

**CITY OF WOBURN
CITY COUNCIL
COMMITTEE ON PERSONNEL
WOBURN CITY HALL
COMMITTEE ROOM
TUESDAY, FEBRUARY 13, 2024 – 6:00 P.M.**

Voting members present: Chair Joanne Campbell, Councilor Joseph Demers, and Councilor Robert Toro

Non-Voting members present: President Jeffrey Dillon, Councilor Lou DiMambro, Councilor William Pappalardo, Councilor Joseph Demers, and Councilor Charles Viola. Absent: Councilor Darlene Mercer-Bruen

Also present: Mayor Michael Concannon

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Reading and approval of meeting minutes of November 28, 2023: Motion made by Councilor Toro and seconded by Councilor Demers to waive the reading of and approve the minutes of the meeting of November 28, 2023; approved, 3-0.

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Appointment of John M. Cashell as Planning Director/Woburn Redevelopment Authority Administrator: Motion made by Councilor Demers and seconded by Councilor Toro to suspend the City Council's rules to allow Mayor Concannon to address the committee; approved, 3-0. Mayor Concannon said there are several appointments before the committee tonight; the first of which is the nomination of John Cashell to become the Planning Director and the administrator of the Woburn Redevelopment Authority. He said some members of the City Council may be familiar with Mr. Cashell. He said Mr. Cashell has a very impressive resume and he is thrilled to be able to offer Mr. Cashell's nomination. He said he respectfully requests confirmation by the committee tonight. He said the goal would be for the committee to recommend the nomination "ought to pass" so the City Council can make a decision on Feb. 20. He said Tina Cassidy, the current Planning Director, has chosen to retire and it is her goal to leave by March 15. He said if the City Council acts expeditiously, there can be a week overlap during the transition from Director Cassidy to Mr. Cashell. He said there is a steep learning curve. He said Mr. Cashell is here to answer any questions the committee may have. Chair Campbell asked Mr. Cashell to tell the committee about himself. Chair Campbell said many members of the council may know Mr. Cashell because he previously had this position for 15 years. Mr. Cashell said he had the position for closer to 17 years. He said in 1985 he was appointed Planning Board Coordinator by then-Mayor John Rabbitt. He said working in Woburn has led to all the subsequent success he has had during his career. He said he worked in Woburn until 2001, when he became the town planner in Hudson, N.H. He said Hudson is a very vibrant community and there was a lot of residential development during his tenure. He said there was a steep learning curve partly because the

community is in a different state. He said he returned to Massachusetts and became the Town Planner in Georgetown. He said he was ready for a change. He said you are either cut out for this profession or you are not. He said when he arrived in Hudson, the community was involved in 30 court battles. He said within a year of his arrival, all the court battles went away. He said Hudson wasn't organized to manage the amount of development that was taking place. He said everything got smoothed out. He said it was a matter of gaining the confidence of town counsel and the selectmen. He said once you gain their confidence, things start smoothing out. He said when Mayor Concannon offered him the position in Woburn, he can't tell you how joyful he was. He said for him to come back to the community where he started is a thrill. He said there is a lot of work to do. He said he is ready. He said he has the energy. He said he feels comfortable coming back. He said he has read the city's website and he has been watching Planning Board and City Council meetings. Chair Campbell said the city has changed since Mr. Cashell left. She said development is going to continue. Mr. Cashell said he has lived in Woburn all his life and he is proud of that. He said he has seen all the change over the past 20 years. He said Woburn is on the map. He said the city is going places. Motion made by Councilor Demers and seconded by Councilor Toro to suspend the council's rules to allow any member of the City Council not on the committee to address Mr. Cashell's appointment; approved, 3-0. Councilor DiMambro said Mr. Cashell's resume is unbelievable. He said Mayor Concannon could not have asked for a better candidate. Councilor DiMambro asked where Mr. Cashell sees the city 5-10 years from now. Mr. Cashell said the city's prospects all depend upon what happens with the national economy. He said Massachusetts always seems to be on the forefront of technology and health care, but it is an expensive state in which to live. He said the demand for growth is going to continue as long as the economy continues to expand. He said people come to Massachusetts for the incredible quality of life. He said the weather isn't as cold as it was and it doesn't snow as much as it used to. He said Woburn is going to continue to grow. He said when he looked at Boston 3-4 years ago there was a crane on every block. He said 20-30 years from now the area inside the Route 128 belt will be one big metropolis. He said the population never stops growing. President Dillon said he has known Mr. Cashell for many years. He said his reputation is beyond reproach. He said he has known Mr. Cashell on a personal level as well and knows he loves Woburn as much as anyone in the room. He said he will support Mr. Cashell's nomination 100 percent. Councilor Pappalardo said Mr. Cashell has an impeccable resume. He asked why Mr. Cashell left Woburn in the first place. Mr. Cashell replied when he was younger he was much more involved in politics. He said he ran for mayor twice. He said he has gotten that out of his system. He said he is done with politics and has been for a long time. He said when he was in Hudson there was a younger colleague who was heavily involved in politics. He said he warned the colleague that politics is not their role. He said people do not realize how vibrant things are in New Hampshire. He said planners in Massachusetts could learn a lot from what is happening in New Hampshire. He said New Hampshire loves stealing businesses from Massachusetts. He said he is staying out of politics. He said he is done. He said he knows he is coming to Woburn to do a job. He said when you get this old, you get superpowers. Councilor Viola said Mr. Cashell has an impeccable track record. He asked if Mr. Cashell has any ideas for the WRA. Mr. Cashell said he has a lot of ideas. He said when Mayor Rabbitt created the WRA it had a very different focus. He said back in the 1960s the downtown area was very different. He said there was a Sears Roebuck downtown. He said there has been so much transformation, especially in the last 20 years. He said when he sees the downtown area, he would like to see improved facades. He said improving the store fronts could attract more vibrant businesses. He said everyone wants to see a

healthy, clean environment. He said he was on the WRA board when Don Borchelt was the executive director. He said a lot was accomplished due to a lot of hard work during Mayor Robert Dever's administration. He said downtowns are tough. He said city officials have to listen to what is going on. He said Woburn has a Chamber of Commerce but Georgetown does not. He said that is kind of strange. Councilor Ferullo welcomed Mr. Cashell back and said he is looking forward to working with him again. He said he is thinking back to 1985 when the Planning Dept. was working on a lot of exciting stuff. Mr. Cashell said he grew up on Vernon Street. He said when he became Planning Coordinator he advised Mayor Rabbitt that he had to do something with the pavement because the physical appearance of the city needs to be addressed. He said Mayor Rabbitt told him that costs money. He said he thought Mayor Rabbitt ignored him at first but six months later construction started and things took off after that. Councilor Ferullo said the streets are cobblestone if you dig deep enough. Motion made by Councilor Demers and seconded by Councilor Toro that the appointment of John Cashell as Planning Director/WRA Administrator "ought to pass;" approved, 3-0.

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Appointment of Anne G. Chatfield to the Woburn Board of Appeals: Mayor Concannon said he is very pleased to present Anne Chatfield to the committee for consideration as an appointment to the Zoning Board of Appeals. He said he has gotten to know Ms. Chatfield over the past year or so through the Woburn Chamber of Commerce. He said Ms. Chatfield is relatively new to Woburn but she has proven to be a quick learner. He said she has an extensive background in real estate. He said if Ms. Chatfield is appointed, she will be taking the place of Edward Robertson, who is a long-time member of the board. He said he met with Mr. Robertson and he was very gracious about the transition. He said Mr. Robertson served as the city solicitor for period of time and has been a real gentleman. Chair Campbell asked Ms. Chatfield to tell the committee about herself. Ms. Chatfield said she is a newer resident. She said she moved to Woburn in 2017 and lives in Ward 7. She said she is originally from California. She said she obtained her real estate license in 2013 and has since worked for a number of different agencies. Chair Campbell asked if Ms. Chatfield has familiarized herself with the ZBA. Ms. Chatfield said she has attended a lot of meetings and read minutes from previous meetings. Councilor Demers said he is glad to see Ms. Chatfield back in front of the committee. (Scrivener's note: Ms. Chatfield applied and was interviewed for an opening on the Traffic Commission last year but was not selected.) He said one the difficult things about being a member of the council is the turning down qualified and enthusiastic applicants. He said he will gladly vote to support Ms. Chatfield's nomination to the ZBA. Councilor Viola said he has seen Ms. Chatfield at ZBA meetings. He said he knows she has taken an interest in municipal affairs and she will bring enthusiasm and expertise to the ZBA. President Dillon said good things happen to those who wait. He said the ZBA is a perfect spot for someone like Ms. Chatfield with her background in real estate. Motion made by Councilor Demers and seconded by Councilor Toro that the nomination of Ms. Chatfield to the Zoning Board of Appeals "ought to pass;" approved, 3-0.

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Appointment of William J. McGrath to the Woburn License Commission: Mayor Concannon said Mr. McGrath is here to answer any questions the committee may have. He said

Mr. McGrath will fill the vacancy created on the License Commission when Councilor Pappalardo was elected to the City Council. Mayor Concannon said he has known Mr. McGrath forever. He said he is a long-time Woburn educator. He said Mr. McGrath has always been involved in the community. He said he thinks this will be a perfect fit. He said when he was considering nominees he wanted someone who has common sense and an open mind. He said he can't think of a better candidate. Mr. McGrath said he has lived in Woburn for his entire life. He said his children grew up in Woburn and his son is a lieutenant in the Woburn Police Dept. He said he has been involved in a number of community organizations. He said the License Commission will be a new venture for him but he thinks he can contribute. Councilor Demers said he was one of Mr. McGrath's students at Woburn High School. He thanked Mr. McGrath for his willingness to serve the community. He said he will support Mr. McGrath's nomination. President Dillon said Mr. McGrath's reputation precedes him. He said this nomination is a good opportunity for Mr. McGrath and the License Commission to work together and he knows Mr. McGrath will do a good job. Councilor Toro said he knows Mr. McGrath through their mutual affiliation with the Woburn Host Lions Club. He said he believes Mr. McGrath will be an asset to the License Commission. Councilor DiMambro said what he appreciates about Mr. McGrath is his status as a lifelong resident of Woburn. He said he will be happy to support Mr. McGrath's nomination to the License Commission. Mr. McGrath said he has tried to follow the activities of the License Commission since he was nominated. He said he has spoken with Capt. John Murphy, who is the Woburn Police Dept.'s liaison to the License Commission. Councilor Pappalardo said he was a member of the License Commission for five years. He said at first there was a learning curve but with the help of his two colleagues on the commission he was able to get up to speed quickly. He said he was also able to reach out to the City Solicitor for help when it was warranted. Motion made by Councilor Demers and seconded by Councilor Toro that the nomination of Mr. McGrath to the License Commission "ought to pass;" approved, 3-0.

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Reappointment of Jan H. Fuller to the Commission on Disability: Chair Campbell said she has spoken to Timothy Donovan, who is chair of the Commission on Disability, who endorsed the reappointment of Ms. Fuller. Motion made by Councilor Demers and seconded by Councilor Toro that the reappointment of Ms. Fuller to the Commission on Disability "ought to pass;" approved, 3-0.

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Reappointment of the following to the Woburn Council on Aging: Rosalie Travelo, Mitzie Stein, Mary Jane Mastrodomenico, Angela Amato and Joyce Parker: Chair Campbell said there are several members of the Council on Aging nominated for reappointment. Motion made by Councilor Demers and seconded by Councilor Toro that the reappointment of Rosalie Travelo, Mitzie Stein, Mary Jane Mastrodomenico, Angela Amato and Joyce Parker to the Council on Aging "ought to pass;" approved, 3-0.

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Motion made by Councilor Toro and seconded by Councilor Demers to adjourn; all in favor, 3-0. Chair Campbell adjourned the meeting at 6:40 p.m.

A TRUE RECORD ATTEST

Gordon Vincent
Clerk of Committees