

## **HOLLISTON BOARD OF SELECTMEN**

July 22, 2014  
2:30 p.m.

Selectmen's Meeting Room  
Town Hall

Present Kevin Conley, Chairman; Jay Marsden, Vice Chairman; Jay Leary, Clerk; and Paul Le Beau, Town Administrator.

### **DPW DIRECTOR INTERVIEWS**

Sean Reese was present and thanked the Board for the interview. He said that he has a solid technical foundation. He does not know how to do everything and he does not know everyone. He said that he has solid management skills. Mr. Conley asked what strengths and weakness do you see in Holliston. Mr. Reese said he did do a little research and spoke to a former Water Commissioner who worked for him in the past. He said that he knows that there are problems with the Water Department and you want someone to come in right away to take hold and get that department underway correctly. He said that there are hydrant issues. He said that we do not know how many there are and how many work and how many do not work. He said that he is 100% confident that he can come in and straighten out the Water Department. He said Holliston is a small town like Hudson. He said that both Towns are similar. He said that there would always be a separation of licensed treatment operators and highway. He said that there can be some co-mingling but the water department has a special service and specialty jobs. They should not be doing asphalt work. He said plowing is ok. He said that there will be a separation between Highway and Water. Mr. Conley asked if Mr. Reese would be stronger on the water side of the department or the highway side? Mr. Reese said that he would be strong on the water side. He said that he has all but one water license, that is treatment #4. He said that he plans on taking that test by November. He also said that he has several degrees. He is in school going for a degree in Civil Engineering. He said that he does not want to lose out on a job opportunity down the road because he did not have a degree. He said that he thinks it is a good degree to have. Mr. Conley asked how would he combine the two departments together to form a DPW. Mr. Reese said that there should always be someone on-call in both departments. He said that during the week, it would be a Water Department and a Highway Department and on the weekends the departments would co-mingle. He said that a Highway person and a Water person would work together. He said in snow emergencies for plowing, they would all work together. He said that they would all have to be available for overtime. He said that he has worked in towns that the Water Department did everything from digging the hole to filling it back in with asphalt. He said that some Towns have an asphalt crew. They would take care of the road repair after a water main break. He said that we would have to see what happens with the staffing. He said that we would have to see how both departments work together. Mr. Conley asked if Mr. Reese was able to write grants. He said that he has done a little grant work. Mr. Conley asked if Mr. Reese believed in process. Mr. Reese said that he believes in defined roles. He said that you should know what your role is and what is expected of you. He said that there should be a recordkeeping process to break it down for a daily role. Mr. Conley asked if there were an emergency, how long would it take you to get to Town? Mr. Reese said that it took him 30 minutes to get to Holliston. Mr. Reese said that the DEP requires a 60 minute response time. He said that he would like to see an employee who lives in Town be on-call. That way, they can respond immediately. Mr. Leary asked what skills do you have to be a DPW Director? Mr. Reese said that he has a solid management foundation. He said

that he can work with people. He said that a DPW Director is technical. You have to be able to relay information to the average person. He said that people demand more today. He said that it is different from 20 years ago. He said that they want more services. Mr. Reese said that you have to be able to manage people. He said that you do not get the best out of people if you yell and bring them down. He said that is not how he manages. He said that not everyone will have the skills that you think they have. He said that you try and bring out the best in them. He said that in the towns that he has worked in, there are good workers and there are not so good workers. Mr. Leary asked Mr. Reese what is the best thing that has happened to you? He said now. He said that public works is a great field to be in. He loves the people that are in the public works. He said that he can run a department and manage people. He said that every role he has had in public works he has earned more responsibility. He said a DPW Director is what he wants to be. He said that his worst experience would be he worked in another town and he had a foreman who was very difficult to deal with. He said that he does want to be yelled at every day. He said that he learned a lot from that employee. He said that he learned how to treat people. Mr. Leary said that you have worked in existing DPW's, this would be a different situation. It will be new and just in the beginning stages. How would you handle this? Mr. Reese said that this is a good experience, you are starting from the beginning and it will be an investment for the Town and the long term. He said that you have the pieces, you just need to put them all together. He said that you need leadership from the top. He said that there is no sewer department so you are merging two separate departments, Water and Highway. He said time will tell how much interaction will happen between the two. He said that the funds to run the departments should all be put in one account and they should be able to draw from it as needed. He said that a general fund needs to be set up in case there is an emergency with a broken water main. You have to fix it right away and the funds should come out of the enterprise fund. Mr. Leary asked if Mr. Reese has worked with the DEP much. Mr. Reese said they are good to work with. He does not talk to them every week, but when he calls they are more than willing to help. Mr. Reese said that he is the contact for the Town of Hudson. Mr. Leary said that he understands that the Water staff has different licenses from the Highway staff. Mr. Leary said Highway and Water have been working separately from the beginning and that creates challenges. Mr. Leary asked how do you see the two departments merging into one? Mr. Reese said that the staff should not be surprised by what they are asked to do. They should know what is expected of them. Mr. Reese said that the DPW should be taking care of the hydrants. Mr. Leary said that we are looking into the Fire Department taking care of them. Mr. Reese said that anyone who is working on a hydrant should know what they are doing. He said that just because they are a firefighter does not mean that they know how to maintain a hydrant. He said that you could cross train a water and highway personnel. Mr. Reese said that he does not like to see firefighters working on hydrants. He said that it should be part of the water infrastructure. Mr. Reese said the DPW should be responsible for the hydrants. He said that you can cross train staff to do. Mr. Leary asked Mr. Reese about the number of staff people that he over-see now in Hudson. Mr. Reese said that he over-see a staff of seven. Mr. Leary asked if he was in charge of hiring and firing? Mr. Reese said no, the DPW Director. Mr. Leary asked if Mr. Reese ever had experience hiring and firing. Mr. Reese said that he has reviewed resumes and will make a recommendation.

Mr. Marsden asked if you were hired as the DPW Director what would your first one hundred days look like? He said that he would get everything back in compliance on the water side. He also would bring

the record keeping up to date. He said that on the highway side, he would let it run on its own for a while. He said that he would meet with everyone to see what their job is. Mr. Reese asked if Holliston had contracted with White Water to run the water side for now. Mr. Marsden said yes. Mr. Marsden asked if Mr. Reese liked to out-source on the water side? Mr. Reese said that the Water side should be 100% in control of the town. He said that if he was hired as DPW Director he would keep White Water on for a short time until he is transitioned in. He said that he would limit their involvement.

Mr. Marsden said that we are asking residents to conserve water but we can't make any money if it is not used. How do you move forward to try and improve the structure of the Water Department? Mr. Reese said he thinks that the budget for a DPW is about four million dollars. He said that we are mandated by the State to conserve water. He said that the target rate is 61 to 65 gallons of water per year per person. He said that most communities are under a water ban during the summer. He said that helps with the conservation of water. He said that water is a resource. He said that you look for grants for capital projects. He said that State Aid is another resource. He said that you have to forecast out what you think you need, so that there will not be any surprises. Mr. Marsden asked if Mr. Reese would enforce the water ban issue? Mr. Reese said that we will know who has irrigation and who has a well. He said that if they have a well, they can use as much water as they want. But, you do need to enforce the ban once it has been put in place. Mr. Reese said that it is on your water bill that there is no watering and if you are watering, a fine will be issued. Mr. Marsden asked about Mr. Reese's technology skills? He said that Water should have a full SCADA to monitor the water system. He said that is one of the best pieces of technology that the Water Department can use. He said that pumps and chemical pumps can be remotely operated for the wells. He said that it can be done from a lap-top. Mr. Reese said that it all depends on how much money is in the budget for new trucks. He said that we would like a new truck but if we do not have the budget then we will not get that new truck. He said that we have to keep up the equipment.

Mr. Le Beau asked if Mr. Reese was in a union and has now gone to management. Mr. Reese said that he was in the union for five or six years. He said that there was a time when unions were necessary, but now he is not too sure about that. He said that it is the employee's right to bring in a union if they want one. He said that the union did nothing for him except take union dues. He said that a union protects a weak worker. The good worker is unable to get promoted or get a bump in salary because they are union.

He said that he is not anti-union nor pro-union. He said that a union is a double edged sword. Mr. Reese said that he takes two classes per semester toward an Engineering Degree. He said that he hopes to finish in two years. He said that it is a good thing to have. Mr. Reese said that in his position he reports to the DPW Director now. He said that there is a Chief that he reports to as well but he is in the process of retiring. He said that he could take over that position but he is looking for something new. Mr. Leary asked what experience do you have speaking at Town Meeting? Mr. Reese said none. He said that the DPW Director speaks at Town Meeting. The Board thanked Mr. Reese for his time. Mr. Reese thanked the Board for their consideration.

Michael Suprenant

Mr. Conley thanked Mr. Suprenant for taking the time to come to the interview. Mr. Conley asked what strengths and weakness do you see in Holliston? Mr. Suprenant said that this will be the beginning of a DPW and he has been through consolidating departments before. He said that he has handled the challenge before. Mr. Suprenant said that he has heard great things about the Town Administrator. Mr. Conley asked if Mr. Suprenant has water licenses? Mr. Suprenant said that he has treatment licenses for grade 4 and water distribution from New England Water Works Association. He said that he has a CDL license. He does not have a hoisting license. He has the experience. Mr. Conley asked what side would he be stronger on, the water or highway? Mr. Suprenant said that he has a lot of highway experience and a lot of water experience. He said that he has been the supervisor for road work while in college. He said that in Medway they put in a new industrial road and he was the engineer in charge of that project. He said that he has a good background. He said that his experience is balanced. Mr. Conley asked how would you blend the two departments together? Mr. Suprenant said there is a process. He said in the first six months he would evaluate the staff. He said that he likes to do monthly summary of what has been accomplished. He said that there many be a few Water staff that do not want to plow snow but part of the consolidation would be having the departments do cross training. He said that there should be a safety training program. He said that he encourages the employees to get all the license that they can. He said that brings the departments together. He said that in a Town this size both departments have to work together as one Public Works. Mr. Conley asked if Mr. Suprenant has any grant writing experience? Mr. Suprenant said he has several years of experience in grant writing. Mr. Conley asked if Mr. Suprenant believed in a process? Mr. Suprenant said that is basic management. Mr. Conley asked if Mr. Suprenant lived close to Holliston in case there was an emergency? Mr. Suprenant said he would move closer to Holliston if he was offered the position. He said that the DPW Director needs to be available. He said that if there were a fire in Town, he would go to the Fire Chief to see if the DPW was needed.

Mr. Leary asked about the experience that Mr. Suprenant has with working with new DPW's? Mr. Suprenant said he worked for three different communities that he was involved with the forming of the DPW. He said the Town of Webster was one. He said that they were a DPW but they were separated. He said that the Water Department did their own work, the Sewer Department did their and the Highway Department did their own work. He said that he was able to get the Sewer Department to start plowing their own stations. He said that Blackstone was another Town that he helped with the merging of the Departments. He said that Blackstone was further along with merging than Webster. He said that he mandated safety training for all the staff. Mr. Suprenant said that it is a process to merge the departments and it does take time. Mr. Leary asked how could he make the transition as easy as possible? Mr. Suprenant said he would check the skills and the experience of the staff. He also said that customer service is very important. He said that he is always open to new ideas. He said that if you need to make a change, you have to make sure that it is the best thing for the Town. Mr. Leary asked about the experience that Mr. Suprenant has with the DEP? He said that he knows about the wetlands act. He said that he would work closely with the Conservation Commission. He said the DEP gets involved with most things on the water side. He said that he knows about the regulations that we have in Town. He said that there are regulations for the Charles River. He said that there would be interaction with the DEP. He said that there is a lot of paperwork that is involved with

the DEP. He said that the paperwork has to be completed on time. He said that the old landfill needs constant monitoring and testing. Mr. Leary asked about the vision of the DPW? Mr. Suprenant said policies and procedures for the Department. He said that would shape the way the Department turns out. He said that he would have to work closely with the Town Administrator and the Board of Selectmen to develop policies and procedures. He said that it would not only be his DPW but the people of Holliston. He said that he would have workshops on this. Mr. Suprenant said that you have to see how things are run before you have a final vision. Mr. Leary said that it looks like you have worked in the private sector and have owned a business. Why was each position only for a short time? Mr. Suprenant said that some were just for a short time and others things did not work out. He said that working in Bellingham was very political. Mr. Leary said if he was hired when could he start? He said he is free to start now. He said that he is working in the family business now.

Mr. Marsden said he has a vision about the DPW. He said we have to conserve water but we do not make any money if we conserve water. Mr. Suprenant said that he can budget for capital projects. He said that timing and financing on new projects takes a lot of work and it deserves to be looked at long and hard. Mr. Marsden asked if Mr. Suprenant has a lot of contacts at the DEP? He said that he has a few. He said that he would like to see the communities be able to pump more water. Mr. Marsden asked about his technology skills? He said you have to take risks with new technology. He said that he will look at other Towns to see if they have tried the new technology to see if it works. He said that it can save a lot of time and money.

Mr. Le Beau asked if the other places that Mr. Suprenant has worked, was the staff part of a union? He said that he has not worked in a municipal setting where the staff was not part of a union. Mr. Le Beau asked if Mr. Suprenant worked for the Town of Northbridge. He said that he was a volunteer.

Mr. Suprenant was asked what was the biggest project he ever worked on? He said that he worked on a large paving project on Huntington Ave. He said that it took the cooperation of nine city groups. He said that he also started a wastewater treatment plant. He said that he was part of the building new schools. He said that he does well at Town Meeting. He can explain things to the Finance Committee. Mr. Suprenant thanked the board for their time and consideration.

The Board thanked Mr. Supernant for coming to the interview.

**AT 5:45 P.M., MR. MARSDEN MOVED TO ADJOURN. THE MOTION WAS SECONDED BY MR. LEARY. ALL IN FAVOR.**

Respectfully submitted,

Donna A. Muzzy

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