:45 p.m. – Marc A. Strange

Mr. Strange introduced himself. He has been director in Planning for Agawam for 7 years, and on the Board of Selectman of Longmeadow for the last 3 years. He is married has 2 children, a 13year old son Sam, and 9year old daughter Sofie who are active in sports. He stays busy, is also President of the Longmeadow Football Association. He is excited to be here, thinks he'll be a great fit and hopes everyone feels the same way.

Mr. DeBarge: Thanked Mr. Strange for his interest in Ludlow. How do you find the right balance with citizen engagement and the demands of transparency of the work the town has completed?

Mr. Strange: Depending on what you're talking about, priority is the key engagement. Websites are very good public participation platforms.

Mr. DeBarge: What do you know about the Mills project and its potential for the community?

Mr. Strange: It's a great opportunity for the Town of Ludlow. is super excited about that project and that is one of the reasons he applied.

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Mr. Goncalves: Mr. Strange did you do anything with financing in Agawam and paperwork and how do you feel about working with that?

Mr. Strange: Yes, I do have experience working with that.

Mr. Goncalves: Ludlow's main arteries are getting a little congested with business. What is your thought about master plan zoning?

Mr. Strange: A lot of the stuff is planning, identifying priority development areas and PVPC has programs you can get that identify where the priority development areas might be other than the mills; doesn't have enough context to say where the next opportunity might be but that should be a priority. We need to see where the next potential development area is. New growth is so important. New growth is how you get things done without increasing taxpayers' rates.

Mr. Goncalves: How did this fit into your career goal?

Mr. Strange: Never dreamed of being a Town Administrator being a law clerk for Agawam and I thought I wanted to be a city solicitor and that's how I ended up being the director of Planning and Development. I love municipal … you can have an impact on residents lives and I love the interaction with them. Satisfying to give them an answer, always calling everybody back that's a very important part of the job.

Mr. Rosenblum: Town Administrator wears a lot of hats obviously. What is your experience with procurement?

Mr. Strange: I'm not currently certified as a procurement officer, but I deal with it all the time. Things we do are under $10,000, but I am familiar with the process.

Mr. Rosenblum: Looking at the Town of Ludlow and if you were to do a … analysis what do you see are strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and growths.

Mr. Strange: I see that the strengths is when coming over that bridge in Ludlow from Springfield. I thought that I was entering someplace. It has that feeling of a place and right down the road you have the Mills and that is a great opportunity for the town. Financially the towns in a decent place. Structure wise, I think Ludlow's structure is a little different than what we've done in Longmeadow and Agawam different studies doesn't mean worse or better no comparison until you get in and operate within the structure and see how it goes.

Mr. DeBarge: I believe that our government structure is the weakest in this town and doesn't work well. I don't really have a question. I would like your opinion on those of us that are interested in changing the form of the government with the Town Administrator position possibly changing.

Mr. Strange: I would love to be a part of that. To a least explore to see if there are opportunities for....

Mr. Silva: How would you navigate a managed conflict in the workplace?

Mr. Strange: I'm a pretty clear and direct communicator. As a manager, I am positive and positively reenforcing people. Over time, people get a feel of my personality and anybody that works in this town has an impact on quality of life, that matters. That's why we are here to try to raise the community's quality of life. Communication is so important. It has to be talked out if there is an issue get everyone together and work it out.

Mr. Silva: What one thing intrigued you about Ludlow? What interested you to work here?

Mr. Strange: Ludlow is a lot like the town that I grew up in, Rome, New York. ... Blue collar, proud I feel like I would be a good fit. A chance for potential growth, and if I wasn't interested in professional growth, I wouldn't have submitted my resume, I think it's a good fit.

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Mr. Gennette: What would be your priorities in the short, intermediate and long term?

Mr. Strange: I've thought about this quite a bit and I think I would have a goal of a 120-day plan. Within those 120 days my goal would be to meet with all the department heads, meet with you and other business leaders. Get an idea of what is going on in town. What people like don't like, what's working what's not working. Get an evaluation of programs and processes. After 120 days bring you back, this is what I think is working, this is what I think you may improve on. Give you a platform on making changes. Long term, I would really love to change the website. Utilize the e-mail more and visit with senior center once a month. Invite people from the town to get feedback input and invite one of the BOS also to join. I think that's a good way to capture engagement with a different ... of population. I do weekly updates to the Board; personnel are an issue right now so I'd like to come up with a plan to recruit and retain employees.

Mr. Gennette: Is there anything you believe we should be aware of prior to your employment in Ludlow positive or negative?

Mr. Strange: I'm pretty much an open book. I'm honest and hard working. I like to work. I'm so excited about this opportunity and really hope it works out.

Mr. Rosenblum: Any questions for us Mr. Strange?

Mr. Strange: Structure, just want to clarify Town Administrator does not have all departments under him/her, is this correct?

Mr. Rosenblum: It is difficult; all board in agreement nobody answers to anybody. There is some friction between departments, we are all in agreement that our government is not working properly.

Mr. Rosenblum: What is your thought on ARPA funding? ARPA

Mr. Strange: Every town has so many needs and never have enough money. I think you have to look at smaller projects ....

Mr. Rosenblum: Would you like to go ahead with any closing remarks?

Mr. Strange: I am excited about this opportunity and think we will work well together. I like to help people. I really hope this work out.

6:30 p.m. - Mary Tzambazakis

Mr. Rosenblum: Welcome, congratulations please start by telling us a little about yourself and then we'll start with questions.

Ms. Tzambazakis: My name is Mary Tzamazakis. I have come here with many years of experience in private, public and in a non-profit assessor. I have a Batchelor degree in finance, my Master Degree in law. I'm a licensed attorney in Connecticut and Massachusetts. I've leveraged a lot of what I've learned in my different positions. To enhance every single job, I've taken what I've learned from the private sector and leveraged that in the public sector and in the non-profit sector. I think that each different sector provides unique opportunity to learn in growth professionally and you can take the best of each and apply it to your job. That is what I've attempted to do throughout my career.

Mr. DeBarge: Thanks Ms. Tzamazakis for his interest in Ludlow. How do you find the right balance with citizen engagement and demands trans parcening the work of the town completed?

Ms. Tzambazakis: Everyone that is in the government works for a community and taxpayers. They need to know what's happening you have to leverage the… that are available to you to provide that information. Ex. town website, keeping it updated being engaged in the community the senior center community events see where things are, get feedback from the community.

Mr. DeBarge: What do you know about the Mills project and its potential for the community?

Ms. Tzambazakis: I am aware apartments have been completed and something still needs to happen, as far as understanding all the details of it. 1st step read all documents associated with the agreement and what was agreed to between the town and the dividers, looking at where they are now, where they are moving forward with addition construction, time lines. Why they are, where they are and what they are doing to move forward. There should be a plan / time line as what they plan to accomplish.

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Mr. Goncalves: Ludlow's main arteries are getting a little congested with business. What is you thought about …plan zoning?

Ms. Tzambazakis: There is new growth happening in individual and residential housing. Few developments that are happening, there is going to be some type of growth. The key is looking at the zoning of the community the planning and where the community wants it to go. Do they want more commercial growth or residential growth? Where's the balance going to be? The impact of traffic patterns. What is the impact of the quality of life? The zoning/planning Boards coming in with the Selectmen Board, this is a vision of what we want for the community. From there you go to planning to try to identify spending sources. How much funding from grants, money from the state? Finding financial resources to move forward.

Mr. Goncalves: How does this job fit/become your career goal?

Ms. Tzambazakis: I've been chief financial officer for the City of Springfield and I've been town administrator and over the 10 years chief administrator officer of library system. That is considered one of the top systems of the entire unites states and part of it has to do a lot with using the library as a leverage point for the community. Engagement and doing unique things; helping people. All this experience of the last 10 years along with all my knowledge in all the other areas that I've worked with, would help me take on this position and make a positive difference for the community. I can play a good role in supporting the financial stability and growth keep moving community forward.

Mr. Rosenblum: Town Administrator wears a lot of hats. What is your experience with procurement?

Ms. Tzambazakis: At present time I am responsible for procurement I just completed… and completed LFP and just completed a contract with a main service provider for IT. I have done a variety of work requiring LFP on different types of things. They key is making sure you have the scope of what you need in them to do. Checking up on companies that you're dealing with, make a check list of all vendors that are used and how happy we are with them. Need to take account the quality of work that people provide you.

Mr. Rosenblum: Looking at the Town of Ludlow and if you were to do a … analysis what do you see is are strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and growths?

Ms. Tzambazakis: The government structure has opportunities, different boards, different departments. The challenge is getting everyone on the same page. Creating a team with different leaders. There's a lot of pride living in Ludlow, a new Senior Center. You've got positive things that are happening even at the Mills. A lot of excitement here in Ludlow, so those are all positives.

Mr. DeBarge: I believe that our government structure is the weakest in this town and doesn't work well. I don't really have a question, but would like your opinion for those of us that are interested in changing the form of the government with the town administrator position possibly changing.

Ms. Tzambazakis: I think that different types of forms of government work for different types of communities' people in town should decide what would be best for this community.

Silva: How would you navigate a managed conflict in the workplace?

Ms. Tzambazakis: First step is to find out what the conflict is and talk to the individuals that are having the conflicts. Could be something simple as miscommunication, or different opinion finding a middle ground. If it's a conflict between two boards that would be a little bigger than me. If the conflict is between 2 individuals just a matter of talking it out and finding some middle ground.

Mr. Silva: What one thing intrigued you about Ludlow and what interested you to work here?

Ms. Tzambazakis: What intrigues me is the changes and growth taken place in the last 20 years or so, a lot of people moving into this community and the desire to move here. What intrigues me is what created that type of want for people to live here? I'd like to work here because if I am able to move here I would love to make a difference in the community where I live.

Mr. Gennette: What would be your priorities in the short, intermediate and long term?

Ms. Tzambazakis: First thing I'd like to do is meet all the department heads, visit all offices, and meet all individuals. Meeting with all the departments to have them tell me what works well for you what doesn't, and how I can help you. Part of being a good leader is working with deferent people and trying to make them the best that they can be by supporting them. Looking at the finances the past few years. The current state is and the potential future state to determine what the real financial picture is of the community. Reading all the contracts that are currently in place with all the different unions I understand where those are. Understanding the town charter; and the roles. The authority of all the different boards so that I don't over step or offend anyone. Long term I'd like to really understand what is going on with the Mills project, and where that is. To see where things are heading with the superintendent and with what collaborative we would… With the libraries I would love to go there and meet the staff and seeing the library and the Senior Center.

Mr. Gennette: Is there anything you believe we should be aware of prior to your employment in Ludlow positive or negative?

Ms. Tzambazakis: My managing is as follows: I expect everyone to do their job and to report to me. I think you have a duty, and I will do anything that needs to be done to do the job. Just because you have a title doesn't mean that you are better than anyone else.

Mr. Rosenblum: I have one more question, what is your input on ARPA funding, where would it be beneficially used in our community?

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Ms. Tzambazakis: I know that you have a consultant that is working with you. I'm not really up to date on that so I can't really answer to that.

7:15 p.m. – Angie Lopes Ellison

Ms. Ellison: Introduces herself, I'm interested in the Town of Ludlow and this position primarily my entire life has been public administration, public management I'm very familiar with all aspects. Presently working in city of North Adams I have a passion for journeying in municipal work. I'm a graduate in political science and American studies.

Mr. DeBarge: How do you find right balance with citizens engagement and demands while keeping trans parcening the work of the town completed?

Ms. Ellison: Tacking into regards the work particularly as Town Administrator, Town Manager you have about 50 if not 500 balls up in the air and you're hoping that it stays there. Once that comes closer down to the ground and falling that is when you notice and try to reassess. One thing that I love about the positions is that you are constantly working on projects and programs. Regardless that I solve the solution I will always answer a resident. It's important to have an open-door policy.

Mr. DeBarge: What do you know about the Mills project and its potential for the community?

Ms. Ellison: Mills project is an incredible program and having experience in those areas that I would hope given the opportunity I would make that vision come to …

Mr. Goncalves: Ludlow's main arteries are getting a little congested with business. What is your thought about …plan zoning/developing?

Ms. Ellison: What I saw in some of the master plans, and you guys have over lay type of zoning. Clearly defined but not practical. Looks good on paper but doesn't necessarily translate into how it's implemented. Some of the issues of what your vision is, you need to move forward to what you would like to accomplish. Do you want more new growth? And if it is more new growth there will have to be compromise in regards to other areas. I would have to look post Covid and how to make it relevant to now.

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Mr. Goncalves: How does the Administrator here become your career goal?

Ms. Ellison: For Ludlow I want to make this my forever home. Perfect fit, understand the community and the dynamics. Career wise I want to stay in the work of municipal government I love the work of municipal it's public institution.

Mr. Rosenblum: Town Administrator wears a lot of hats. What is your experience with procurement?

Ms. Ellison: I am Procurement certified I have done various jobs, biggest being 30… project we go through the state and everybody else for help with big projects.

Mr. Rosenblum: If you are looking at the Town of Ludlow and if you were to do a … analysis what do you see is are strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and growths?

Ms. Ellison: I think your strengths are in a … community and you have a master plan. Yyou have a solid financial… If I am the successful candidate, I would want to see what has changed and what needs to be changed from 2004 to 2022. Some things still haven't been done and why? How do we move forward?

Mr. Debarge: One of our greatest weaknesses in my opinion is our form of government. Seems we are all on separate islands. I have been very vocal in changing our form of government with a new charter. I'd like your opinion on changing our form of government and possibly altering the position of Town Administrator?

Ms. Ellison: There is a process that we can go through to win the vote of the people to make the change. There are those that want to see the change and those that want it to remain the same. Pros and cons for both types of government.

Mr. Silva: How would you navigate a managed conflict in the workplace?

Ms. Ellison: By establishing expectations. I meet with different department heads, what their expectations are their accomplishments for the year. I do team meetings. Finance team meetings on regular basis. Operational team meetings so everybody knows what's going on. DPW, Public Safety different team meeting, so we can better serve the community. Communication is important.

Mr. Silva: What one thing intrigued you about Ludlow and what interested you to work here?

Ms. Ellison: Ludlow has a lot of opportunity for growth. You've had a wonderful Town Administrator. I think you are ready for the next stage.

Mr. Gennette: What would be your priorities in the short, intermediate and long term?

Ms. Ellison: The main aspect is to get to know the departments and to get to know the five of you as well. Set up to see what your priorities are. See each department head and see what they need help with to grow and develop. I set high expectations that's my moto, in a level of professionalism when they need it, it reflects on the community. Long-term is whatever the … plan says.

Mr. Gennette: Is there anything you believe we should be aware of prior to your employment in Ludlow positive or negative?

Ms. Ellison: In past I have broken level of trust. In an incident that pertained the treasure and the selectboard. You have to have a level of trust.

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Mr. Gennette: What is you input on having internal house IT?

Ms. Ellison: Having it here you end up having more… issues as opposed to the people who are figuring it out, if you have it out … you definitely have pros and cons.

Mr. Rosenblum: What are your thoughts on ARPA?

Ms. Ellison: I'm a firm believer that ARPA is best at the initials stages of intercept that particular is the most expensive part. Revenue have changed some of the guide lines for ARPA. It's an extensive equation to see if you qualify for loss revenue and they have gotten rid of that so if you … less than ten million dollars you don't have to do that equation.

Mr. Rosenblum: Ms. Ellison any questions for the board?

Ms. Ellison: What would be the three things that you would want me to take care of first thing?

Mr. Goncalves: Mine would be master planning for this community.

Mr. Gennette: Mine would be … for the tax payers.

Mr. Rosenblum: Facility manager some to oversee our facilities.

Mr. DeBarge: Maintain our town better, in all areas and would love to see a rotary in town maybe by center street Mass Pike entrance area

Mary Aicardi – Consultant from Collins Center at UMASS she gives her opinion on how to vote for candidate and deliberate. Each board member votes on ballet and hands to he and they say why they chose who they did.

Mr. DeBarge: Marc Strange- because of his short- and long-term plans, he tipped the scale more than anything.

Mr. Goncalves: Marc Strange – because of his outlook of future, knows about the Mills project was well prepared and has the same vision that I do.

Mr. Rosenblum: Marc Strange – Liked communication and efficiency and knowing about the Mills project.

Mr. Silva: Marc Strange – Pretty much along with what everyone else has said, he'll work well with the Mills and responsive to all the questions asked very well prepared.

Mr. Gennette: Angie – I chose Ms. Ellison and Mr. Strange second, they both new about the master plan, Mills project. I was going to vote for Mr. Strange he is a very knowledgeable man. Then Ms. Ellison came in and there wasn't a single answer that she didn't impress me on. When she came up with the response to … and gave her honest opinion about what happened and the fact that she had to take that on, and there's not too many people that would've faced that. I think she could do amazing things in Ludlow and that's the reason I went with Ms. Ellison.

Mr. Goncalves suggests Ms. Aicardi negotiate with Marc Strange for position and Angie Ellison as second if Mark doesn't agree.

Ms. Aicardi: We don't negotiate we do the notifying.

Mr. Dennette: Mr. Chairman. Seeing how I am not getting the candidate that I was originally suggesting, for the unanimous effort is that I will also go with Mr. Strange.

Moved by Mr. Goncalves for the Board of Selectmen to offer the job of the Town Administrator to Marc A. Strange subject to successful negotiations on salary and a successful background check and that we also notify Angie Lopes Ellison and have her as an alternate in the event we are not successful in negotiating with Marc A. Strange, seconded by Mr. Silva. Vote 5-0.

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Closing Comments:

Moved by Mr. Goncalves to adjourn meeting at 8:47 pm, seconded by Mr. Silva. Vote 5-0

Chairman

Ludlow Board of Selectmen