

BOARD OF COMMISSIONERS MEETING  
MINUTES OF  
September 10, 2020  
Buzzards Bay Water District 15 Wallace Ave. Buzzards Bay, MA 02532

Present:

Wendy Chapman, Chairperson  
Joe Carrara, Commissioner  
Judith Flynn, Commissioner  
Galon "Skip" Barlow - Commissioner  
Steven Souza – Superintendent  
Barry Woods - Administrative Support

Absence: Robert Ethier, Co-Chair Commissioner

Guests as indicated below in items 2., 3., 4. at stated times.

Meeting was held outdoors at the office at 15 Wallace Ave and recorded by Steven Souza, Superintendent

There was a statement made by the Chairperson to entertain a motion to call the Buzzards Bay Water District meeting to order at 4:46p.m. Commissioner Carrara made the motion to call the meeting to order. Seconded by Commissioner Barlow. Unanimous yes vote of all commissioners.

The Chairperson alerted all attendees that the meeting was being recorded. No other attendee indicated that they were recording the meeting.

**1. Interview candidates for Clerk/Treasurer from prescreening committee:** Mr. Efthimiades was on premises and the interview started a few minutes early. Each candidate was given a package containing but not limited to: Job descriptions of all staff members assigned to the Buzzards Bay Water District; Salary Step chart; Clerk/Treasurer Personnel facts outlining terms and conditions of employment-hours-probationary period-supervision-reporting-health insurance-dental insurance-retirement system-personal days-sick leave-vacations-life insurance-longevity-special requirements. A mission statement was included describing the technical; financial; and managerial abilities to sustain and operate the water district in compliance with governing laws and directives, organizational chart; job posting; proposed budget for FY 2021 (all attached). Each interviewee was given ample time to review the package presented them. Each interviewee was given the opportunity to ask questions and receive answers regarding any information in the attachments to include an overview of the district by the commissioners.

**2. Interview 5:00p.m:** Bill Efthimiades

**3. Interview 5:30p.m:** John Foley

#### **4. Interview 6:00p.m: Tawnya Menesale**

Each Interviewee was asked the following approved questions by the Board of Water Commissioners:

1. Tell us about yourself to include your background that qualifies you for this job and your current responsibilities and duties. (Commissioner Barlow)
2. If selected, when will you be available to start working at the Buzzards Bay Water District. (Commissioner Flynn)
3. Where do you see yourself in five years and are you willing to travel when necessary for various conferences and training to achieve this goal. (Commissioner Carrara)
4. Why should we hire you and what inspired you to apply for this job. In particular, because we are a small District. (Commissioner Chapman)
5. Do you have any specific comments or questions for the Board. (Commissioner Barlow)
6. How do you cope with stressful situations and working under pressure. Subsequently, how do you interact with others in accomplishing the overall goals and objectives. (Commissioner Flynn)
7. What are your strengths and weaknesses. (Commissioner Carrara)
8. What management style suits you the best. Do you feel comfortable working independently and being involved in the total team concept and taking any necessary actions to carry out the mission of the Buzzards Bay Water District. (Commissioner Chapman).

**5. Discussion about candidates:** Upon conclusion of all interviews, the commissioners discussed the following: Commissioner Barlow said that it was a good idea to discuss all candidates while the information is fresh in everyone's minds. He additionally indicated that he was comfortable with the interviews that were conducted and the candidates provided by the prescreening committee. Commissioner Carrara wanted additional time to digest the information as each candidate brought something different to the table and it is imperative that the commissioners make the right decision. Mr. Woods felt that there was one candidate the night before and one candidate during this meeting that would be best suited for the water district position. He additionally said that his concern is that historically we've had problems with DOR regarding free cash and it is felt that it would be a problem if we move slowly and stressed the importance of filling the position as soon as possible. We have had candidates drop out and there is a lot of jobs changing out there and the longer we wait we may lose the best candidate for the position. Due to the complexity of the job, each day we fall further behind and new information is constantly available. Superintendent Souza agreed with Mr. Woods. He additionally said there is a lot of information in areas that he is not familiar with and that our part-time helper Vivian although extremely helpful is unfamiliar with some issues and that is a concern when it comes to DOR and other facets of the operations. Commissioner Barlow asked Mr. Woods who the two individuals were that he felt was most qualified. Mr. Woods said that Jessica Norwood was the candidate from the previous night. The second candidate is Tawnya Menesale that was just interviewed

tonight. Commissioner Barlow said that those are the two candidates that he was thinking about also. The commissioners discussed these two individuals in length as they clearly demonstrated the quality and skills needed and were clearly above all of the other candidates. Superintendent Souza agreed with the other commissioners and Mr. Woods regarding these two candidates. Commissioner Carrara agreed as well. However, he felt that there is a difference between the two candidates, i.e., one knows VADAR and the other candidate doesn't. Tawnya would be able to contribute right away. Commissioner Chapman said that Tawnya was the most qualified because she has already gone through treasurers/collectors school, has already worked as a treasurer and is familiar with DOR in addition to her qualifications. Commissioner Flynn said that Tawnya is also a CPA and can probably do the taxes. It was mentioned that the district is exempt from paying taxes as a municipality. Commissioner Barlow felt that Tawnya had the best interview and was very concise and to the point. She displayed how flexible she can be as an individual or with the team and that is what we need. Commissioner Chapman added that her knowledge of VADAR was very valuable to the district as previously mentioned by Mr. Woods. Also, at the present time, the only person that knows the VADAR system is the billing clerk which puts the district at a disadvantage. If a situation arises where the billing clerk cannot report to work for various reasons, the district would be in a real bind. Commissioner Flynn asked if the previous treasurer ever learned VADAR. Commissioner Chapman said that she wanted to learn it, but she wasn't allowed to. Commissioner Flynn asked why not. Commissioner Chapman said that it was a preference from the person running the VADAR system because she felt she was the one in charge. Mr. Woods said that it has been like that for years and that more interaction would be a positive direction for the water district. He further clarified how there had been problems in the past due to the lack of communication and having cross training would bring much needed flexibility. Commissioner Flynn said that with a two-person office staff, you really need to have them co-train. Commissioner Chapman said that is her position. Subsequently, superintendent Souza has been approached because there is a technician very capable of learning VADAR. The problem is that you really don't want the treasurer getting involved in the billing side because of checks and balances. One person is collecting the money and one person is balancing the money. You do not want the same person collecting the money, making deposits, and doing the balancing. Commissioner Flynn asked if billing clerk is mainly responsible for sending out the bills and taking the money in. Subsequently, the treasurer puts the money in the bank. Commissioner Chapman said that is correct and the treasurer runs all the reports. Mr. Woods added that the billing clerk does the commitments. Commissioner Flynn asked if the treasurer puts the data into QuickBooks. Commissioner Chapman said yes. She additionally said it is a check and balances system just like the town has with the treasurer and town collector. By law, they cannot be responsible for the same functions. Additionally, one of our technicians who actually works on the equipment understands the process and very capable of learning the VADAR system in case we run into a problem down the road. Commissioner Flynn asked if the billing clerk has a problem with somebody else learning the system. The answer is yes and sometimes no depending upon the time and situation. Commissioner Carrara indicated that this has been a problem that has developed over years. Mr. Woods said that although the superintendent, treasurer,

billing clerk and himself work closely together, there has been a need over the years for people to go into the field and get a greater understanding of the true overall picture. However, there has been pushback in the past. Corey has shown the interest and has shown management ability. Specifically, because he's worked in retail with management skills, he helped with the meter program which was going very slow, he took the time to create the spreadsheets and has shown his interest in working with the billing clerk to show her the field aspects of the position. Commissioner Flynn said that it makes sense for him to learn the VADAR system. Commissioner Chapman said that they have already started the process. Consequently, the billing clerk has made a comment asking if the district is trying to get rid of her. The billing clerk was told no, but in a small water district like ours it is imperative that we work together and have flexibility. It was also mentioned that when people have been around for a long period of time may feel insecure about sharing information about their job with others. Commissioner Barlow asked superintendent Souza and Mr. Woods which person they felt the most comfortable with in learning the VADAR system. He also asked all the commissioners. Commissioner Chapman stated that the superintendent has been recently been told that the VADAR manuals are in the office and will currently be shared for instructional purposes. Commissioner Carrara asked if the person selected to train will also train in the billing clerk's total job. Commissioner Chapman said no. The person will be required to learn enough so that he can monitor it for any problems. We currently have no one available to do that. Mistakes and misunderstandings happen, we are only human. Mr. Woods indicated that the last candidate knowing the VADAR system is a big plus to include her past municipal experience. The district has had problems in the past with the VADAR system and the knowledge thereof. Commissioner Flynn mentioned that before a final decision can be made to hire, the references need to be checked out. Commissioner Chapman also said that we must have our treasurer be certified. Commissioner Flynn said that we did send the previous treasurer to be certified. Commissioner Chapman said that Tawnya has already started the certification. Subsequently, it would lower the costs to the district for the courses already taken. Commissioner Carrara felt that there was too much interference between the commissioners and the staff. He further stated, that he does not like it, it should've never happened, and is against the guidelines of the water district. The commissioners need to stick to their job of taking care of the warrants, the meetings, and to go through the chairperson for any other business. Commissioners are not operational staff and should not interfere with their assigned duties and responsibilities. If it is warranted, it would be permissible to ask the superintendent or Mr. Woods in administrative support. Any concerns either of them have, they are to contact the chairperson for instructions. We want people to be able to do their job without the additional unnecessary interference which is against the guidelines for commissioners. Mr. Woods stated that he has tried to make positive change over the years. He respects all the commissioners. However, since we've changed to a five-member commission board, there has been miscommunication problems with the board not working together and we need to stay within the parameters of the open meeting law which is not always the case of late. If there are problems that need to be discussed or brought forward, it should be put on the agenda. Since the notice given by the previous treasurer to leave the district, people are very uneasy with things that have negatively transpired and keeps people guessing

about their own jobs. We don't want to go back to the time when we had four superintendents in six years because of problems created. This has made it difficult as an example to get information from the billing clerk who has been here the longest. It took quite a while to build mutual cooperation and trust. Because the new five-member board is not fully working together under the rules and guidelines established for the position, it has led to negative feelings of the staff. There is a learning curve that is understandable, but the interference must stop for unity and operational purposes. Any problems festering would be best discussed in open session and appropriately put on an agenda. Commissioner Chapman explained the requirements for an agenda. Commissioner Carrara agreed that it doesn't make any sense for people to overstep their boundaries without working together as mandated. The purpose behind having five commissioners was so that we could have greater discussion and quorums during board meetings and make good sound decisions. But, by the same token, the operational staff has to be able to learn and do their jobs without interference. Especially, where they are very well qualified individuals. Commissioners should listen and learn and not interrupt a smooth running process. Concerns should be brought up as Mr. Woods indicated at a meeting after being put on the agenda properly. This is not a full-time job as a commissioner, and it is a mistake to try to make it one. Commissioner Barlow agreed with commissioner Carrara. He also added that if the superintendent has a problem, he could bring it to the board. Commissioner Chapman said that it is similar to the town. The board of selectmen are not allowed to go to the individual departments in the town hall and tell them how to do their jobs and saying you should be doing this and you shouldn't be doing that. There is an authority protocol that must be followed. Commissioner Barlow agreed saying he doesn't go into the Board of Health or the Town Administrator and tell them how to do their job. Commissioner Chapman said that the boards meetings are full disclosure. The commissioners resumed conversation regarding the final two candidates that were best qualified. Commissioner Barlow wanted the input from the superintendent and Mr. Woods regarding the best qualified candidate where they will be working so close with the treasurer and would be required to give feedback during the probationary period. We would like to see a smooth transition. Commissioner Chapman mentioned that having a technician learn the VADAR system would take pressure off the new treasurer. She also said that the superintendent and Mr. Woods would have to be content with the selection of the new treasurer, so their input is very important. She further asked if they had a preference. After discussion with all involved, it was felt that Tawnya Menesale was the best qualified applicant that would best fit the needs of the water district and will make a positive immediate impact. The commissioners also felt that Jessica Norwood was an excellent candidate although she did not have the experience or the qualifications that Tawnya Menesale has. Chairman Chapman stated that there is a distinct difference between accounting in the real world and that in municipalities which is very important to the selection. October is the deadline for dealing with DOR and Tawnya has experience and is familiar with what is required. Mr. Woods said that in the past in the month of March DOR would call and say that they would not certify our free cash because of problems. Commissioner Barlow stated that he wanted references of the top two candidates. Mr. Woods received the references per instructions on Jessica Norwood interviewed on September 9. Superintendent Souza will get the references on

Tawnya Menesale. There was talk about references being in written form; email; and/or by telephone. There was a motion made by Commissioner Barlow to have Tawnya Menesale as the number one candidate and Jessica Norwood as the number two candidate if for any reason Tawnya Menesale turned down the job. Having the two candidates references made available for the commissioners to review was part of the motion. Commissioner Carrara seconded the motion. Unanimous yes vote by all commissioners.

There was a final discussion on the date and time to meet with Tawnya Menesale. There was a motion made by Commissioner Flynn to have a meeting with the selected candidate Tawnya Menesale on Thursday, September 17, 2020 at 4:00p.m. to negotiate all aspects and requirements of the hiring process regarding terms and conditions of employment; and signing of any documents required and/or finalize any administrative functions to include but not limited to salary. Seconded by Commissioner Barlow. Unanimous yes vote by all commissioners. Superintendent Souza will make the necessary notifications and preparations for the September 17<sup>th</sup> meeting.

**6. Any business not reasonably anticipated within 48 hours:** The Chairperson asked if there was any business not reasonably anticipated within 48 hours that needed to be discussed. There was no discussion.

**7. Adjourn:** There was a motion made by Commissioner Barlow to adjourn the meeting. Seconded by Commissioner Flynn. Unanimous yes vote by all commissioners.

**Recorded by:**  
**Stephen Souza**