



TOWN OF PRINCETON

Office of the Selectboard

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April 8, 2019

Letter from the Selectboard regarding the Town Administrator Search

Dear Residents,

Our Town Administrator, Nina Nazarian, will be leaving us after the Annual Town Meeting in May for a position in Littleton. The Selectboard has begun the process of filling her position. We have advertised for an interim Town Administrator (TA) and hope to select one in April to start in early May. We have selected the Collins Center as our executive search firm to recruit qualified candidates to consider for our new TA. The search firm will be speaking with board and committee members, department heads, and other key stakeholders to understand what Princeton needs in its new TA. There will be an opportunity for community input. The firm will guide a screening committee, to be appointed by the Selectboard, as they review applications, interview candidates, and select 3-4 people to be referred to the Selectboard for final consideration. The entire process could take 4-6 months and will cost in the \$8-10k range.

As we embark on this process, we want to share with you what our TA does and why it is a critical function in our town. The TA is the chief operating officer of the town. The position implements the policies of the Selectboard and manages all of our town employees except police and fire. The TA is a manager of people and, equally important, a manager of the critical processes in the life of the town. In small towns such as ours, the TA, as well as our departments heads, must be both a manager and a front-line worker. Some of the functions the TA is responsible for are budgeting; planning; developing the warrant; managing key processes; procuring goods and services; hiring, developing, and cross training staff; and communication. The TA plays an important role in communicating with and among organizations of town government and with the public and employees. The position is also a strong advocate for the town's needs with regional and state leadership.

There is a lot going on in Princeton right now. The TA is managing many projects with the help of volunteers, some of which are repair and stabilization of several buildings; sale of Mechanics Hall; working toward the building of a new public safety complex; the final rollout of Charter; the Route 140 and several other large road-related projects; the new Senior and Community Center at Post Office Place; and the planning for temporary office space for Town Hall employees while Bagg Hall is being repaired. These are some of the more visible projects. There is a long list of projects within Town Hall that are less visible to residents.

During the past 12 months, the TA has been involved in contract negotiations with the police and fire chiefs; the lease at PO Place of the former Sonoma space; the contract with the Architect doing

repairs and stabilization; procurement of fire trucks; discussions with legislators on the bond bill; application for and administration of grants; and many contracts related to our large road projects. She has hired 6 replacement employees and 3 temporary or seasonal employees; created and helped staff 3 new committees; and has helped bring a new member of the Selectboard up to speed. We have had several lawsuits and needed to take action on other issues in Town such as code violations. The TA works closely with Town Counsel to make sure everything is done correctly.

The TA must be very knowledgeable about Massachusetts municipal law. The Administrator ensures that we are following proper legal procedure and, when needed, answers to residents on legal matters. For example, we had a resident file an Open Meeting Law complaint against the Town. Nina spent a considerable amount of time researching the issue and assembling a response to the resident and the Attorney General's office.

Other responsibilities of the TA include:

- Preparation for and follow up from the Selectboard meetings
- Management of the environmental sites in town (landfill, TPS for PCBs, and former USTs at Public Safety Building)
- Working closely with Regional School District
- Workers compensation claims, family medical leave act requests
- IT infrastructure implementation

How did we manage without a TA before Dennis Rindone became our first TA? State law changed in 1996 to allow towns to use the term Executive Secretary and Town Administrator interchangeably. When Dennis was hired, it was as an Executive Secretary and his title was later changed to Town Administrator. In 1975, 30% of Massachusetts towns had a public administrator (town administrator, town manager, executive secretary, or manager with a different title). By 2005, 86% employed one. The State has made the job of running a town much more complicated over time. The Open Meeting Law was passed in 1975. There have been significant changes in procurement laws since the late 1980s and labor laws are regularly changing. New laws regarding Public Records began in MA in the 70s but have been strengthened and more tightly enforced in the last few years. Earlier this year, a bill was passed that clarifies that public sector employers must meet OSHA standards. These and other changes in laws must be understood and followed by our town government.

Sincerely,

The Princeton Selectboard



Richard C. Bisk, Chair



Edith M. Morgan, Clerk



Karen G. Cruise, Member