

**CITY OF WOBURN
CITY COUNCIL
COMMITTEE ON PERSONNEL
As a Committee of the Whole
WOBURN CITY HALL
COMMITTEE ROOM
TUESDAY, APRIL 9, 2024 – 6:00 P.M.**

Voting members present: Chair Joanne Campbell, President Jeffrey Dillon, Councilor Joseph Demers, Councilor Robert Toro, President Jeffrey Dillon, Councilor Lou DiMambro, Councilor William Pappalardo, Councilor Joseph Demers, Councilor Charles Viola, and Councilor Darlene Mercer-Bruen

Also present: Dept. of Public Works Supt. John Duran and Human Resources Director Shawna Healey

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Reading and approval of meeting minutes of April 3, 2024: Motion made by Councilor Demers and seconded by Councilor Toro to waive the reading of and approve the minutes of the meeting of April 3, 2024; approved, 8-0 (Ferullo absent).

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Interviews for the position of Deputy Superintendent of Public Works: Chair Campbell said there are two candidates who will be interviewed tonight. She said she will ask the same questions of each candidate. Councilor Demers asked if individual council members will be able to also ask questions. Chair Campbell answered affirmatively. Chair Campbell said the two candidates are finalists that were chosen from an executive session meeting with the Personnel Committee on April 2. She said the council's Rule 34 stipulates no more than three finalists can be forwarded to the committee of the whole. She said after examining the resumes of six candidates on April 2 the committee voted to bring these two finalists forward. She said the finalists are Renny Carroll and Regina Needham and they will be interviewed in that order. President Dillon said he has received a message from Councilor Ferullo that he will be arriving in a few minutes. Councilor Demers said he does not think it would be prudent to recess the Personnel Committee meeting and take another matter on the posted agenda out of order, as the time of Mr. Carroll's interview is listed on the posted agenda at 6:10 p.m. Motion by Councilor Demers and seconded by Councilor Toro to take a 5-minute recess; approved, 8-0. Chair Campbell recessed the meeting at 6:05 p.m. Motion made by Councilor Demers and seconded by Councilor Toro to return to the regular order of business; approved, 8-0. Chair Campbell reconvened the meeting at 6:10 a.m. **Renny Carroll** - Chair Campbell introduced Mr. Carroll to members of the committee as a whole. She said she will be asking the same questions of each candidate and then she will open the meeting to any member of the committee. Chair Campbell asked Mr. Carroll to "Please take a few moments to tell us about yourself and your experience that would be helpful in assessing you for the Deputy Superintendent's position and why you are

interested in the position.” Mr. Carroll said he started his own business and then worked for a drilling company. He said he then worked for the city of Beverly, then worked for 10 years in Portsmouth, N.H., and then wanted to take on a role as the DPW superintendent in Groveland. Chair Campbell asked Mr. Carroll to “Please tell us about your experience in a DPW and public environment.” Mr. Carroll said in Groveland the highway department is basically everything. He said the DPW is also in charge of cemeteries, public spaces and parks. He said all grants go through his office. Councilor Ferullo arrived at 6:13 p.m. Chair Campbell asked “As Deputy Superintendent, you would be involved in many different projects and will get numerous interruptions on a daily basis of things that must be addressed. How do you organize yourself to ensure progress on those things you are tasked to do?” Mr. Carroll said prioritizing tasks is the biggest thing. He said you have to tackle things at the top of the list and work your way down. He said there are emergencies that throw things off to a later date. Chair Campbell asked Mr. Carroll to give the committee an example of an emergency. Mr. Carroll said there was an instance when a tree fell and he grabbed a chainsaw and removed the tree. He said the tree created an issue because it was on power lines. He said he has all the necessary licenses and capability for doing anything that is required. Chair Campbell asked Mr. Carroll “to describe (his) conflict resolution skills. How would you handle a conflict with a staff member? How would you handle a conflict with a citizen?” Mr. Carroll said if there was a conflict with an employee he would bring union representation into a meeting. He said there are protocols that have to be followed and he would make sure he stands behind whatever resolution there is. He said conflicts with residents are handled a little differently. He said sometimes you have to say no even though that is not what the resident wants to hear. He said he has a good rapport with almost everyone he deals with. Chair Campbell asked Mr. Carroll to give an example of a conflict with a resident. Mr. Carroll said in Groveland there are a lot of properties that border conservation areas. He said there are disputes when trees fall down on private property and residents want the town to remove the tree. He said he tries to respond in a calm manner. Chair Campbell asked “Have you ever had to defuse a situation with a volatile co-worker. How have you handled it? What was the outcome?” Mr. Carroll said in Portsmouth there were situations when policies were not being followed. He said an employee had taken a city truck without permission to train for a CDL license exam. He said there was yelling and screaming but he was able to defuse the situation and get the equipment back into the yard. He said there was a subsequent conversation with the DPW Director and the Human Resources Director. He said the employee was reprimanded and subsequently suspended for a couple of days. Chair Campbell asked Mr. Carroll to “Please describe your experience as a supervisor and a manager. What do you consider your strengths? What are your weaknesses and how will you overcome them to be successful in this position?” Mr. Carroll said his strengths are his ability to perform a number of different tasks. He said he has held just about every position in the public works realm at one point or another. He said a weakness may be the perception he is a little too easy going. He said that is sometimes mistaken for weakness. He said he can put his foot down when needed. Chair Campbell asked “Why should we select you as the next Deputy Superintendent? What sets you apart from the other candidates? Is there anything you’d like to share with us that isn’t on your resume?” Mr. Carroll said his years of experience set him apart as a candidate. He said he has wielded every sword in the private sector. He said he really has a good wealth of knowledge that he thinks can help mold the next generation of workers. Chair Campbell asked if Mr. Carroll has any questions for the committee. Mr. Carroll said he does not. Councilor Demers asked Mr. Carroll to expand on why he wants to come to Woburn. He said Mr. Carroll is already a DPW

superintendent now and asked why he would want to come to Woburn. Mr. Carroll said Groveland is a very small town. He said there are not a lot of major projects going on. He said he likes the hustle and bustle of a bigger city. He said he misses it. He said if he was 63, he'd be okay but at his age he wants to return to city life. Councilor Toro said his thoughts were similar. He asked why Mr. Toro would want to report to a superintendent as a deputy. Mr. Carroll said he thinks Woburn would benefit from his previous experience as a superintendent. He said the dynamic won't be that different because he has five bosses now. Councilor Toro asked Mr. Carroll if he lives in Groveland. Mr. Carroll said he lives in Methuen. Councilor Toro said the Deputy Superintendent's job is 24/7 and asked if Mr. Carroll has any concerns about getting to and from Woburn. Mr. Carroll said he knows all the side roads. Councilor Toro asked why Mr. Carroll's tenure in Portsmouth was so short. Mr. Carroll said the person who hired him in Portsmouth left. He said he felt it was time to move on. Councilor Toro asked if Mr. Carroll still owns a business. Mr. Carroll said he does not. He said after the Big Dig his company sold everything off. Councilor Toro asked if Mr. Carroll left Portsmouth on good terms. Mr. Carroll said two of his references are from his tenure in Portsmouth. He said he left in good standing. Councilor Toro asked where Mr. Carroll sees himself in five years. Mr. Carroll said he wants to work in a city and retire in a city. He said he enjoys the hustle and bustle. Councilor Toro asked if he sees this job as a stepping stone or if he wants to grow in this position. Mr. Carroll said he wants to grow in this position. President Dillon said looking at Mr. Carroll's resume it seems like he checks every box the position requires. He said he fits perfectly from what he sees. Councilor DiMambro said Mr. Carroll meets a lot of qualifications. He asked if Mr. Carroll has any experience with underground utilities. Mr. Carroll said he did not have to deal with a lot of sewer lines in Groveland but he did have water lines. Councilor DiMambro asked if Mr. Carroll can look in a trench and can see if it is done right. Mr. Carroll answered affirmatively. He said there will be nothing Mr. Duran knows that he doesn't know. Councilor Pappalardo asked how big the team he manages in Groveland is. Mr. Carroll said there are four DPW employees in Groveland. He said he managed 16 employees in Beverly and about 30 in Portsmouth. Councilor Pappalardo said it sounds like Mr. Carroll is bored in Groveland. Mr. Carroll said most of the public works issues in Groveland are not complicated. Councilor Pappalardo said that is not likely to be the case if he gets the job in Woburn. Mr. Carroll said he is looking forward to any challenges that will come his way. Councilor Mercer-Breun said Mr. Carroll has a very impressive resume. Councilor Mercer-Breun posed a hypothetical situation involving a water main break and asked to whom he would make the first call. Mr. Carroll said the first thing he would do is mobilize a crew. He said he would then notify the state. Then he would determine which entity has jurisdiction. Councilor Mercer-Breun said Mr. Carroll said earlier said he would rather tell someone no if the situation is warranted. He said it is really important to set proper expectations. She said she was glad to hear Mr. Carroll has healthy relationships with the people he works for. She said there is no requirement for the person in this position to be an engineer but it seems like Mr. Carroll has some of those qualifications. She asked if Mr. Carroll is comfortable looking at plans. Mr. Carroll said he studied engineering for two years at Suffolk University. He said he has been looking at plans for decades. Councilor Viola asked Mr. Carroll how he would address employees he supervises on his first day of work. Mr. Carroll said he enjoys meeting new people. He said he would introduce himself and let the employees know he is here to work. Councilor Viola asked if Mr. Carroll knows anyone who is currently employed by the city of Woburn. Mr. Carroll said he does not. President Dillon asked Mr. Carroll how much familiarity he has with GIS. Mr. Carroll said GIS is a valuable tool in the public works realm. He said GIS

is an effective tool that can be used, for example, to locate corrugated pipes that need to be replaced. He said he has used GIS for drainage. Supt. Duran asked if the DPW employees in Groveland are unionized. Mr. Carroll said they are. HRD Healey asked if Mr. Carroll is in a union. Mr. Carroll said he is not. **Regina Needham** - Chair Campbell introduced Ms. Needham to the members of the committee as a whole. Chair Campbell said she will be asking the same questions to Ms. Needham she asked of Mr. Carroll. She said members of the committee will then be able to ask questions of Ms. Needham. Chair Campbell asked Ms. Needham to "Please take a few moments to tell us about yourself and your experience that would be helpful in assessing you for the Deputy Superintendent's position and why you are interested in the position." Ms. Needham said her original training and experience is in engineering and construction. She said she is a civil engineer. She said she worked for an architectural engineering firm. She said she decided education would be a better route for her but now she would like to get back into the world of construction. She said her experience in education and engineering give her a background that represents the best of both worlds. Chair Campbell asked Ms. Needham to "Please tell us about your experience in a DPW and public environment." Ms. Needham said she has experience working in the public works sector, on permitting and site design. She said she has worked with planning boards and conservation commissions. She said she has worked with zoning boards. She said she has worked with clients on permitting issues. Chair Campbell asked if Ms. Needham can give the committee any examples of projects that involved permitting with municipal boards. Ms. Needham said she has worked on permitting for the Natick Mall, the Burlington Mall, the Square One Mall in Saugus and other properties in New Hampshire. She said she has worked on site development. She said she has been to conservation commission meetings. Chair Campbell asked "As Deputy Superintendent, you would be involved in many different projects and will get numerous interruptions on a daily basis of things that must be addressed. How do you organize yourself to ensure progress on those things you are tasked to do?" Ms. Needham said organization ties into what she is doing now. She said she has to put out a lot of fires, both as an engineer and as an educator. She said both occupations require her to adapt to continuing changes throughout any given day. Chair Campbell asked Ms. Needham to cite an example. Ms. Needham said she remembers getting calls from the field from contractors and having to make quick changes. Chair Campbell asked Ms. Needham "to describe (her) conflict resolution skills. How would you handle a conflict with a staff member? How would you handle a conflict with a citizen?" Ms. Needham said she feels she has always been able to work well with other people. She said she prefers to talk through any problems. She said as an educator she has to work together as part of a team and come up with compromises. She said with citizens it is important to listen and make them feel like you will listen to all their concerns. Chair Campbell asked "Have you ever had to defuse a situation with a volatile co-worker. How have you handled it? What was the outcome?" Ms. Needham said she cannot recall an instance where she had to defuse a volatile co-worker. She said she has always been there to support her co-workers. Chair Campbell asked if Ms. Needham can recall any situations where there was a disagreement that had to be resolved. Ms. Needham said she would take the same approach as she would for a conflict resolution with a citizen; she would listen. Chair Campbell asked Ms. Needham to "Please describe your experience as a supervisor and a manager. What do you consider your strengths? What are your weaknesses and how will you overcome them to be successful in this position?" Ms. Needham said she has a lot of experience working with people. She said she worked together with other engineers in a cooperative environment. She said she worked in situations where everyone needs to be made happy. She

said she has experience working on deadlines as a project manager. She said her weakness is she does not delegate enough. She said she has gotten much better, however. Chair Campbell asked "Why should we select you as the next Deputy Superintendent? What sets you apart from the other candidates? Is there anything you'd like to share with us that isn't on your resume?" Ms. Needham said her background is very different. She said she worked in the construction industry until she had four children and changed to the education realm. She said she always knew she wanted to return to the construction industry. She said the education field lends itself to time management. She said she thinks she has a set of qualifications that make her an ideal candidate for this position. Chair Campbell asked Ms. Needham if she has any questions for the committee. Ms. Needham said she asked a number of questions of Supt. Duran when she interviewed with him for the job. She said she thinks she understands what the job entails. Councilor Demers asked why Ms. Needham chose to apply for a job in Woburn. Ms. Needham said she started looking a little bit here and there but in the last couple of years she wanted to get back into the construction world. Councilor Toro said Ms. Needham's resume indicates she has an extensive background in education. He asked how Ms. Needham would transition her career toward a public works realm. Ms. Needham said has been able to maintain her management skills as an educator. She said she has kept up with some the technological advances in the engineering field. Councilor Toro said if Ms. Needham is hired she will be on call 24/7, which is a big change from being an educator. Ms. Needham said she has thought about that a lot. She said her husband is supportive of her seeking this job. She said she thinks there are after hours responsibilities in every job. Councilor Toro asked Ms. Needham where she sees herself in five years. Ms. Needham said she is not really sure. Councilor Toro asked Ms. Needham if she is hired for this job would she look at it as a transitory role or something more permanent. Ms. Needham said she would consider this role something she would hold onto until retirement. Councilor Viola asked Ms. Needham how she would address the DPW employees on her first day. Ms. Needham said she would prefer to reach out to each employee individually. Councilor Viola asked Ms. Needham if she knows anyone employed by the city of Woburn. Ms. Needham said she knows a couple of people. President Dillon asked Ms. Needham if she sees this role as bring more in the field or at headquarters. Ms. Needham said she sees this as more of an administrative role. Councilor DiMambro asked Ms. Needham if she has any experience without layout in the field. Ms. Needham said she does have some field experience. She said would feel comfortable with looking at a set of plans and diagnosing issues in the field. Councilor Mercer-Bruen said she has no doubt Ms. Needham has experience in crisis management at school. She said if there is a water main break on Washington Street that might be under the realm of the city, state or MRWA, and Supt. Duran is not available, to whom would she make the first call. Ms. Needham said her first call would be to the department's water/sewer supervisor, then make an assessment and then contact other agencies if applicable. Chair Campbell said she would like to open the meeting to discussion about the candidates. She said City Council Rule 33 indicates the committee can move forward with one or both candidates for a vote at the council's next regular meeting if the committee so chooses. Councilor Toro asked if there will be discussion among members of the committee. Chair Campbell said there will be discussion among members of the committee but no public participation. Councilor Toro asked if the committee will be making a recommendation tonight. Chair Campbell answered affirmatively. Councilor Toro said both candidates were great. He said Mr. Carroll stood out. He said Mr. Carroll has experience. He said if Supt. Duran is unavailable, Mr. Carroll could come in and do the job right away. He said Mr. Carroll is the person for this job. He said both candidates would be good, but Mr. Carroll is the

person. Councilor DiMambro said Mr. Carroll checks all the boxes. He said Councilor Mercer-Bruen asked Mr. Carroll a question about what he would do in an emergency and Mr. Carroll knew the answer right away. He said he liked the fact that Mr. Carroll is able to address issues in Supt. Duran's absence. He said Mr. Carroll has experience with site work. He said he was very impressed with all of Mr. Carroll's answers. Councilor Pappalardo said there is a clear choice. He said Mr. Carroll stood out. He said the choice is fairly straightforward for him. Councilor Mercer-Bruen said the city is looking for someone who can jump into this role right away. She said she came into this process with an open mind. She said she likes Ms. Needham's qualifications as an engineer. She said Ms. Needham is well qualified. She said Ms. Needham has a lot of skills, but for what the position entails, Mr. Carroll is the right candidate. Councilor Viola said the two candidates come from very different backgrounds. He said both candidates would bring skills to the position. He said Mr. Carroll is the person who would be ready to go. Councilor Ferullo said he echoes his colleagues' comments. He said both candidates are qualified but he agrees Mr. Carroll would do well in this role. President Dillon said Mr. Carroll has an excellent background. He said he has performed well in a number of different roles. He said his vote will be for Mr. Carroll. Chair Campbell said she agrees with everyone's comments. Councilor Demers said it is always tough to make personnel decisions. He said he thinks Mr. Carroll rose to the top. He said Mr. Carroll has experience in a public works setting, in a position of management. He said he will be supporting Mr. Carroll's candidacy. Motion made by Councilor Demers and seconded by Councilor Mercer-Bruen to recommend the appointment of Renny Carroll to the position of Deputy DPW Superintendent; approved, 9-0.

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Motion made by Councilor Toro and seconded by Councilor Demers to adjourn; all in favor, 9-0. Chair Campbell adjourned the meeting at 7:14 p.m.

A TRUE RECORD ATTEST

Gordon Vincent
Clerk of Committees