

MASSPORT COMMUNITY ADVISORY COMMITTEE MEETING

Minutes of the EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE MEETING – May 31, 2018

Location: Boston City Hall - INTERVIEWS OF EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR FINALISTS

Members Present: David Carlon, Pam Hill, Myron Kassaraba, Jerry Falbo, Maura Zlody, Wig Zamore and Peter Navarra.

MCAC Members present: Frank Cianno

Others: Jennifer Dopazo Gilbert, General Counsel and Bernard Lynch and Sharon Flaherty from Paradigm Associates (HR Consultant)

Massport: Anthony Gallagher

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1. Bernie Lynch gave an update of the process noting there were 28 candidates 8 interviews and 2 finalists.

Mr. Lynch suggested some questions for the 2 finalists as a launching pad and other questions could be asked depending on the flow of the interview. He handed out the resumes of Matt Romero and Aaron Toffler. MR. Lynch will serve as moderator and the Committee should feel they can ask all follow-up questions.

Wig Zamore disclosed that he filed an appearance of conflict form with the City of Somerville and gave a copy to Dave. It was noted for the record. Wig indicated he has known Mr. Toffler over the years in a professional collegiate setting.

2. Interview of Matthew Romero

Q: Would you like to start by telling us a little about your background; work history; experience; and education?

Mr. Romero noted that he built an organization from scratch at MWRA. He wanted the chance to come on board at the start of the MCAC and this was very appealing. He described his unique experience in a sister organization at MWRA Advisory Board.

Mr. Romero was asked about his responsibilities at the MWRA Board. He described them Communications Director and second in command. He is in charge of budget review and reporting. This year budgetary and policy review to the MWRA Board was very successful. He is also in charge of messaging, social media and website redesign. He said he is a Jack of all trades.

Myron asked him whether he interfaces with individual communities.

Matt noted that his communication is with members and also he goes to communities to meet leadership or address certain issues.

Dave asked about the Annual Report from 2018 on the website. He asked how long did it take to evolve that report?

Mr. Romero noted that this was his first task at MWRA. The task was to update the report technically and to make it more image and table heavy. In 2009 he decided to integrate the 2 reports and switched to color and make them interactive. It is a policy document now as opposed to a budget report.

Matt discussed the budget and policy report and the shift in 2009 to consider policy issues.

Jerry Falbo noted the many facets of the job, administrative, budget, representation in front of legislature and head-on with Massport. The Director will require staff. What type of personnel would you look for? Subject matter?

Mr. Romero acknowledged he needed to get up to speed on transportation issues so he would need someone more technical to fill the hole on the transportation technical and environmental issues. Also, he would want 2 support staff; first an analyst and an administrative person.

Jerry asked about a Budget person?

Mr Romero said he would know over time, but yes a support person is needed, but ready to delve into the administrative aspects on his own.

Jerry discussed directly dealing with Massport, but agreed it's a slow rollout.

Pete Navarra asked how many communities were represented at MWRA

Mr. Romero stated 60 communities.

Pete asked if there were ever disputes.

Mr. Romero stated yes some issues cam up, but the majority stem from one community getting something that helps them and it costs money so the other communities need to pick up the tab. MWRA was the arbiter for waste water rates. Matt discussed the role of administrative staff and the executive committee.

Myron wanted to set expectations on staff hiring. He said realistically for first year how would you get up to speed on your own?

Mr. Romero believes Massport will be a resource. He Compared MWRA to MPA with respect to briefings and meetings and communicating with MPA staff. He will do homework upfront then asking questions.

Myron asked how has that worked with MWRA?

Matt noted it has evolved over time and become more positive and engaging. Annual meetings helped to build the relationship.

Pam Hill asked; you have a way to gather information, there are many masters and disparate towns interested in different aspects of Massport operations. How will you shape and understand the larger policy issues? How will you interact with the different voices?

Matt stated that it is important to set realistic expectations; prioritize issues, identify the issues first and then prioritize which then in turn shapes the information we request. Once the information is secured then review and see what direction to go.

Jerry noted that the Executive Committee is experiencing frustration in getting information. We need someone to stay on MPA and be firm. How will you do all those things and get what we need from Massport?

Myron interjected whether adversarial or evolved its figuring out how to address those challenges.

Matt hopes that there is a difference between staff to staff communication rather than committee to Massport communication. This is not a gotcha game and hopefully he can build trust overtime. Massport predates you by 50 years as opposed to MWRA and the Board which evolved together at the same time.

Jerry noted the differences between MWRA and Massport. We have a good relationship but it is an adversarial relationship. Is that what you meant?

Matt said you can't come out swinging you must establish trust first before you can push on a particular matter.

Bernie what is your start up plan; first 6 months?

Matt said first know the key players; the MCAC members, meet John Nucci and Tom Glynn. Then try to meet with Massport staff to understand the conglomeration of Massport operations and how all the pieces fit together.

Bernie asked will you go in to the communities?

Matt said yes to reach out to those communities that do not have active members, so that there is always a quorum and explain the value of participation.

Pam Hill noted some are empowered and some are impacted and more disadvantaged. Do you have a view of who represents those less empowered people? Do you see a social justice issue?

Matt asked for a clarification on empowered.

Pam said empowered in that they have more power and affluence.

Matt said thank you he understands. He said personally, yes it resonates that there are impacted communities, but I think that the committee will prioritize and if the issue makes the list and is impactful then great.

Bernie noted that there are public aspects and the more mundane administrative tasks to set up. Are you comfortable setting up the day to day?

Matt stated that he started as an administrative staff person. Setting up budget and agendas and general office support will be part of his duties. He noted that his husband is a talented massage

therapist and he helped him set up his own business, accounting and expenditures all aspects from scratch.

Myron compared his current role, noting waste water is messy but airplane noise is visceral. Have you thought about the public component; airplane noise and what is being done to solve the issues. How would you deal with the public component?

Matt said waste water was a real issue. Perhaps a public hearing model is a place to start.

Pam asked when Matt was at Harvard what was his favorite class and why?

He answered Human Behavioral Biology, it was fascinating because it dove in to the biology of behavior and societal impacts. The other class was Christian Bible and its Interpretation with Professor Peter Gomes. He was so impressed with his lectures.

Bernie noted that Joe Flavaloro does government work. Do you do any of the government work?

Matt answered yes he participates and interacts and works at the State House on the funding issues.

Bernie asked if he had any interaction with DEP or EPA?

Matt said yes, Alexandra Dunn from EPA is coming to the MWRA forum.

Myron asked about CLF interaction and how would CLF play in to this organization?

Matt noted the relationship has not been warm and fuzzy over the years because of the costs involved in their requests. The MWRA and CLF relationship has evolved however.

Maura asked what are you not very good at?

He described himself as too much of a perfectionist. I'd like to be better at the environmental and technical issues of MPA operations. I'm a life-long learner and look forward to learn the complicated topics.

David noticed a lot of content on the MWRA website. He was concerned about disinformation and asked how did you create the content to ensure it is accurate?

He made 2 video series the green sheets and stand-alone topics like rates or environmental issues. Also, hot button issues like mountain biking in the watershed issues. Distilling the information to tell the position or provide the most important information is key.

Frank Cianno asked whether the MWRA knows he is looking to move?

Matt said yes and the Arlington representative knows as well.

Frank Cianno asked are you prepared to go it alone and are you happy to do so?

Matt said he is in a small organization now and I can do all of the tasks and pieces. I have the skill set to do all the tasks. I do feel comfortable, and creating it from scratch is appealing.

Myron said going way back working for a Town Administrator tell me about your challenges.

Matt responded Framingham was tough it only had one support person and many many different issues and many Town Meeting Members. Listening is key and you must set realistic expectations and prioritize.

Pete asked what is the biggest barrier you think we face and how will we get over it as a committee and build the organization?

Matt sees three; 1) the mundane office set up and hiring staff; 2) getting up to speed on MPA operations and terminology; and 3) building the relationship between MPA and MCAC; and 4) building his relationship with the MCAC membership.

Bernie asked for questions or closing thoughts.

Matt Romero asked about the timeline for the vote?

Bernie stated it was unknown at this time.

Matt had no further questions and thanked the committee.

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Mr. Aaron Toffler

Introductions were made.

Bernie began the questions.

What attracted you to apply for the position of Massport CAC Executive Director?

Aaron stated he had been working with Air, Inc. around airport issues. My entire career I've worked in environmental justice issues and impacts on communities. I see this job as a confluence of things I've done over the years. This marries, research education and advocacy. Now Dean of School of Arts at Laselle. I have represented a lot of different interests. The job has a lot of what I am interested in.

Bernie asked what do you feel least comfortable with?

Aaron answered, in the beginning in the day to day operations the solitariness of the position in the beginning will be hard. I would try to structure my time to get out in the communities in order to know the issues and interact with the communities. I would not have any colleagues so the intial lack of collaboration would be tough.

Bernie said this is a start-up, so office location and administrative issues etc. do you have any experience doing that?

Aaron said he has not started an organization, but he said I have started programs like at the Urban Ecology Institute. As far as administrative I have had responsibility to create and manage budgets. Look forward to working with the MCAC members to build the organization.

Myron noted he has mostly academic background. He asked Aaron to talk about government experience.

Aaron responded; In last ten years it has been academic, but the UEI worked directly with state agencies. He discussed work with Chelsea and advocating with State and local officials. Natural Cities program was to garner more support for programs to support.

Pam asked what is your career aspiration?

He noted that his role at Air, Inc. was representing a community group, so I haven't completely turned my back on the law but the practice of law was not for me. When I was at Boston College I taught an undergraduate class and was energized. I then taught at B.U. which lead to the LaSalle position. I look at the legal training as an asset to gather and explain information and advocate for an outcome.

Pam asked are you representing Air, Inc. as an attorney?

Aaron said no more as a community advocate, no brief writing.

Pam asked what is your career aspiration with this job?

He responded, I thought I would practice environmental law to impact positive change. The thread that runs through the positions I've held is to try to improve conditions in communities. This job would test me and expand my interests.

Peter noted his cover letter and asked did you directly work with Massport – relationships – nature of relationship with MPA?

His answer was, I work in a collaborative way and straightforward. I try to come to a mutual understanding with the parties. With Massport I joined Air, Inc. when they were negotiating their agreement. He has interacted with Katie MacDonald, Anthony Guererro and Flavio Leo. For the most part he had good relationships; perhaps a notch under collaborative.

Peter asked what would you do to get information from MPA?

Aaron recalled trying to renegotiate the Air Inc agreement. He tried to get that back on track in to a productive communication. I believe Katie MacDonald thought I was reasonable. A lot of community groups butt heads with MPA and that is common. I have also had frustrating conversations with MPA, but I operate with transparency and integrity.

Myron wanted to follow-up on the Massport topic and the growth of Massport operations. How do you view MPA in the context of your environmental work?

Aaron answered: I believe MPA and communities got off to a bad start. I am a customer, we need an airport, but they could work more collaboratively. Need to develop trust and a working relationship and we could be good for each other. There is opportunity to get them to behave in a way that they recognize their impact on communities. The relationship could be mutually beneficial. At some points Air Inc was satisfied and at some points it has been contentious. Interaction needs to be consistent to improve. I'm excited about this position because it would give me an opportunity to cultivate the relationship. He wants to start at a mutual understanding and then move forward.

Jerry noted that Air Inc has a contentious relationship with Massport. You represent you have had some success and some losses. Do you view the role as giving you power to achieve more success for MCAC?

Aaron responded: yes, the Air Inc and MPA relationship has fluctuated. I see the MCAC as designated by MPA as the community relations arm and MPA is obligated to work with the MCAC so the MCAC has more legitimacy than Air Inc..

Pam noted that regional solutions is part of the MCAC mission statement. She said there is an issue of use of Hanscom and how to deal with regional solutions and distribution of burden.

Aaron noted that as a College Faculty Chair he dealt with 94 opinions. He thinks pushing several agendas at once and getting information and working collaboratively can have regional benefits. He looked at the recent EDR. Discussion of data and usage and regional solutions. Need to know individual community concerns, gather information and discuss solutions.

Pam requested that he please speak to the basic mundane duties of this start-up and the day to day issues?

Aaron said this is correct, I have systems that take care of problems at LaSalle. LaSalle has grown in the last ten years and the systems have not kept up so I have figured out processes to get them done. It will be a challenge to figure it out initially. I expect to travel and meet a lot of people. The day to day will be a challenge but not insurmountable.

Peter noted the CAC Mission statement which addressed many MPA operations not just Logan. Many members came from the Logan CAC, so always trying to learn. MCAC has some very passionate members. How will you try to balance the past experiences with the goals today?

Aaron answered, I've been in a position where many people have passionate opinions and positions. Compared it to a faculty vs, administrative position at LaSalle. I try to operate on an even keel and transparently and with integrity so no matter how passionate the opinion I listen and try to not lose myself. I have a good read on situations and people. I represented a passionate group for a long time and sometimes that involved trying to manage relationships to try to smooth things out.

Pete asked for an example.

Aaron noted that Jay Ash and he disagreed but they still have a relationship. It happens in academia all the time but it does not get in the way of moving forward to other issues. He anticipates a long term viable relationship with Massport.

Jerry asked what would you do from day 1?

The answer was, get to know all the members and MPA staff. Then identify issues. Then I would be looking to get some help.

Pam asked again how will you do all of the mundane stuff?

David added, in the context of the Open Meeting Law as well?

Myron asked about MPA finances. There are other groups like CLF and MassPirg that are environmental groups, Can you speak to what you think their role is?

Aaron believes there is a role for CLF – they have been thinking about transportation issues such as the 5000 car parking garage. I think it is building partnerships with those organizations. There is a role and he anticipates they will operate but the idea is to elevate the MCAC issues so they see the partnership value. Need to look at what issues they can work with the MCAC on.

Dave noted the follow-up – each community may have numerous and different issues, not all environmental, so how do we grapple with all that?

Aaron noted that although not traditional environmental issues I have a broad definition of what environmental issues are. That doesn't negate the fact that there are very different approaches by each community. That is the challenge to see if conditions can be improved.

Bernie noted that with respect to gathering info and analyzing budget and communicating the information. Any ideas on how to communicate the information?

Aaron noted that there are several layers-internal communication through the web, content for the website. He looked at individual community links. Perhaps identify and provide community links to the MCAC. Discussion of digital content and face to face meetings.

Bernie asked Aaron, do you have any questions?

Aaron asked about the MCAC relationship with MPA now?

Dave said it is evolving slowly and Pete noted we are learning how to work together.

Jerry stated we are not getting the material we seek fast enough and in some areas we have made proposals that have been rejected for various reasons.

Members discussed the expectations and history of MCAC and other organizations with MPA.

Frank Cianno asked – Are you prepared to take this on as a full time position?

Aaron said yes I have 2 jobs right now that would have to go away first.

Frank Cianni – it will be a little lonely will you be OK with that?

Aaron noted my mother told me to take a typing class and it was good advice.

Aaron Toffler asked how is the relationship MCAC with the legislature?

Dave said we were successful and got the funding through the legislature. The leadership is supportive of the MCAC.

Aaron – thanked the members for their time.

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9:03 p.m. interviews ended.



Pam wants to adjourn and give some thoughts to the process. Others want to deliberate. General consensus was to begin deliberations.

Dave likes Aaron but has concerns for him going from LaSalle to the mundane start-up duties.

Pam is impressed by both candidates. Pam is more comfortable with the hands on experience of Matt. She is worried about the transition for Aaron.

Pete is very impressed with the quality of both candidates but they are very different. Pete supports Matt because of his more relevant experience with the MWRA Board. Matt has no preconceived opinions and he is eager to learn the technical aspects. The start-up point is where we need Matt's experience.

Maura like Matt's energy. Pam agreed and noted Matt's verbal skills. Jerry noted neither has the technical skills.

Jerry said Aaron has experience with Massport and he knows the ins and outs that Matthew must learn. Matthew however, has the energy and the knowledge of working within a governmental type agency.

Myron likes Matt because of his focus to establish a relationship with MPA. The ED must be viewed positively by MPA and State House. Myron thinks being an advocate for Air Inc is a detriment to building the relationships. Myron thinks Aaron would be a great resource but for right now he would vote for Matt.

Members were impressed with the MWRA budget report prepared by Matthew and noted this is similar to what MCAC will do.

Wig thanked Bernie and agreed there were many great candidates that were lost due to the money delays. Wig clarified the role and successes of CLF. Two challenges that are very different from MWRA; the communities do not have conflict because they are on the same side of the issues. As far as MPA it is tough to deal with MPA when they may not be eager to do. With the MCAC mission the challenge is to come to regional solutions.

Motion by Peter to make a conditional and conditional offer of employment to Matthew Romero, subject to funding and all background checks and other requirements of Massport. Motion was seconded by Maura.

Jerry and Wig abstained.

Maura, Dave, Pam, Pete and Myron voted in favor.

Motion to adjourn Pam, second Wig unanimous vote to approve 9:19 pm.

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Minutes by J. Dopazo Gilbert

Approved on: October 15, 2018

