

**TOWN OF NEWMARKET, NEW HAMPSHIRE  
TOWN COUNCIL NON-PUBLIC MEETING**

**June 17, 2015 5:30 PM**

**NON-PUBLIC RSA 91-A:3 II – PERSONNEL**

PRESENT: Council Chairman Phil Nazzaro, Council Vice Chairman Gary Levy, Councilor Dale Pike, Councilor Amy Thompson, Councilor Toni Weinstein, Councilor Amy Burns, Councilor Larry Pickering

EXCUSED: None ALSO PRESENT: Town Administrator Steve Fournier, Town Clerk/Tax Collector Terri Littlefield

**AGENDA**

Chairman Nazzaro called the meeting to order at 5:33 pm.

Vice Chair Levy made a motion to move into Non-Public Session, and Councilor Pike seconded.

Town Administrator Fournier polled the council and the motion passed 7-0.

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Chairman Nazzaro informed Town Administrator Fournier that the goal of the Council was to first discuss the matter and then have him come back in for the last half-hour to talk about their recommendations. Town Administrator Fournier then left the Council Chambers.

**TOWN ADMINISTRATOR GOALS**

Chairman Nazzaro stated that he had met with all the department heads to confirm opinions of the performance of Town Administrator Fournier, and presented a recap of the positive and negative feedback he had received. He said that in general everyone felt Town Administrator Fournier knew the business and all the aspects of government very well. They also felt his positive attitude and interpersonal relationship skills were good for the Town and he was well-liked. On the negative side they cited Town Administrator Fournier's lack of demonstrated leadership, his inability to complete the pay increases on time, and his sometimes inattentiveness at meetings. They said that no department head meetings had been held and that Town Administrator Fournier had taken no pro-active steps to keep them informed. Chairman Nazzaro said that personnel reviews had still not been sent out, though he had reported they were completed. He stressed that the Council needed to do due diligence and let him know when he was not doing well and when he was, and that they needed a course of action to follow. He explained that he was using the topic headings from the employee evaluation form as a guideline for suggesting actions to help Town Administrator Fournier improve his performance and asked the Council to discuss areas in which they felt he was doing well and areas where he needed to improve.

The Council generally agreed that Town Administrator Fournier was knowledgeable and personable. Councilor Pike felt that he came across well to the public and always made himself available. He also felt that meetings were run well and the budget process had also been run well, and that he came across as confident by his actions. Councilor Thompson agreed that he had a good knowledge of the job. Chairman Nazzaro felt that Town Administrator Fournier understood the government but that he was not sure how to be an effective manager. Vice Chair Levy felt that while he came across in a convincing manner, he sometimes made up things he did not know, and Councilor Pickering agreed. Chairman Nazzaro said that Town Administrator Fournier worked well with his staff, was good with public relations and had excellent interpersonal skills. Councilor Pike felt that they did not have a good system in place to evaluate Town Administrator Fournier's performance according to standard management procedures, but that they needed to follow his progress. Chairman Nazzaro added that though Town Administrator Fournier was good at building relationships and had good interpersonal skills, he had not notified the department heads that the money for the raises was available and would be distributed, which had contributed to the incident involving Chief Cyr.

The Council next discussed areas where Town Administrator Fournier needed improvement. Councilor Weinstein said that with regard to the Lamprey Health Transportation issue, he had assured them that other towns did not include this in their budgets, which turned out not to be the case. Councilor Thompson agreed that he very confidently made assertions, and Chairman Nazzaro said that it then became a matter of trust. Councilor Pickering brought up the codification process and wondered how an ordinance once passed by the Council had become missing. Vice Chair Levy said that Town Administrator Fournier also took notes during the meeting, but did not always follow through and provide the information requested by the Council. Chairman Nazzaro said issues of liability and dependability were raised, and cited Town Administrator Fournier's lack of reliability, his standard management practices, and his tendency to quickly give out incorrect answers. Councilor Pickering said that it was difficult to be "one of the guys" and an effective manager at the same time. Chairman Nazzaro mentioned that Town Administrator Fournier was quick to cut a Councilor off at a meeting if he did not like the direction things were going.

The Council then discussed possible ways to help Town Administrator Fournier succeed, and Chairman Nazzaro suggested finding a mentor or coach to advise him. He also said that the Councilors could provide individual coaching in their areas of strength. Councilor Thompson felt they needed to make sure Town Administrator Fournier remained proactive and that a mentor was a better solution. Vice Chair Levy suggested finding a coach who could get feedback from the Town Council, and work with Town Administrator Fournier to achieve results. He said that the coach would then know all the issues and could address these to Town Administrator Fournier and hold him accountable. Councilor Weinstein said that she would have a hard time recommending a "councilor" and that she would hate to see that become a substitute for the Council dealing with the Town Administrator directly. Chairman Nazzaro said that his job performance would dictate his responsibilities. Councilor Pike felt they were really looking for some way to track his progress and that a mentor could help him do the standard things he should be doing. Councilor Pickering said they needed to be more on top of things, and again referred to the comments of Chief Cyr. Chairman Nazzaro explained that if Town Administrator Fournier had been in communication with his department heads, the incident could have been avoided. He felt that Town Administrator Fournier had created an environment that had allowed it to happen. Councilor Burns

agreed with having a mentor to provide extra guidance, and felt that along with the goals the Council also needed strong expectations, and suggested using a spreadsheet to track his progress. Chairman Nazzaro said that they needed to manage tighter and make sure things were getting done, adding that there were multiple agencies who supplied this type of guidance. Councilor Thompson said they also needed to support each other and improve their communications. Chairman Nazzaro added that they needed to be more deliberate in discussing any issues they were seeing with Town Administrator Fournier as they arose. In general, the Council felt they should work to find a mentor/coach to help Town Administrator grow, let him know he needed to do a better job, and assure him they believed in his ability to succeed.

Town Administrator Fournier was brought back into the Council Chambers at approximately 6:35 pm.

Chairman Nazzaro told Town Administrator Fournier that the Council would continue to hold quarterly counseling meetings addressing areas where he needed to improve. He told Town Administrator Fournier that they believed he had the capacity to achieve at a high level, but that now morale was low due to the pay raises. He first addressed things that were going well, citing his interpersonal skills and the fact that he was well-liked by all in the community. He said that the Council wanted him to succeed and continue with his ability to keep up good relationships with the staff, and stressed the importance of these relationships to the Town. He said he felt that Town Administrator Fournier was lacking in the area of communications and cited his lapse in holding staff and department head meetings, adding that he should have held one-on-one meetings with department heads regarding the pay raises. He stressed the importance of reliability and following standard management procedures, i.e. completing employee reviews as required by the Town Charter. He said that the Council needed him to handle these processes so that they could focus on strategic issues.

Chairman Nazzaro then presented the recommendation of the Council to provide a mentorship to work with the Town Administrator to help him succeed, mentioning MRI as one of the companies that provided this type of service. He said that Town Administrator Fournier needed to be a better manager, and he felt a breakdown of trust had occurred. He added that the Councilors also had individual skills that could be made available to him. Town Administrator Fournier said he realized that a lack of communication had occurred regarding the incident with Police Chief Cyr. He stressed that he completely understood the importance of trust, and said that he would go over the reviews and raises with each of the department heads in the next week. He said that he would be combining the reviews and goals in one document in the future. Chairman Nazzaro replied that goals had been established in January and said it was unacceptable that the reviews had not yet been completed as required by Charter. He added that he wanted to see the employee evaluations for 2015 when they were completed. He said that quarterly counseling would continue to occur every three (3) months, and that the mentor issue would be finalized within the next month. Councilor Thompson felt that they needed to follow-up and follow through to get this accomplished.

#### **DEEDING – Terri Littlefield**

Town Clerk/Tax Collector Terri Littlefield reported that the Deeding would be done on the following day, and that there were four (4) properties who had not paid up. She said that two (2) of them were Mobile

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Homes which were to be handled in small claims court, plus the Eagles property on 41 Exeter Road and a small parcel of land on Hersey Lane with an assessed value of \$7,300. She said that the owners had 3 years to pay all back taxes plus 15% of the current assessed value of the property. Councilor Pike asked about the woman who had requested a payment plan be set up, and Town Clerk/Tax Collector Littlefield replied that the Mortgage Company had stepped in and paid the taxes. She stressed that she needed to complete the deeding by 5 pm on June 18, 2015. She explained that if it was not done tomorrow, she would need to restart the entire deed process. Town Administrator Fournier said that Town Attorney John Ratigan would cover the process but that the Town's insurance company may not recommend proceeding. Councilor Thompson suggested having Attorney Ratigan call the insurance company and confirm.

Councilor Burns made a motion to move out of Non-Public Session and Councilor Thompson seconded.

Town Administrator Fournier polled the Council and the motion passed unanimously, 7-0.

Chairman Nazzaro closed the Non-Public Session at approximately 6:58 pm.

Respectfully submitted,

Patricia Denmark, Recording Secretary.