HALIFAX BOARD OF SELECTMEN

SELECTMEN MEETING

TUESDAY, MAY 18, 2021 – 6:30 P.M.

GREAT HALL

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Meeting came to order at 6:30 p.m. with Selectmen, Gordon C. Andrews, Troy E. Garron and Ashley A. DiSesa present.

**PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE**

The Board as well as those attending tonight’s meeting stood to recite the Pledge of Allegiance.

**SCHEDULED APPOINTMENTS**

**Darlene Regan - Interview for Council on Aging Director**

*Andrews*

Tell us a little about yourself and what interests you in taking this position in the Town of Halifax.

*Regan*

I transitioned to the gerontology in 2000 from the health care industry due to the industry changing and outsourcing a lot of the jobs. I went back to school, and I have a degree in speech and language, and decided that gerontology was where I needed to be. I volunteered and that’s how I got involved with the S.H.I.N.E. and have been doing it for almost ten years. In terms of Medicare, I have a good background in that area coming from the insurance industry and that lingo but when the Affordable Care Act – I decided to venture into becoming a Certified Application Counsellor for the state of Massachusetts. I did that almost five years before transitioning from Old Colony Elder Services and then into the position that I’m in now. I also went back to school and got my Master’s in Health Care Advocacy because the need for advocacy is out there especially with the transition of the ACA, and that’s what most of our population is struggling with, not just our older adults or just people with disabilities, but many people today - young population. I earned my master’s degree last year in Health Care Advocacy, and I’ve been working in Outreach for the Town of Kingston. With my background I’ve been told that I’m over-qualified for the Outreach position, but it’s okay because I love what I do. But I also love the fact or enjoy the fact of being able to get out there and create programs that the state of Massachusetts is now offering under the Executive Office of Elder Affairs. There’s a lot out there, the Executive Office of Elder Affairs wants us to encourage some of these programs. I just signed on with the Massachusetts Council on Aging to re-write their Outreach Guidebook. So, the positivity, this is where I am today, and I love what I do. I enjoy working with the community – community is so important today, especially during the pandemic. We have to go forward – there are so many opportunities out there,

*Garron*

Did you ever have to fire anybody?

*Regan*

No, I’ve been in the supervisor’s position with Old Colony Elderly Services, and I had to reprimand and actually had a negative review for a person.

*Garron*

How do you deal with a patient that’s irate?

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*Regan*

Every person is going to have a different concern and there always is going to be a challenge with everything we encounter today. We don’t always agree, but we do work it out. It is a matter of everyone discussing it and working to see how we work out.

*DiSesa*

Do you have any experience in managing a budget for a facility like this?

*Regan*

In managing a budget, yes. I wrote a grant for the state of Massachusetts for a Navigator Program, so you have to have a budget. The reason I started the HBRC Inc., was to, back in 2012, when ACA was happening, - the Affordable Care Act means a lot a things to everyone – not so much in Medicare but for a lot of individuals, and so therefore, I wrote a grant to work with the community and so budget-wise you have to have your line-items in order. I work with that on a daily basis.

*DiSesa*

If you had to describe your character in one word, what would it be?

*Regan*

Flexible & Approachable.

*Garron*

How do you get along with other department heads in the effect with what you’re doing in your job?

*Regan*

In terms of where I am now, I’ve worked with the Executive Office of Elder Affairs, I work with the Kingston Town Administrator, and the staff in Kingston and get along with everyone well.

*Andrews*

How do you feel about public speaking/presenting before a group of people?

*Regan*

I feel comfortable with it as I have an experience in presenting topics and programs that that are offered.

*Andrews*

Have you visited the Council on Aging before?

*Regan*

Yes, I have. I was there in Halifax in 2000 and volunteered heavily actually there because of the S.H.I.N.E. – they didn’t have a S.H.I.N.E. counsellor there present, so I would jump from town to town, but I was there specifically for Halifax, so I met a lot of people there.

*Andrews*

The facility is not ideal, and the Board recognizes that but there is a plan to look at to try to do an addition to the Museum building down the street – put a new kitchen, bathroom, an elevator, and make that space open and usable to the Council, and then take the Museum artifacts and move them to Pope’s Tavern – that’s a process that’s being looked at right now, so for the short term the facility is still at Pope’s Tavern.

*Regan*

When I was volunteering, it was discussed at that time that perhaps maybe there would to be a change, there’d be some upgrades to the Senior Center, and a few things had changed – the kitchen area and so on. But there was always that contentious situation you know like especially with the other buildings going up, so I’m aware of that. But it’s nice that it’s still on the record to happen.

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*Garron*

How would you go about developing a relationship with the key departments?

*Regan*

You have to have a strong rapport and understand what the dynamics are and the direction we’re going to go as a Center. You have to have a strong core and you might have differences in opinion of how things should be developed, but working together is really important, and I strive to always make that happen. People don’t always agree, but there has to be a team effort in anything you do.

*Garron*

How do you feel about what the goal is for the Council on Aging?

*Garron*

Three most important skills the Director should have.

*Regan*

To have a relationship. The pandemic has changed the dynamics of everyone in this community – we have to search the needs of everyone in the community and see what we can provide. Also working within the realm of what we’re allowed to have for budgets, for going forward, even the community centers utilization for all aspects, care givers, which are so important today. Care giving today is a major concern and we all are care givers for someone, and that’s where our adaptation to the CoA has to be a community resource. I have a good, strong background in a lot of resources and connections with our state representative and senator’s office to work with.

*Garron*

Do you have any hobbies?

*Regan*

I’m a runner and do a lot of reading of course. I have two beautiful dogs, so I spend a lot of time with the walking. I like being outdoors.

*Garron*

Why do you think you’re the best candidate for this position?

*Regan*

I don’t think I’m the best of anything, but I am going to do one thing – be there for the community. I’m sincere, my passion and drive are to find resources that are going to work as we adapt working with the staff, the Town Administrator, and the Select Board to build a community. So I don’t say I’m the best, but I’ll tell you you’ll get a bang for your buck. I do provide a lot of information and a strong background. I’ll leave the rest up to your decision to whether or not I would be a good candidate.

*Andrews*

Are you certified in CPR, First Aid and AED?

*Regan*

We did get certification in October. I can re-do that, but we didn’t get our certificates, but we got certified.

*DiSesa*

What is one of your biggest accomplishments?

*Regan*

So as an Outreach Coordinator, basically the relationships I have built over time and the people’s trust. Prior to that, being able to make the connections with the different programs that are available. I worked heavily with MassHealth in terms of the different types of programs whether it be long-term care or community health. I write an article and I do a lot of connections to the community.

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We have to be very careful as to what we do bring into the centers because there’s a lot of stuff out there that people want to sell, and I don’t think that’s appropriate. I do believe that we have to be very cautious as to what kind of services we provide to our seniors, and I’m very guarded when it comes to anyone’s information.

*Garron*

Have you ever been in the position that you had to do the hiring?

*Regan*

Yes, I have. We rely heavily on volunteers, so we had interviewed several volunteers at their current position. Prior to that, as a supervisor with Old Colony Elder Services we had to hire and recommend certain individuals for certain positions to move up the ladder, so I had that option to do so.

*DiSesa*

Do you have any questions for us?

*Regan*

The direction of the Center?

*Andrews*

The process that we’re looking at right now is to to get an understanding of what systems are in the current building at the Museum and if we do an addition to that, what needs to be brought up to speed. I think the help from the Director of the layout will help with what kind of addition that we do, like spacing-wise and look at what the needs are. We have done numbers of studies about how big it should be and what needed – it’s going to be how you take that information, review that and then give input to what we can actually do with that space.

*Regan*

We have done a great job developing the Center in Kingston. It is one level, homey and warm. Then if you look at North Andover, which is fabulous, it’s huge, and it’s going to be called a Community Center. Plymouth is another big center. But you really have to base it on what programs are going to be offered and the needs of the seniors.

*Garron*

Do you believe in training your staff?

*Regan*

Yes, there is a lot of training available under the state of Massachusetts’s Council on Aging. There is so much information that’s out there under our umbrella. I call it “The Apple Tree” – if it’s there to be picked, we’re going to pick it, because it’s available to us. I’m budget-wise. I noticed that there are expenses that is allotted to the Council on Aging and salary and asked if they could define where that number comes from.

*Seelig*

It is going to be any expenditure, everything, unless there’s a specific line item that’s under the Council on Aging, it’s any non-wage expense. So, everything composing of office supplies to, I think there’s a separate line item for the van, there is, and the van expenses go there but it would not, it would go under that also. But basically, any operating expenses – electricity as an example, unless there’s an electricity line item, for Council, then electricity also is there.

*Regan*

I did not see any grants.

*Seelig*

The grants do not appear in the operating budget because in essence they’re all in a pot of money, not appropriated through the Town Meeting.

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For instance, there’s an annual grant that all Councils on Aging receive across the Commonwealth – that’s separated out but it’s not in the budget.

*Regan*

I didn’t see heavily investment in grants so, or am I wrong?

*Seelig*

I think specific grants for the Council have been applied by the staff.

*Regan*

The Massachusetts Council on Aging offered a grant just recently in reference to Apple computers, and they had offered that grant and some towns did apply for it and it was $46,000. I’m just kind of curious just to see where, what type of grant funding besides the formula grants that were offered.

*Andrews*

If you are offered the job, how soon would you be able to start?

*Regan*

two weeks.

**Debra Surpenant- Interview for Council on Aging Director**

*Andrews*

Would you like to tell us a little bit about yourself and why you are interested in and becoming the Council on Aging Director for the Town of Halifax.

*Surpenant*

I’ve always been interested in developing programs for older adults and people in. So I’m happy to be here and to be considered for this position.

*DiSesa*

Do you want to talk to us about what you do right now?

*Surpenant*

I started as the Community Social Worker and was there for 23 years. My prior employment was with the North Attleboro Housing Authority which is where I became very familiar with the needs of older adults, and I also worked with clients who were residents helping them get housing. I wanted to continue my work with that particular population. I was hired in 1995 in Mansfield as the Community Social Worker – I was the first full time Community Social Worker, and my position entailed giving services, information and referrals to people who were aged 59 and under, people who were in crisis. From there, I assumed the position of Assistant Director of the Council on Aging and Social Services – it was the same agency – that was in January of 2000, and I managed the transportation program, the nutrition program, and supervised the staff. I produced, edited, and wrote the Newsletter. We used to send everything out to a printer, but then we decided that we could do it in-house, and we did everything from brochures which I developed, to business cards, the newsletter, to flyers – everything in-house. It was fun and a great creative outlet. In 2017 my director retired after 35 years, and I was so appreciative of her mentorship, and I took over as Director.

*Garron*

What are the three skills that you think you should develop to be the Director of the Council on Aging?

*Surpenant*

Organization, the ability to work with different groups of people, the ability to collaborate, and the ability to write grants.

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There are so many different skills that a director needs to use for a Council on Aging, and I’ve been doing management for pretty much over 30 years, so I feel that I’ve got all those skills.

*Garron*

Have you done budgets?

*Surpenant*

I’ve developed budgets for grants and for the programs. I have worked with the Town Accountant to develop/refine our budget.

*DiSesa*

If you could describe yourself in one word, what would it be?

*Surpenant*

Optimistic.

*Andrews*

Are you comfortable with public speaking, presenting in front of a group?

*Surpenant*

I am, I’m a little shy, but I call up my high school and college drama skills, so what I learned from back then, but I’m fine speaking in public.

*Garron*

Have you done any hiring in the position that you are in?

*Surpenant*

I hired four positions, and in prior jobs I created positions and hired them. Very early on in my career I worked in the battered women’s movement and was the director of a battered women’s program in Fitchburg, and I enlarged that program and hired, created another office and hired a few staff people.

*Garron*

Have you ever had to discipline anyone?

*Surpenant*

Yes

*Garron*

What steps did you take?

*Surpenant*

As Director of the Council on Aging I actually had a situation that came up – a new hire had publicly humiliated another staff member, she was a few weeks into her employment, and I felt her treatment of another staff member was not called for and I told her that I did not think that it was going to work for her in our agency. I did ask her if she wanted to stay, she could stay but I felt she needed to resign after her public humiliation of that particular staff person. I think that having people working in this field requires respect for everybody. So yes, I have had to discipline people.

*Garron*

Have you ever had to deal with an irate individual coming into your office?

*Surpenant*

Yes. Usually there is a way to de-escalate, and usually irate people have other issues that are going on. I do, again, have a background in working within programs curbing violence against women and all people. If the behavior is a chronic behavior, then I think that it would be very proper for the Council on Aging to discuss with the family member or the person or both what steps should be taken to change the behavior.

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*Andrews*

Have you visited our Council on Aging before?

*Surpenant*

I visited it late last week, and I did speak with Susan. She told me that there were discussions in the works about increasing the space, so that would be very exciting.

*Andrews*

We are working on those, but seeing the space that is available right now, if you were hired do you feel comfortable that you could provide services to our families here in Halifax with the space that we currently have?

*Surpenant*

Sure, I think flexibility is an important aspect of any public service, and evaluation of space use is certainly post-COVID is certainly in order – how can we best use the space. But I understood that only during this emergency the upstairs being used.

*DiSesa*

What is one of your biggest accomplishments?

*Surpenant*

I think my grading the program. When I took over as the Director of the Council on Aging, my grading the program to make it more stimulating, mature and adult-like. One thing I did do was collaborate with the Audubon Sanctuary in Attleboro, and have the educator come and do a program on natural history. It was a four- or five-part program, and we had a tremendous amount of people coming every week. It was expensive from the standpoint of what we would normally offer, but it was paid through money that the Council on Aging did have for special programming. Very exciting for me, the Board and the staff.

*Andrews*

Are you certified in CPR, First Aid and AED?

*Surpenant*

I was certified for probably 20 years.

*Andrews*

So, there is nothing that would prevent you from becoming certified

*Surpenant*

No.

*Garron*

What would you do as far as staff is concerned over there?

*Surpenant*

I think the budget dictates how much staffing. It would be nice to see the Council on Aging grow and start an internship program with Bridgewater, which right down the street. We could take care of some social work issues; do some field work; do some recreational or educational programs. Supplement what the Council on Aging offers by doing some creative exploration and collaboration. One thing I did was develop a one-year action plan, should I be hired in this position, and if it’s okay I’d like to implement it. Because the Council on Aging is more than just the Director, it is so important that the Board, the Town Administrator, and the Select Board, be involved in determining the direction of the Council on Aging. It would be nice to see short- and long-term plans.

*Andrews*

Do you have questions for the Board?

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*Surpenant*

Not at this point.

*Andrews*

If you were offered this position how soon would you be available to start?

*Surpenant*

Right now, I’m home doing an on-line graduate study and that work is flexible, but I do have a commitment in early June so I would say probably by mid-June sometime.

**MEETING ADJOURNED**

There being no further business, moved by Garron and seconded by DiSesa, the Board unanimously voted to adjourn the meeting at 7:30 p.m.

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Ashley A. DiSesa

Clerk

/pjm