

**TOWN OF LA POINTE
SPECIAL TOWN BOARD MEETING
WEDNESDAY, JULY 11, 2012
AT 4:30 PM AT TOWN HALL**

Called to order at 4:38 PM

Present: Nick Nelson, Jim Patterson, Greg Nelson, Ham Ross, Larry Whalen

Public Present: Kate Bortell, Glenn Carlson, Dave Thomas

The purpose of this meeting is to interview Lisa Potswald, a candidate for the Town Administrator position. His answers to the following questions appear in bold type.

Where did you hear about this position? **Potswald states that she has a home on the Island and also read about it in the newspaper.** What have you done since to learn more about the challenges you will face if you get this job? **Potswald states that she is a “chronic researcher” and has read the website, the Comprehensive Plan, Big Bay Town Park Master Plan, Summary Budget, and Chapter 60 of the state statutes. She has also met with Barb Nelson, Administrative Assistant. She has also attended Town Board Meetings & Town Plan Commission Meetings.**

What are some things your current (or previous) employer could do differently to be more successful? **Potswald responds: “listen to employees.”**

Why have you decided to leave your current job? **Potswald responds that after 34 years in Minnesota county & municipal government positions, she has decided to move to Madeline Island.**

If not your current job, what job in your past do you think most resembles the requirements of this position? **Potswald feels that many different positions have prepared her for this job:** Follow-up: Why did you leave that job? **See above.**

What adjectives would your current (previous) employer use to describe you? **Potswald responds: “a leader, adaptable, trustworthy, blunt, dependable, and organized.” She also listed some negative adjectives: abrupt, tactless, opinionated, impatient, & intimidating**

Ham Ross asks if she would be able to deal with sensitive egos. She replied, **“Absolutely. She would focus on the greater good.**

Ham Ross asks her what government authority she would be answering to. She responds, **“You guys.”**

Larry Whalen asks if she is a “content or process” person. She responds that she is task-oriented so she tried to focus on the process because it’s important legally. She realizes that she would have to be patient with the process and over-emphasize the process.

Think of someone you have had problems with in your career, as we all do, who you would NEVER use a reference. What adjectives might they use to describe you? **See above.**

Describe a time when you hired (or fired) the wrong person. **Potswald states that she does not make individual decisions regarding hiring, but that she considers hiring to be an art.**

How do you alleviate stress? **Potswald states that she feels that stress is good up to a point, that it motivates people—a person can use stress to get a job done. If she personally feels stress, she re-prioritizes. Are you more likely to cause stress in others v. them causing you stress? Potswald states that she feels stress is circular in nature.**

What tools or habits do you use to keep organized? **Potswald responds that she uses an organizer, spreadsheets of projects with tasks & dates, lots of notes and a tickler list.**

What are the first 5 things you would do if you got this position? **Potswald responds: a.) meet & greet, gather information with all employees. b.) visit all town buildings & work sites. c.) attend all committee meetings, d.) meet with the Town Board regarding their concerns & direction; and e.) draft a work plan for Town Board approval, particularly including the 2013 budget process with a focus on projected projects. She adds that she is experienced in budget preparation and would review all line items on the proposed budgets. She would also submit weekly reports in the first three to six months. She is also interested in creating a performance appraisal system for Town employees. Potswald continued by saying that she is interested in a “zero-base budgeting” which means that a department’s budget is based on its needs.**

Ham Ross asks if she would be assisting department heads with their budgets. Potswald states that she feels the budget is a team effort, and that not everyone is trained in budget preparation.

What are the things you do NOT like to do, and not want to work on? **Potswald responds: “dealing with the media.”**

How you would go about revising our (personnel policy handbook, comprehensive plan, zoning ordinances). **Potswald states that she would**

being by asking the Town Board for their highest priority; however, she feels that each should have a regular schedule of updating. She would talk to the Zoning Administrator regarding the Zoning Ordinance. She feels the Comprehensive Plan needs updating. And she is experienced in writing personnel policies and job descriptions.

What unique experience or qualifications separate you from other candidates? **Potswald lists the posts that she has filled in both St. Louis County, Minnesota and the City of Duluth, Minnesota. She feels that she is experienced in many facets of the Town's various departments. She is also a certified mediator in the state of Minnesota, as well as being certified in performance measurement and management, and certified at strategic planning. She has also written many grants for various causes.**

Ham Ross asks if she is experienced at writing ordinances. She responds that she has written both ordinances & resolutions.

Are you more of a hands-on manager or a delegator? **Potswald responds that the answer depends on the situation, but that she is most comfortable in a team situation. She looks for the person with the skills to get a job done.**

Nick Nelson asks if Potswald has experience working with tribes. She responds by saying that there are three reservations in St. Louis County, and she has worked with all of them as either a social worker or a planner. What tasks will you do for the (town board/department heads) that they currently must do themselves? Potswald replies that she will figure that out based on the skills involved.

Ham Ross asks about grant writing. She responds that she has the skill set.

Greg Nelson asks how Potswald will help the Town Board with its current information overload, i.e.: research, present an opinion and suggest a direction. She responds that she likes to generate single page memos with bulleted points. She adds that she tends to over-communicate, and she uses lots of email.

This position has been vacant for more than ten years, and we seem to have survived without it. Why do you think we should fill this position now? **Potswald feels that the Town Administrator's responsibility is to make everyone else's life easier—that the whole staff should support one another.**

How will you decide what matters need review by the Town Board, versus those matters you can resolve on your own? **Potswald says that in the beginning she would need to get some sense of the Town Board regarding what they want to deal with. She would not want to assume anything until she establishes a good working relationship.**

Potswald states that she is available whenever she is needed, and she has no questions for the Board.

Jim Patterson asks Potswald to give an example of a successful conflict resolution in which she has participated. She relates that the City had a very bright but not personable employee who alienated a neighborhood community group. She worked with him for a year before having to let him go. She also worked with the community group to refocus on the issues and feels that she used her skills to de-escalate the situation. She eventually assigned someone else to the group.

How do you operate your daily work – support staff needed, independent, resourceful, get things myself or “I’ll have my coffee now”? **Potswald states that she works without a support staff.**

What kind of work atmosphere are you used to? Quiet, private space, right in the thick of things, etc.? **Potswald states that she can work comfortably in a “gang office” situation.**

Can you handle an “open door” type of atmosphere? **Potswald states that she is comfortable with an open door policy. She says that she feels that customer service is important in government. She would listen, set up a plan and keep track of how the plan is working.**

What type of tasks are “beneath” you to perform? Cleaning up, snow shoveling, making coffee, helping the public, etc. **Potswald states that she wouldn’t ask anyone else to do anything that she wouldn’t do.**

What frustrates you the most in the work place? **Potswald states that what frustrates her is not getting things done.**

What do you see happening with the Town of LaPointe and an administrator position five years down the road? **Potswald states that five years down the road she would like to have a plan in place for the replacement of infra-structure. She is interested in long-term planning regarding roads, sewer, water, & the economy. She wants to focus on the future: what do we want the Town to look like.**

What reference sources would you bring or use to start out with? **Potswald responds: the Wisconsin Towns Association, the statutes, County Association; she would also check with other communities as to how they do things. She also has connections from her previous jobs.**

Nick Nelson asks Potswald what key points she got from her conversation with Barb Nelson. Potswald responds: 1.) long-term planning for infrastructure, 2.) dealing with folks who walk in off the street; 3.) the budget.

Greg Nelson asks what Potswald's attitude would be towards attending the meetings of various departments & committees. Potswald replies that it is absolutely part of the Town Administrator's job, but as a liaison, not directing them.

Greg Nelson asks Potswald's intentions regarding attending committee meetings: Potswald responds: "Absolutely! But as a liaison, not directing them."

Nick Nelson points out that Potswald brings a lot of skills and qualifications to the job and asks if the Town would be hiring someone who is over-qualified if they hire her. Potswald states that she grew up in a small town. She has unique skills to contribute to the community, but that the Town Board would direct her work.

**Motion to adjourn: HR
Adjourned at 6:16
Submitted by Patty Hobin, Town Clerk
Approved as submitted on July 31, 2012
Patty Hobin, Town Clerk**