



PLANNING BOARD  
**TOWN OF NORWELL**

Post Office Box 295  
Norwell, Massachusetts 02061  
(781) 659-8021

2017 JUL 27 AM 8:25

RECEIVED

**Norwell Planning Board Meeting Minutes**  
**6/21/2017**

The meeting was called to order at 7:10 P.M. with Chair, Donald Mauch, Sr., presiding. Also present were Vice Chair, Jamie Crystal-Lowry and Board Members Scott Fitzgerald and Patrick Campbell. Unable to attend was Brendan Sullivan. Also present were Town Administrator Peter Morin and Human Resources Manager Barbara Childs. The meeting was held in the Planning Office.

*Motion made and duly seconded to open the meeting. Unanimously voted.*

**Discussion - Screening Process**

Mr. Mauch asked Town Administrator Morin to briefly discuss the process by which the two finalists for the planner position were selected.

Mr. Morin noted that, by charter, the hiring decision is ultimately his with the PB's consent. Earlier in the current search, the PB did the initial screening with the expectation that he would make the final decision, but the process got bogged down. When they re-advertised the position, they put less emphasis on prior experience and more on educational background and good fit for Norwell.

Mr. Morin screened responses; he and Mr. Mauch had conversations with four candidates and selected the two strongest ones, each of which had different skill sets and were at different places in their careers. He felt that either candidate would do well in the position, and wanted the PB to choose the one they felt would best fit the town's needs.

Ms. Crystal-Lowry asked about start date delays. Mr. Morin and Ms. Childs felt that both finalists could start quickly. Mr. Morin left the meeting at 7:15, before the interviews started, and the PB briefly reviewed resumes and reference checks. Mr. Mauch thanked Mr. Morin and Ms. Childs for their help throughout the process. He also advised that both candidates were provided with three questions in advance:

1. Briefly tell us about your personal and professional background.
2. Based on your interview last week, tell us briefly and succinctly what you learned about Norwell and the Town Planner's position.
3. Tell us why you believe you are the best candidate for the Town Planner's position.

### **Town Planner Finalist # 1 - Rayna Rubin**

In response to Question 1, Ms. Rubin discussed her experience as a community planner specializing in land use planning and development. She has worked in a variety of roles in this area, including as developer's representative, conservation commission member, MBTA liaison, and hospital reuse committee member.

Ms. Rubin characterized her skills as relating in particular to regulatory compliance, coordination and outreach, and working with town bodies and officials. She specialized in project management and streamlining processes to make them more functional and user-friendly.

She applied for the position because she enjoys planning and prefers it to licensing because it takes in a lot of factors, including market aspects and the character of a community, and likes bringing all these things together.

Ms. Crystal-Lowry asked about her use of technology in presentations. Ms. Rubin felt that people weren't using PowerPoint documents as much as they had in the past, because they tended to take people's focus away from what was being presented. Her own choice of media for presentations depends on the facility and the size and purpose of the meeting. She characterized herself as not a graphics person but acknowledged that knowledge of technology and its use where appropriate was important.

Mr. Campbell asked Ms. Rubin about her current firm and her role there. Ms. Rubin characterized it as a small firm that works with the Rail division of the Massachusetts DOT in the areas of rail maintenance and rights of entry. She personally worked with licensing and right of entry requests such as for utility maintenance.

Mr. Campbell also noted that she went to school in Wisconsin and Colorado, and asked if she was new to the area. Ms. Rubin replied that she grew up in Newton, went away for her undergraduate and graduate studies, and then moved back to New England.

In reply to Question 2, Ms. Rubin felt the Planner had to be a jack of all trades, and interact with a lot of people concerning a wide variety of issues. She felt it would be especially important for the Planner to work well with people, especially the PB and local residents, and to be a good face in the community.

She also felt the PB was looking for someone to be proactive with project reviews, hopefully catching issues before projects get built; handle the routine filing of legal notices and other reports; possibly update the master plan, an area in which she is experienced; and to proactively research what other towns are doing so as to find best practices.

Ms. Rubin cited the OSRD concept as a unique idea that could potentially allow developers to be more creative and environmentally friendly in developing sites. She was also interested in Norwell Center and what could be done to make it more vital, and in making sure the industrial parks in town were helping the tax base.

She felt the town was making good use of Community Preservation Act funds, with lots of money available for projects. She was pleased to see that these funds were being actively used in Norwell, having lived in other towns that considered the CPA to be a cost burden to residents.

Mr. Fitzgerald asked about her ideas for growing the commercial tax base. Ms. Rubin stated that she would need to know more about what kind of things are acceptable under the current zoning. She felt the town should avoid malls given their current troubles, and noted that the Urban Land Institute had issued some interesting reports on new ideas, particularly concerning transit-oriented development around bus or rail lines.

Ms. Rubin observed that many New England towns, unlike Norwell, have their town hall, library, and police departments located in their town center. Ms. Crystal-Lowry noted that these facilities moved out of Norwell Center as they grew in size. Ms. Rubin felt the PB and residents should think about what kind of development in the Center is realistic, of the right scale, and could be supported, and suggested that small office or retail might be the best fit.

At this point, Ms. Crystal-Lowry asked about her comfort level with answering questions from residents. Ms. Rubin noted that she likely wouldn't be able to answer all questions on the spot on her first day, but would be happy to research and get back to people as needed. She saw her first job as to educate herself, and would be very comfortable answering direct questions as time went on.

Ms. Crystal-Lowry also noted that many departments in town had new hires, and asked about her comfort level dealing with other officials and taking ownership of issues where needed. Ms. Rubin indicated that she would make time to talk to officials behind the scenes and build positive relationships, but was very comfortable taking charge in the areas where Planning had jurisdiction.

Mr. Campbell noted that the Planner could also be considered the economic development director for the town, and would be the point of contact for commercial developers who didn't want to deal with multiple people. Ms. Rubin replied that she had done a lot of "herding" throughout her career and would have no problems in this role.

Ms. Crystal-Lowry asked about her comfort level with reading and applying zoning regulations. Ms. Rubin described her methodology as looking at what has been done in the past, and looking at the specific property and asking what kind of development made sense there. She would also consider the Town's master plan and other economic activity in town, and synthesize that into the plan with a view towards reaching consensus if possible.

Ms. Crystal-Lowry asked whether she had any direct experience with OSRD-type developments. Ms. Rubin noted that she hadn't directly done development, but did work on overlay districts in Dedham, including yield and unit calculations. Mr. Mauch advised that they had discussed density bonuses on the phone, and noted that other towns had different names for these kinds of districts.

In response to Question 3, Ms. Rubin noted that she liked the idea of working in a smaller town, and felt she could provide the expertise the Planning Office needed. She has worked with all kinds of specialists, could be a jack of all trades, and could speak "up and down the scale" to developers, officials, and residents. She felt she could be effective at streamlining processes where appropriate, and explaining them to residents, and was willing to work cooperatively with other town officials and departments.

In closing, Ms. Rubin briefly asked about the previous town planner. Mr. Campbell advised that he took the Planner's job in Hull. Ms. Rubin assured all that she wouldn't be bored in Norwell.

### **Town Planner Finalist # 2 - Kenneth Kirkland**

Mr. Kirkland passed out an information packet that included his resume, two sample memos, a PowerPoint presentation, and a project grid.

In response to Question 1, he felt his academic record spoke for itself. He advised the PB that his uncle had been Town Council President in his hometown of Coventry, RI, and that he had spent the past four years working for the Planning and Zoning Departments for the City of Cranston, RI. Mr. Kirkland noted that the city could be split into three areas, including the urban core, commercial center, and an agricultural/semi-rural area to the west, and therefore he saw a wide variety of project applications.

Mr. Kirkland added that he dealt with a wide variety of people in the Building Department, often acting as a runner between different departments and officials. This has given him a good way of dealing with people and taught him how to talk to residents without talking at or down to them.

Ms. Crystal-Lowry asked Mr. Kirkland about his comfort level interpreting zoning regulations. Mr. Kirkland indicated he was absolutely comfortable doing so and pointed the PB to the two memos in his packet, which were written by him with the goal of providing officials with all the information needed to make decisions on a project. He also reviewed the accompanying PowerPoint printout and project grid with the PB.

Mr. Campbell asked whether these memos were something he came up with himself. Mr. Kirkland replied that they were based on a rough template that he developed and likes to reuse, as it allows him to present a robust amount of information in a very readable format. He characterized himself as a digital person who liked to keep a clean desk but still provide residents with the information they needed.

Mr. Campbell asked Mr. Kirkland why he was interested in Norwell, noting it was very different from Cranston. Mr. Kirkland replied that he preferred smaller towns and said that Norwell reminded him of Coventry. He discussed a Greenway system in Coventry whose goal is to allow people to safely walk from one end of town to another, and drew connections to the ongoing efforts to make connections between open spaces in Norwell. Mr. Kirkland was particularly interested in communities that were actively trying to move to complete streets. He enjoyed living in Amherst, MA, where he was able to walk and bike places, and didn't want to go back to a car-dominated, exurban lifestyle.

Mr. Mauch asked Mr. Kirkland about his idea for developing the commercial tax base using solar power. Mr. Kirkland noted that a lot of housing had grown into the remaining agricultural land in Cranston, and that the city government was tackling how to preserve the remaining farmland. Since there are insufficient funds to purchase these lands outright, the city government is trying to control what is developed there.

One solution the City is pursuing is to allow the development of utility-grade solar farms on these lands. In addition to generating renewable energy, these farms provide all the tax benefits

of development without most of the costs. He noted that this land is taxed at a commercial rate, with additional payments being made to the municipality per kilowatt hour of power generated. After 20-30 years, this gives the city money tied to the property that can potentially be used to purchase land for open space; it also buys the city time to enact conservation restrictions.

Mr. Kirkland then discussed a project where a developer wanted to put in a Cumberland Farms with gas pumps in front. He worked with this developer to redesign the plan to move the gas pumps in back, bringing the storefront up to street, so as to preserve the urban feel of the area.

In response to Question 3, Mr. Kirkland noted that the PB seemed to like his ideas and samples. He had a number of templates he could bring with him that could be customized to Norwell's requirements, and this would allow him to provide the PB with the information they needed to make the best decisions on projects.

Mr. Campbell asked about his long-term career goal. Mr. Kirkland replied that he ultimately wants to become a town administrator. A lot of his classmates did not want to deal with local issues and residents, but he did and he wants to stay at the town level. He also noted in closing that relocation would not be a problem.

### **Selection of Town Planner**

Ms. Crystal-Lowry questioned the practice of selecting a town planner in open session. Ms. Childs indicated that this had been done when hiring the town administrator. Mr. Mauch added that the Police Chief, Fire Chief, and Finance Director had also been hired in open session, and felt that transparency was paramount. Mr. Campbell also pointed out that last year's interview discussions had been recorded in the PB meeting minutes and were public record.

Ms. Crystal-Lowry felt the PB should offer the position to Mr. Kirkland. She felt that both candidates were qualified, but liked Mr. Kirkland's organization skills, grasp of the issues, and confidence. Although she felt Ms. Rubin to be personable, she struggled with relating her previous experience to the needs of the town. She noted that much of that experience dealt with transportation issues that wouldn't be relevant here, and felt Ms. Rubin wasn't as familiar with the town as she would have liked.

Mr. Fitzgerald agreed with Ms. Crystal-Lowry. He characterized Mr. Kirkland as highly motivated and well-prepared, and felt he came in with materials and talking points that were very relatable to what the PB was looking for. He felt Mr. Kirkland could help modernize the Department's practices and leave it in very good shape even if he were to leave after a few years.

Mr. Campbell agreed with all preceding comments and felt Mr. Kirkland was the better candidate.

Mr. Mauch felt that either candidate could do the job, but that Mr. Kirkland's vision was more aligned with Norwell's needs. He described Mr. Kirkland's ideas as imaginative and creative; he also felt Mr. Kirkland, being a newly certified planner, would be more likely to take guidance and advice as needed.

Mr. Mauch also agreed that a lot of Ms. Rubin's experience seemed to be in the area of public transportation, and was concerned that some of those skills might be underutilized in the Norwell



Planning Office. He mentioned in closing that Mr. Kirkland's profile closely aligned with the level of abbreviated experience, yet combined with a solid educational background referenced in the revised job posting.

Ms. Childs advised that both candidates had excellent references. She felt that Ms. Rubin's strength was primarily as a project manager. She got the impression from Ken's references that they had been mentoring him for years and would continue to help him if he were to take the Planner position. She also noted that they would have hired him if they had a job to offer.

*Motion by Ms. Crystal-Lowry to offer the Planner position to Kenneth Kirkland. Duly seconded by Mr. Fitzgerald and unanimously voted.*

**Adjournment**

*There being no further business, a motion was made by Ms. Crystal-Lowry to adjourn at 8:51 P.M. The motion was duly seconded by Mr. Fitzgerald and unanimously voted.*

I certify that the above minutes were reviewed and approved by a majority vote of the Planning Board on 7/26/17.

  
\_\_\_\_\_  
Scott Fitzgerald, Clerk

Copy filed with: Office of Town Clerk  
Post to Planning Board Webpage