

February 25, 2023

Mr. Leonard Diggins, Chair
Arlington Select Board
730 Massachusetts Avenue
Arlington, MA 02476

Dear Mr. Diggins:

The purpose of this letter is to provide a report to the Select Board regarding the Town Manager search including the results of the recruitment efforts, the work of the Screening Committee, the status of the process, and a discussion of next steps.

As noted in our initial proposal and reflected in numerous municipal manager searches across the Commonwealth, it is a very challenging market for communities to hire a new Town Manager. A dramatic cycle of retirements across the state has led to over two-thirds of the communities in Massachusetts replacing their chief administrative officer over the past 4+ years. The situation has only been exacerbated by fewer individuals seeking employment in these and other municipal positions. And, the market in the metro-Boston area is particularly challenging as many Town Managers have only recently been appointed to their positions.

Our formal recruitment efforts for Arlington began in late November after we were able to work with the Board and the community in identifying the skills and qualities sought in the next Town Manager and the Board determining the general compensation package that would be offered to the successful candidate. Our search efforts included a widespread posting and advertising of the position, distribution of the position announcement to hundreds of potential candidates, and active and direct recruitment of candidates that were identified as possible applicants.

Upon approval of the Board to move forward with the search for candidates, we advertised and/or posted the Town Manager position through the following channels:

- Massachusetts Municipal Association (MMA)
- International City and County Management Association (ICMA)
- Women Leading Government (WLG)
- Boston Chapter of the National Forum for Black Public Administrators (NFBPA)
- Engaging Local Government Leaders (ELGL)
- Massachusetts Non-Profit Network
- Alumni job boards at area universities with Master of Public Administration programs.

In addition to the posting and advertising of the position, we also distributed through direct email a position announcement to all 300+ members of the Massachusetts Municipal Management Association, and to our proprietary database of potential candidates built up through 7+ years of municipal manager searches. Finally, we also conducted individualized follow-up contact or “headhunting” with about two dozen prospective candidates to encourage their interest in the position.

After the outreach, recruiting and advertising efforts, we received twenty resumes in application for the Town Manager position. The number of candidates within the applicant pool received is in line with recent searches that have been conducted. Importantly, we identified up to 12 candidates that were worthy of consideration by the Town Manager Screening Committee. The Committee reviewed the materials and backgrounds of the candidates and after considerable discussion determined to interview the six individuals that were identified as the “most qualified” individuals. The interviews occurred over the course of two days and included questions related to their background and interest in the position, their management and leadership style, skills related to finances, personnel and projects, external relationships, and Board relations. The candidates were also provided a scenario related to strategic planning and community development for which they were asked to make a presentation to the Committee.

At the conclusion of the interviews, the Committee chose four candidates for advancement to the Select Board. Each of these candidates were notified of their status with an expectation of Board interviews being conducted the last week of February or the first week of March. However, over the course of several days, three of the candidates for various reasons made the decision to withdraw from the process. The effect of these withdrawals left the Screening Committee with only one candidate to bring forward which is not an option under the Massachusetts Open Meeting Law which had allowed the Committee to review and interview the candidates in Executive Session. Further discussion by the Committee in an additional meeting regarding the pool and other options resulted in a decision by the members to notify the Board of their inability to provide any other candidates.

At this juncture possible options for next steps would include, but may not be limited to, re-opening the search with use of the Screening Committee or re-advertising the position with resumes/applications being submitted directly to the Town which would be a public process for any interested candidates. Board members may have other suggestions that could be reviewed with Town Counsel.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "Bernard Lynch", with a large, sweeping loop at the end.

Bernard Lynch
Principal