Board of Health

Meeting Minutes

June 27, 2023

The board held interviews for the Public Health Director position.

Members present: Kelly Lamas, Chair; Adrienne DeSantis, Secretary; Antonio Tavares, Member

Meeting was called to order by Ms. Lamas at 4:30 PM and Pledge of Allegiance was performed.

Ms. Lamas: Ok, before we get started, just an update for the board and also for viewers who may have seen the agenda. So, we had three candidates for the Public Health Director position interview with Marc Strange and Carrie Ribeiro. The three were asked to come for a second interview with the board. The candidate that was scheduled today for 4:30 PM withdrew her application hence why the agenda was revised, and Paulina was then scheduled for 4:30 PM. The other applicant had some conflicts, scheduling conflicts, so we can discuss after we interview Paulina what the board would like to do about that candidate. Does that sound ok? Alright great. Hi Paulina. Come on up. Welcome.

Ms. Matusik: I brought all my certificates for you guys to look at. They're in the folder so I'll just leave it here if you have any questions.

Ms. Lamas: Alright so we'll start. Do you want to start with Tony, Adrienne, myself and move around each a question at a time? Until we decide.

Ms. DeSantis: Alright.

Ms. Lamas: Tony you may go first.

Mr. Tavares: Me?

Ms. Lamas: Yes, because I run the meeting.

Mr. Tavares: So, Paulina welcome.

Ms. Matusik: Thank you.

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Mr. Tavares: My question for Paulina is so you've been doing the interim for the last 7 months?

Ms. Matusik: Yes 7 months.

Mr. Tavares: And I have to say for myself that you have been doing a wonderful job. And I read your whole resume and all the attachments to your resume. You have an amazing resume.

Ms. Matusik: Thank you.

Mr. Tavares: So, do you feel in yourself the confidence to be the Health Director? I know you've kind of almost done it for the last 7 months.

Ms. Matusik: Yeah.

Mr. Tavares: Do you feel comfortable with yourself being the Health Director for the Town of Ludlow?

Ms. Matusik: If you asked me this question 7 months ago, I probably would have said I have no idea. But doing this for the last 7 months, I love this position, and I feel I keep growing as a person doing it. And there's so many different challenges that I feel like happen along the way that you don't really know until you do a job. So, I feel now where I'm at, I feel comfortable that I can continue doing what I have been doing the last 7 months. I think that I can do an even better job. So yes, to answer your question.

Mr. Tavares: And you feel like you're the right person for this job?

Ms. Matusik: I mean, yes, I do for the Ludlow Health Director. I feel like I am the right person for the job. Yes.

Ms. DeSantis: Alright, so I also reviewed your resume and I also have observed your interactions and work for the last several months. So, I'm pleased that you're here, that we can go forward with the interview. So, tell us why you're the ideal candidate.

Ms. Matusik: Sure. I think that my wide range of education, past experience and current experience make me a great candidate for the position. I think that a Director of Public Health needs to know more than just one avenue of the job. I think they need to know all aspects. And I think that my education and past experience and my master's degree really help me kind of look at all avenues. So, to answer your question, I think that's why.

Ms. DeSantis: So, one of the questions is what do you think is the biggest challenge? But I'm going to tell you what I think is the biggest challenge, or one of the biggest challenges. And maybe you can speak to it. I have some concerns. So, you have voluntarily taken on the role of the leader of the consortium, which is the multi-town, am I saying it right consortium?

Ms. Matusik: Shared Services Grant.

Ms. DeSantis: Shared Services. So that is concerning to me because I really don't want to lend you beyond or in this position beyond what we have. I think we've witnessed the previous leader of the Shared Services probably got burned out and overdrew and overextended. So, I'm concerned in regard for that for you. Can you speak to that?

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Ms. Matusik: Of course. So, with the Shared Services Grant, what I'm doing now is kind of bringing everybody up to speed. We started from scratch, and then hiring a coordinator for the Shared Services, so everything that I'm doing now, and all the extra duties will no longer fall on the health director. I just am looking to bring the grant back up to speed. So, putting in that time and effort right now, to me, is worth it. So that way we can utilize all the amazing services that this grant will offer the Town of Ludlow, as well as the other communities. And by doing that is also hiring the Shared Services Coordinator, so kind of building that together.

Ms. DeSantis: And that's built into it?

Ms. Matusik: Yes.

Ms. DeSantis: Full-time salary?

Ms. Matusik: Full-time salary so that's one of the requirements for the shared services is either a part-time or full-time coordinator to take on all those duties and responsibilities so that way the director does not have to.

Ms. DeSantis: So that's all they do?

Ms. Matusik: Yes.

Ms. DeSantis: And it's not running off our fiscal year, so it could be when you're ready?

Ms. Matusik: Yes.

Ms. DeSantis: Is that anything our board participates in?

Ms. Matusik: Yeah. So, for the shared services portion, Kelly was nominated to be on the executive board.

Ms. DeSantis: Ok.

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Ms. Matusik: So, during your normal board meetings or if you would like me to send new updates as they happen to you individually before the board meetings, I can do that. But individually every town has one person off their board that forms that executive committee, that kind of makes those decisions and then should report back to their community.

Ms. DeSantis: And who oversees that person?

Ms. Matusik: That would be the director, but they would report to that program coordinator, so if they had any questions, anything regarding the shared services that would go to the shared services coordinator.

Ms. DeSantis: Who does the coordinator report to?

Ms. Matusik: The director.

Ms. DeSantis: Who's the director?

Ms. Matusik: Whoever you guys, me, if you choose that.

Ms. Lamas: It would be the fiscal holder of the grant. So, Ludlow is the new fiscal holder. Since Chrissy's departure we've taken over the fiscal responsibility of holding the grant, therefore it would defer back to us.

Ms. DeSantis: And you're ok with that, comfortable with that? You feel that you have the availability to do that?

Ms. Matusik: Yeah. I think the services offer more than they ask for. They offer a lot more. I mean for the inspectional software, other avenues, duties, positions. They offer more benefit than they offer, I guess negative components.

Ms. DeSantis: Thank you.

Ms. Matusik: You're welcome.

Ms. Lamas: So, you've been in this position for 7 months. So, describe to us how this transition has been shifting from your role as Public Health Coordinator to now this interim position, as you're wearing multiple hats including how you have assessed operations of the department. And determine you know kind of working with personnel with that shift in roles and how that has been with the team. And your process for establishing new goals and objectives. So, all of that.

Ms. Matusik: So, I feel like the Public Health Coordinator and the director, that position was kind of an easy shift. To me, the personnel avenue when I took on the role, I met with all staff to kind of establish this is what's happening. And then I tried to establish open communication within the department just letting them know yes, I'm in this position but we're still coworkers. And I would still love to work together as best to help the department and the community. So, that was the first avenue I took because I think in order for the health department to work best is to bring open communication with all employees. And then moving forward, I kind of sat back and watched how the department worked, how Angela worked, how Tim worked, the administrative and the kind of changes the department took to then help analyze and assess next best steps. So, I didn't want to bring too many changes because I feel like that's more harmful than helpful. And then as I did things, I communicated with staff. So that way there were no surprises or any conflicts, or I would have a meeting before implementing anything, asking for input where certain areas requested the input, other areas I was the decision maker ultimately as not to bring more conflict. Does that answer your question?

Ms. Lamas: So, thank you for sharing that. Given what you've done those first 7 months, which sounds like incremental changes, you know getting staff input. If you were to get this role and become the official director, what would your first steps in thinking about changes or challenges that you foresee?

Ms. Matusik: Yeah, sure. So being in the department even when I first started, I like to have things written down, so I know what to go to. I've noticed not only for our department but other departments there are actually no set policies and procedures. So, if somebody has a question, they have no place to go to. There's nothing in writing for really, besides your job description, what's set in place. So, implementing policies and procedures which I've already started. I guess procedures more than policies, kind of just about calling out sick and just next steps what to do. So, just working more on policies and procedures for staff so they know what's required of them and required of the health department and just keep things more structured.

Ms. Lamas: Thank you.

Ms. Matusik: You're welcome.

Mr. Tavares: I think the question I was going to ask you, I think it's kind of similar to what Kelly just asked you. Because mine was what are some of your goals for the department? It's kind of, you know. What are some of your goals for the department if you do get the job?

Ms. Matusik: Yeah, so one of them is working on policies and procedures. Another one is doing the community needs assessment to get the input of the community. What are the needs of the community based off what the health department is already doing and what the health department can do better, which would also help the board decide position wise what's needed and what we could be doing better, not only as a department but as a board. Also working towards improving the department, improving relationships within the community, communication and just continue working together to bring more awareness, education and letting the people know that the health department is a resource and that we are here. And this is the stuff that we have to help.

Ms. Lamas: Any follow up questions to that?

Mr. Tavares: No.

Ms. DeSantis: So, what's your assessment at this point of the health department? Are you feeling that things are running good operational wise? I know a lot of changes because we've got a new AA, we now have an in-house inspector. We're doing everything out of our department now. Maybe just give me a sense of what's your take on the operations.

Ms. Matusik: Yeah. I think currently, with the student intern included, I think we have great communication within the department. Anita has been a great asset to help both Tim and Angela. And the student intern has kind of helped me take on those roles from the past position for the Public Health Coordinator, so more of those education pieces that I would bring out to the community, she's been very helpful with. Also helping with the community needs assessment. That will hopefully go out towards the end of the summer. But I think with the set staff that we have right now, us working together and communicating, I think we're doing a great job as a team, so yeah, I do.

Ms. DeSantis: So, you give it a good mark?

Ms. Matusik: I give it a good mark.

Ms. DeSantis: Good. Without saying and answering nothing, reflecting on your relationship with the board, what else can the board be doing to support you in this role?

Ms. Matusik: I feel like that's a tough question. To be honest, I feel like as a board you guys have been extremely responsive. And you've kind of let me do things that I want to do. I think just continuing being responsive and proactive as you guys have been. I know when I present things to you on the agenda and during meetings, you guys are always supportive. So, I think just continuing the support that you give me and working together I think would just. I can't really ask for a better board honestly. You guys are just very, you communicate great and you're extremely supportive. I can't really ask for more than that. I think those are the two biggest strengths to bring awareness and togetherness and I really appreciate that.

Ms. Lamas: So, this should be an easier question. Because I think this is something, we've known you for probably what 2 years, you've been here 2 years?

Ms. Matusik: November of '21 I started.

Ms. Lamas: Almost 2 years. So, because you weren't part of the initial interview process I think, though we've all seen your resume and your accolades, I would like to know just a little bit more about your experience in Public Health. Why did you choose Public Health? Why do you love Public Health? Why do you love doing it in Ludlow?

Ms. Matusik: Sure. When I graduated high school, and I went to college, I was actually going for Occupational Therapy. And in my, I had 1 year left to finish the program, and I decided that Occupational therapy was just not what I wanted to do. So, I finished out my bachelor's graduating with a Health & Human Studies degree. And then I was like what can I do that's still health related, but more of public than just individual care. And that's when I decided to go back for my master's because I just felt like Public Health was just kind of all-encompassing and you can either focus on 1 direct avenue such as health inspections or environmental or disease. Or you could make it as broad as you wanted. Which is kind of what brought me to Public Health, and I mean when Covid hit and kind of being pulled in different directions. I guess that's what really brought in the love for Public Health just being able to help multiple people instead of just 1 individual person at a time. It's kind of what got me into Public Health.

Ms. Lamas: You didn't answer why Public Health in Ludlow.

Ms. Matusik: Well, I am a Ludlow resident, so it hits very close to home for me. So being a town resident and then working for the town that I live in, I mean I couldn't ask for better. I'm going to get emotional just talking about it, but I just think what better place to work and to live. Sorry.

Ms. Lamas: Thank you. Tony?

Mr. Tavares: So, besides this interview, did you meet with Marc & Carrie?

Ms. Matusik: I did interview with Marc & Carrie, as well as I think that was a prerequisite for all, everybody to do.

Mr. Tavares: I just thought that one of them was going to be here. I didn't know.

Ms. Lamas: We will discuss after the interview what.

Mr. Tavares: The recommendation?

Ms. Lamas: Yes, I have it right here.

Mr. Tavares: Ok. I didn't know that.

Ms. Matusik: I didn't know that either.

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Ms. Lamas: That's going to be discussed after the interview. This is for the interview with Paulina. And I did mention that all 3 candidates were interviewed by Marc & Carrie prior to starting. Any more questions for Paulina?

Mr. Tavares: No.

Ms. DeSantis: I have no other questions.

Ms. Lamas: Any questions?

Ms. Matusik: For the board? Yeah. I did write some questions down for you guys. I guess just doing this job for the last 7 months, what I guess I've never really asked you guys and if I do get the position, what is the one most important, or if you have a couple that's fine, important thing that you would want me to accomplish within the next 90 days?

Ms. DeSantis: That's a very good question.

Mr. Tavares: So, I'll just say something to that question Paulina. It's a great question. While my thing was always working together as a team. You have a team behind you. And what I would like to see, personally myself, keep working together as a team because working together as a team, I think you guys are going to succeed in what you guys do. I'd just like to see you guys work close as a team.

Ms. Matusik: Awesome. Thank you, Tony.

Ms. DeSantis: Well, I don't know if this is more of a statement than an answer for you, but what has happened is this department has come together. And that's happened already, and that is something that I would hope for in the first 90 days, but you've kind of accomplished that already. Have all services under one roof. That's been accomplished already. And if not, I would have said we need to shoot for the goals for that. And thirdly, to heal as a department. Because of the ups and downs over the last couple of years and then going through Covid and different

stuff. Just healing from ups and downs, but apparently that sounds like something else you've accomplished in the last couple of months or year. And then, so that is what I would answer. If you were a new person coming in, those are the three things I would be looking for in the next 90 days.

Ms. Matusik: Thank you.

Ms. Lamas: I echo Tony and Adrienne and I think that all being said that I would thinking about the needs assessment, and this can't happen in 90 days probably, so maybe in a year. From that needs assessment, I would love to see kind of three strategic priorities for the department that work towards addressing what has been found in that assessment. So, we don't know yet what it will look like, we can probably speculate based on what the health needs are, in conversations that we've had and what's happening just across the region. But that's what I'd like to see kind of having these three priorities and thinking about it strategically over the course of is it 2 years, 3 years 5 years to reach that smart goal. So, and that will come now as Adrienne mentioned, a couple of those successes have been met where having a full department, services and healing.

Ms. DeSantis: It's almost like they need it to happen first as a foundation before you can move ahead and start goal setting.

Ms. Matusik: Yeah, I agree. Thank you, guys. One last question for you all. What is the performance review process for you guys as the health director?

Ms. Lamas: So, there is something formal that Carrie has. And with your interim position we haven't done that as a board and I think that in years past it's done as a board, or it's done as individual board members and the individual board members present it. So, I think that would be a decision that the board would make when that performance review time comes around. Is that right?

Ms. DeSantis: I think we all did an evaluation and fed it to one person to then incorporate into one presentation.

Ms. Matusik: Ok, thank you.

Ms. Lamas: And I don't think she's updated since the same one that I saw last time, the performance reviews that everyone else has.

Ms. Matusik: Well, those are all my questions for you guys.

Ms. Lamas: Any last, no, ok. Well thanks Paulina.

Ms. Matusik: Thank you guys. I appreciate your time.

Ms. DeSantis: Thank you.

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The interview ended.

Ms. Lamas: Ok, so this is the third candidate. I know that it was emailed but I have a copy if you all wanted to take a look at it.

Ms. DeSantis: I have it.

Mr. Tavares: I have it too.

Ms. Lamas: Ok. So, I do have a printed email from Carrie with recommendations and I was waiting for the end because I didn't want it to, I wanted to discuss it as a board together. So, this is the candidate. We have, it is the discretion of the board, or the decision of the board if we choose to interview this candidate or we decide to you know decline an interview based on what we heard today from Paulina.

Mr. Tavares: Do you know why she wasn't able to come?

Ms. Lamas: Oh yeah, sorry about that. She was unable to come because she has a conflict in her schedule. She's on vacation.

Mr. Tavares: Ok.

Ms. Lamas: Any discussion? Comments about this?

Ms. DeSantis: I defer to Tony.

Mr. Tavares: I mean, we do see her resume. I know she went to Northeastern University where she got her degree. If she knew about the day I don't understand. Maybe she's away.

Ms. Lamas: She's away.

Mr. Tavares: I don't know what you guys think. Should we wait to meet her? I mean Paulina brings a lot to the table. I mean she has some. The only thing I've got to say about this girl is that she did take the time to do this, to fill out and be interested. Also, to come and meet with us.

Ms. Lamas: So before.

Ms. DeSantis: Yes, can you just fill us in on.

Ms. Lamas: Yes, why don't I just give you this. I don't know if we need to read this out loud until we make our decision.

Ms. DeSantis: Thank you. Can we just react off this then?

Ms. Lamas: Yes, absolutely.

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Ms. DeSantis: Then I would support what Carrie wrote. She already has Marc and Carrie's approval. I have no reason to second guess that at all.

Mr. Tavares: I agree with Adrienne especially since she's been doing it for 7 months, so we know what she brings to the table, you know what I mean. And she's been doing a good job in the last 7 months. I support too for Paulina.

Ms. Lamas: Ok. I'm 100% in agreement with both of you. I agree. Paulina has been doing this for 7 months and I don't think there's a better candidate for this position. So that being said, when I spoke with Carrie, we can model it off of what we did last time for the health inspector where there can be a board member working with Carrie to negotiate salary and have an offer letter drawn up. We just need to determine a start date. I was thinking July 3rd, starting the Monday before the holiday. That starts the new fiscal year.

Mr. Tavares: Does Carrie have enough time to do all that?

Ms. Lamas: Yes, because Paulina is already an employee so it's just getting an offer letter and signing off on some paperwork.

Mr. Tavares: I don't care when she starts. I don't have an issue with it.

Ms. Lamas: Does that sound good?

Ms. DeSantis: yes. If she can't then the following Monday.

Ms. Lamas: Yeah. So, we'll let her know the board asked for July 3rd and if not, we'll do July 10th as an effective date.

Mr. Tavares: I personally won't be, since I'm going to be away for 2 weeks, I personally don't want to be the one with Carrie about the salary. I don't know which one of you guys, but just because I'm going to be, you know what I mean.

Ms. DeSantis: But that would be between Carrie and Paulina, right?

Ms. Lamas: So, the board member is the one. I do have the current budget as it stands. Paulina sent it to me. The one that was approved with the town meeting.

Ms. DeSantis: So, you do your magic with Carrie and Paulina and if for some reason it gets stuck you let us know.

Ms. Lamas: Ok.

Ms. DeSantis: And then we can modify our choice.

Ms. Lamas: Ok.

Ms. DeSantis: But if all goes well.

Ms. Lamas: So either July 3rd or July 10th.

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Ms. DeSantis: And that she's accepting of the salary. We don't know that yet.

Ms. Lamas: Let's just have a formal vote to make sure we did everything.

Mr. Tavares: I make a motion to offer the Public Health Director job to Paulina Matusik.

Ms. Lamas: Is there a second?

Ms. DeSantis: I second it.

Ms. Lamas: All in favor. Motion passes 3-0. So Paulina will be offered the position. Alright. That's it for today. I just need a motion to adjourn.

Ms. DeSantis: I make a motion that we adjourn for today the 27th of June, and it is 4:59 PM.

Ms. Lamas: Second?

Mr. Tavares: Second.

Ms. Lamas: All in favor. Motion passes 3-0. The Board of Health meeting adjourns at 4:59 PM on Tuesday, June 27th.

Respectfully submitted,

Adrienne DeSantis

Secretary

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