

POLICE COMMISSIONERS REVIEW PANEL MEETING

Conference Room A
Date: Tuesday, January 8, 2019

Portsmouth, NH
Time: 6:00 p.m.

I. Call to Order

Mayor Blalock called the meeting to order at 6:00 p.m.

II. Attendance

Present: Mayor Jack Blalock, Councilor Doug Roberts, Councilor Nancy Pearson, Thomas Ferrini, John Lyons, Robert P. Sullivan, City Attorney and Kelli L. Barnaby, City Clerk

III. Acceptance of Minutes – December 20, 2018

Mr. Lyons moved to accept and approve the minutes of the December 20, 2018 Police Commissioners Review Panel meeting. Seconded by Councilor Pearson and voted.

IV. Introduction of Interview Process

Mayor Blalock provided a review of the interview process and indicated that the six candidates remaining will be selected to speak in the order they applied for the position. He reported that one candidate, Thomas Coakley withdrew from the process. He stated each member of the Review Panel will ask the candidates a question in addition to reviewing candidate's answers to questions previously provided.

Mayor Blalock and the Review Panel discussed the process that would be used in choosing a candidate to move forward with a recommendation from the Review Panel to the City Council for a vote. Discussion followed as to the process to be followed with a decision to rank which candidate is chosen to be first or second.

V. Interview Process

Mayor Blalock stated each candidate would be provided time to make an introductory statement with questions to follow.

Candidate #1 – Stefany Shaheen

Ms. Shaheen spoke to her inspiration for submitting her name for the position. She indicated that we need to ensure that the Police Commission is fully functioning. She indicated the importance of advocating for the needs of the department.

Ms. Shaheen spoke to her experience and her abilities to serve the Commission in many ways. She discussed her leadership roles that will serve her and the commission well, if she was selected.

Questions were asked by each member of the Review Panel.

Candidate #2 – Kenneth Smith

Mr. Smith thanked the Review Panel for their time and attention this evening. He spoke to his 24 years of public service for the City of Portsmouth. He stated he is a strong supporter of the Police Commission and is a graduate of the Citizen Police Academy and a friend to many officers in the department. Mr. Smith indicated he is interested in the position and would run in the 2019 Municipal Election in order to continue his service to the commission, if selected.

Questions were asked by each member of the Review Panel.

Candidate #3 – Albert “Buzz” Scherr

Mr. Scherr provided his background for the Review Panel and spoke to the importance of trust in the department. He indicated that the Police Commission needs to be independent from the Police Department and trusted by the residents. He informed the Review Panel that he has been a part of the judicial system for 38 years. Mr. Scherr said he was a public defender and spoke to the skill set being of utmost importance for a Police Commissioner. He spoke to his ability to bring people together that do not share the same views and how that will assist in serving on the commission.

Questions were asked by each member of the Review Panel.

Candidate #4 – H. Kevin Watt

Mr. Watt stated his family has a long history in the City. He indicated he is a General Manager of a local business for the past 13 years and oversees 12 employees. He spoke to his experience with multiple departments as well as being extremely organized. He also spoke to his experience serving as a coach for Portsmouth Babe Ruth and his abilities to serve as a mentor. In closing, Mr. Watt said he takes pride in everything that he does.

Questions were asked by each member of the Review Panel.

Candidate #5 – Jacqueline Cali-Pitts

Ms. Cali-Pitts stated she is in awe of the candidates around her this evening. She indicated she has been a State Representative for the last 22 years and spoke to her abilities and skills that would assist her as serving as Police Commissioner.

Ms. Cali-Pitts advised the Review Panel that she has served on both sides of the labor table which provides her knowledge in the negotiating of contracts. She spoke to the importance of trust among the residents and commission. She informed the Review Panel that she is the chair of a committee at the State House and that everyone she works with feels a part of what she does. In closing, she stated her committee makes recommendations and not decisions, and she is a very open person.

Questions were asked by each member of the Review Panel.

Candidate #6 – Thomas P. Hart

Mr. Hart said he was born and raised in the City. He said he went to Portsmouth High School and was influenced by two police officers and was so enlightened by that he acquired 28 years of law enforcement. He informed the Review Panel that he worked at the Rochester Police Department and spoke to his numerous positions held throughout his career. He also spoke to his position with Strafford County where he served as a chief investigator for former County Attorney Lincoln Soldati. He outlined his duties at the county which included work and review of budget processes. Mr. Hart also spoke to his training programs and its value to his abilities to serve as a commissioner. He spoke to his current position with the City of Portsmouth as a Parking Enforcement Officer, which he looks at as an Ambassador for the City. He indicated that he speaks with employees and business owners and it is his responsibility to listen to the citizens and bring back ideas to his supervisors. He further stated he would be a well-rounded diverse person to serve on the Police Commission. In closing, he said that the citizens deserve a good representative on the Police Commission who would act as a conduit with the City Council and Police Department.

Questions were asked by each member of the Review Panel.

Mayor Blalock said the Review Panel has heard from all candidates and asked if there were any additional questions for the candidates or need for clarification. He stated we would be very honored to have any one of the candidates to serve on the Police Commission.

The Review Panel decided they would each pick their first and second choice for the position of Commissioner.

Councilor Roberts said to the candidates not to be offended if he does not pick you.

At 7:45 p.m., Mayor Blalock called for a brief recess. At 7:53 p.m., Mayor Blalock reconvened the meeting.

Councilor Pearson stated her pick is Thomas Hart. She indicated she does not have a second choice.

Councilor Roberts stated his first choice is Stefany Shaheen and second choice would be Albert Scherr.

Mr. Lyons said his first choice is Stefany Shaheen with his second choice being Thomas Hart.

Mr. Ferrini said his first choice is Stefany Shaheen and second choice would be Thomas Hart.

Mayor Blalock said his first choice would be Thomas Hart and Stefany Shaheen is his second choice.

Mayor Blalock announced that Stefany Shaheen is the candidate they would be recommending to the City Council and Thomas Hart is the second selection.

Mr. Lyons said he looked at his notes and the candidates all had outstanding qualities. He advised Mr. Watt he would like to see him look for opportunities to give back to the City.

Mayor Blalock said all candidates are welcome to apply for an opening on the many Boards and Commissions in the City. He stated Ken Smith would have been a great commissioner. He further touched on everyone that applied as a candidate and said he feels they all did wonderful, and thanked the Review Panel for their work.

Mr. Ferrini said he would like to see people keep coming forward to serve the city in some capacity.

Councilor Roberts said everyone did a great presentation.

At 8:00 p.m., Mayor Blalock closed the meeting.

Respectfully submitted by:

Kelli L. Barnaby, MMC, CMC, CNHMC
City Clerk