

MINUTES OF THE CHESHIRE TOWN COUNCIL PERSONNEL COMMITTEE
MEETING HELD ON THURSDAY, JANUARY 12, 2012 AT 6:30 P.M. IN ROOM 207,
TOWN HALL, 84 SOUTH MAIN STREET, CHESHIRE CT 06410

Present

Thomas Ruocco, Chairman; Sylvia Nichols and Peter Talbot.

Councilor Patti Flynn-Harris

Staff: Town Manager Michael A. Milone, and Personnel Director Louis Zullo.

1. ROLL CALL

The clerk called the roll and a quorum was determined to be present.

2. PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE

The group Pledged Allegiance to the Flag.

3. REVIEW OF QUESTIONS FOR TOWN HISTORIAN
(executive session)

MOTION by Ms. Nichols; seconded by Mr. Talbot.

MOVED that the Personnel Committee enter executive session at 6:32 p.m. to include Town Manager Milone and Personnel Director Zullo to discuss personnel issues.

VOTE The motion passed unanimously by those present.

MOTION by Ms. Nichols; seconded by Mr. Talbot.

MOVED to exit executive session at 7:00 p.m.

VOTE The motion passed unanimously by those present.

Following executive session the committee members conducted interviews for the position of Town Historian.

Chairman Ruocco outlined the process stating that each candidate would be asked the same six (6) questions, followed by a brief summary from each person interviewed.

Candidate #1 – Ron Gagliardi

The committee welcomed Mr. Gagliardi and informed him of how the interview process would be conducted.

#1 Please tell us about your background, work related experience and education, and how that would make you the best qualified candidate for this position.

Mr. Gagliardi informed the committee that he is the Executive Director of the Naugatuck Historical Society and Museum. He serves on the Board of Directors of the New Haven

Museum, Lock 12 Director, Assistant Director of Barnes Museum, Board of Directors of the Cheshire Historical Society, is official school historian for Cheshire High School, and has served as the Municipal Historian of Cheshire since 2003. Mr. Gagliardi stated he has a passion for history, has kept a personal journal since 1963, and said his past is as important as his present and future. His slogan is "The past is our present and our future."

Mr. Gagliardi graduated from Hamden High School, Southern Connecticut State University in 1969 with a B.S. in Art Education, Masters in Art Education, and is ¾ of the way through his Sixth Year Certification. His administrative duties include Interim Director of Adult Education in Cheshire, Honorary Town Crier, substitute teacher in the Cheshire School System since 2000, founder of The Beautification Committee to get Cheshire's image going and was the first Chair of this committee. He served on the Cheshire Town Council for two years and other numerous boards and commissions. Mr. Gagliardi said he likes to be part of history as well as record history.

#2 Why do you want to be the Town Historian.

Mr. Gagliardi did a book on Cheshire, which he gave to then Historian Arthur Hostage. At that time, Mr. Hostage asked him if he would like to be the next Town Historian. Stating he loved to do the history of the Town, keep records, collect stuff, Mr. Gagliardi said when Mr. Hostage retired he recommended Ron Gagliardi to the Historical Society as the next Town Historian. The Board approved his appointment and forwarded it to the Town Council for its approval. Now, he would like to continue to be the Town Historian.

#3 How would you define the role and responsibilities of the Town Historian.

Mr. Gagliardi commented on the passage of the State statute which allowed municipalities to appoint a Municipal Historian. The statute did not attach duties to the position. When he was named Town Historian, Mr. Gagliardi tried to get duties as part of the approval, and this was not approved by the Council. There have never been official duties attached to the position. In the ad posted for the position, he saw that it included "assist the Historical Society in its aims and objectives" and this is a given but never officially stated anywhere. His personal statement includes duties to procure, protect, preserve, promote, present Cheshire history.

Mr. Gagliardi said he would be submitting information to the committee on the role and responsibilities of the Town Historian.

#4 What do you feel are the Town's greatest historical attributes and how would you promote these historical assets.

Mr. Gagliardi stated that Cheshire has some parts of its history that are not the same, i.e. the barite mines, the Petit tragedy, and he has never focused in on particular things. His feeling is that he was to document every aspect of Cheshire's history from 1694 to the present. As Town Historian you need to be specific about things, and he has files on 300 Cheshire residents, who are luminaries for various reasons. He keeps files on most groups, organizations, volunteers (civic and religious), and feels he must

document as much as he can. In the process of keeping everything organized, he is getting everything on computer. The attributes of Cheshire are those things specific to Cheshire, but he treats everything as important.

5. How do you envision the relationship between the Town Historian and the three key groups in Town: The Historical Society, Town government (elected and appointed) and the Chamber of Commerce.

Mr. Gagliardi stated that the relationship between the Town Historian must be out there, knowing people and cooperate with them. He is on a first name basis with many of the movers and shakers in Cheshire, and this has helped him. He has a good relationship with the Chamber of Commerce, has office space to be used as needed in the Chamber office, with use of the board room; and a museum of Cheshire business history has been set up in these offices. Mr. Gagliardi helped put together the latest Cheshire Community Guide, and he puts in an historical view of Cheshire in each guide publication.

With regard to the Historical Society and its relationship with the Town Historian is of great benefit to each of them. Mr. Gagliardi said that when someone donates something to him he assures them it is a donation to the Town Historian, and it will not be sold from his collection, and it is unlikely it will be on display due to shortage of space in the Society building. Donations to the Society are more likely to be seen with more made of it. Over the years the Cheshire Philatelic Group has disbanded and they wanted to give their stamp collection to Mr. Gagliardi as Town Historian. Mr. Gagliardi informed them that this collection should go to the Historical Society to be on display and kept for a long time.

During his term as Town Historian, Mr. Gagliardi advised that he spends about \$2,000 to \$3,000 annually on Cheshire artifacts, and he owns them. His plan is that they, eventually, come to the Town in some form. Mr. Gagliardi displayed his collection of Cheshire post cards for the committee, and he insures the Historical Society as the collection on dvds. He is a life member and board member of the Society, donates many things to the Society, and has a good relationship with the Society, except for a few members.

#6. How would you create a better understanding, knowledge and Appreciation of Cheshire history.

Mr. Gagliardi commented on the importance of getting into the school system, and has been working on this with Curriculum Coordinator Burns. He has spoken to many classes, on his own, and believes it is a good thing for the Town Historian to get into the entire school system. Of particular interest is the 3rd grade classes where they study their locale and town history.

Summary

Mr. Gagliardi displayed his book of Cheshire photographs for the committee which included photos of the dinosaur fossil discovery in Town. He plans on a program about Gov. Foote who lived in Cheshire; will borrow a portrait of Gov. Foote, his uniform,

shoes, sword and other items; and, all this will be brought back to Cheshire. Mr. Gagliardi is working on plans for Cheshire Academy and the Historical Society hosting Gov. Foote. Other donated historical items were shown by Mr. Gagliardi, which included a telegram from Gen. Dwight Eisenhower (1956), the postcard collection, a book of 50+ newspaper articles on Cheshire history, and other books and materials.

Mr. Gagliardi has started a book on "Other Luminaries of Cheshire". He showed the key to the past (large bronze key) which is held by people who have donated to his collection. It was stated by Mr. Gagliardi that many historical societies have stopped collection of history in about 1940, and his plan is to focus on the history from 2000 forward, calling the program "20XX" He hopes to get a chapter of the group into the high school and bring the group into other high schools because these students are living this particular time period. They want to document this time period. Mr. Gagliardi advised that he is also working on the Kensett Program which is ongoing in Cheshire. Mr. Gagliardi submitted handouts to the committee for their review and information.

The committee thanked Mr. Gagliardi for participating in the interview.

Candidate #2 – Jeanne Chesanow.

#1 Please tell us about your background, work related experience and education, and how that would make you the best qualified candidate for this position.

Ms. Chesanow said she grew up in a town where history took place and she has a sense of place and history, and could convey this doing work as the Town Historian.

Ms. Chesanow has a degree from UMass in Elementary Education and English; was a teacher for 8 years; has a Masters Degree and Doctorate in Anthropology; and was a professor at Quinnipiac College. She said Anthropology and History are intertwined, and research and writing are two of her strengths.

#2 Why do you want to be the Town Historian.

Ms. Chesanow said being Town Historian would tie things together for her from her work with the Land Trust, Historic District Commission, and her background with children and working in Anthropology. She could pull lots of things together, and present a rich picture of Cheshire to a number of groups, get people interested. She works well with various groups of people, and people like to work with her, getting the best response from people. She would work with many people on various projects.

#3 How would you define the role and responsibilities of the Town Historian.

Ms. Chesanow commented on there being four major roles of the Historian. The primary job is research and writing within a scholarly approach, reaching the public, and interpreting history to the public. Second would be in the area of presentations, teaching, developing curriculum, and giving presentations to groups. Third would be historic preservation with the Historical Society being the leading player, with the

Historian working with them in whatever way they advise. She would do grant writing and has been successful in this area, including a grant for the Walk Back in Time. Fourth would be attracting and promoting Cheshire, enhancing the image of the Town in a general and broad way, and getting active in the State groups and getting to know other historians in the State communicating information back to the community. Ms. Chesanow said there are some “don’t’s” with the position of Town Historian. The Historian should not be a political figure; should not be an officer on the Board of the Historical Society; the Historian reports to the Town and is an agent for the Town. The Historian should not seek to add items to a collection or any sort, and for anything turned over to her, she would seek the best place for an object. The Historian should not be a genealogist, but a data gatherer.

#4 What do you feel are the Town’s greatest historical attributes and how would you promote these historical assets.

Ms. Chesanow said Cheshire has 57 buildings on the National Registry, with each carefully vetted and studied by architectural historians who found great merit in them. They are recognized by the federal government to be of great worth. Cheshire has the Ball & Socket building, Lock 12, two historic districts, and there is rich history in Town which many people do not know about. This must be brought to life. Cheshire has a great agricultural history and this topic is becoming more popular and people treasure this history.

#5. How do you envision the relationship between the Town Historian and the three key groups in Town: The Historical Society, Town government (elected and appointed) and the Chamber of Commerce.

Ms. Chesanow sees a duty of the Historian of publicity, meeting with key people from each group, get a sense of where they are, what their feelings are, and what they would welcome from a Town Historian in activities, presentations. This would give a measurement of how people are thinking, and work along that line.

#6. How would you create a better understanding, knowledge and Appreciation of Cheshire history.

Ms. Chesanow would be more available to the public via e-mail, personal meetings, welcoming people’s historical stories, and making them available to the public. With regard to tourism, she would rent a trolley and give tours of the Town of its historical sites and homes, with commentary. This would be followed with a closing event.

Summary

Ms. Chesanow cited her interest and concerns about oral history, having a place to keep recorded history for the public. Many things which historians do are placed on a shelf, and they need to be available to the public. There are stories from veterans, farmers, and long time residents with personal history experiences. Ms. Chesanow said she is interested in diaries, and people are willing to share them.

The committee members thanked Ms. Chesanow for participating in the interview.

The committee recessed at 7:50 p.m. and reconvened at 8:20 p.m.

Candidate #3 – Cindy Kleist

#1 Please tell us about your background, work related experience and education, and how that would make you the best qualified candidate for this position.

Ms. Kleist stated she has a B.S. from Kansas State University, Masters in Education, and Sixth Year Certificate, and was in the newspaper business for 25 years. She worked at the Bridgeport Post, and with another journalist she wrote the history of the City of Bridgeport. She wrote articles on P.T. Barnum, Pleasure Beach which is the only natural beach in Connecticut, and in 1994 was an historical consultant for an A&E television series. At a library in Bridgeport she set up an historical room, presentations were given on different areas of the city, highlighting the city's history.

#2 Why do you want to be the Town Historian.

Ms. Kleist started looking into the history of Cheshire a few years ago, and became interested in this history. When she started her blog she did Cheshire Then and Now, going to different historical spots in Cheshire, getting old photos of the high school, Temple Beth David, Cheshire Pizza and other places. As Town Historian, Ms. Kleist would use her blog, update this web site, have a monthly exhibit at the Library highlighting different areas of Cheshire.

#3 How would you define the role and responsibilities of the Town Historian.

Ms. Kleist said the responsibility of the Historian is to preserve and protect and promote the town's history to the people in town and in the State to the best of one's ability, using whatever avenue available.

#4 What do you feel are the Town's greatest historical attributes and how would you promote these historical assets.

Ms. Kleist cited the Ball & Socket factory as a great town attribute. On her blog she worked on what this site would look like if it were restored. She would like to have signs on all historic buildings do give a sense of the historical buildings, and this would include the Congregational Church, The Foote House, The Ball & Socket building and the Linear Trail. Open space and the farms are important; there could be foot trails in the center of Town; and children and the school system must be brought into preserving the history of Cheshire.

#5. How do you envision the relationship between the Town Historian and the three key groups in Town: The Historical Society, Town government (elected and appointed) and the Chamber of Commerce.

Ms. Kleist envisions monthly meetings among these groups, invite the public, promote this in the newspapers, and have people feel they are a part of the Town. The Historical Society should interact more with people and get them involved, and there should be use of the social media. Parents and children should be involved with the work of the Historian.

#6. How would you create a better understanding, knowledge and Appreciation of Cheshire history.

Ms. Kleist would use CH 14, highlighting a different section of Town each month, invite people to submit videos for the channel, go to the schools, send out a newsletter. She would use her contacts at the Aetna Foundation to get grants for historical endeavors.

Summary

Ms. Kleist commented on it being important for people to know the history of their town, get them involved and make them fit in. People should be educated on the historical things in Cheshire. Ms. Kleist would do the best job she could do to promote the Town of Cheshire, and make it have the best Historical Society in the State.

The committee members thanked Ms. Kleist for participating in the interview.

MOTION by Ms. Nichols; seconded by Mr. Talbot.

MOVED that the Personnel Committee enter executive session at 8:37 p.m. to include Town Manager Milone and Personnel Director Zullo to discuss personnel issues.

VOTE The motion passed unanimously by those present.

MOTION by Ms. Nichols; seconded by Mr. Talbot.

MOVED that the Personnel Committee exit executive session at 9:05 p.m.

VOTE The motion passed unanimously by those present.

4. ADJOURNMENT

MOTION by Ms. Nichols; seconded by Ms. Talbot.

MOVED to adjourn at 9:05 p.m.

VOTE The motion passed unanimously by those present.

Attest:

Marilyn W. Milton, Clerk