



Natick town administrator finalists announced

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NATICK - Two familiar faces and a leader of Providence, Rhode Island's government make up the finalists looking to become the next town administrator.

Current Natick Acting Town Administrator Bill Chenard, former Natick Deputy Town Administrator/Finance Director Michael Walters Young and Providence Chief Operating Officer Melissa Malone rose to the top of a field of 24 candidates, said Steve Levinsky, chairman of the Town Administrator Screening Committee.

The committee presented its recommendations to selectmen on Monday. It interviewed six candidates, asking them about topics such as innovation, financial planning, human resources and community and economic development.

Selectmen are looking for a replacement for Martha White, who was planning to retire at the end of June. Selectmen and White agreed upon an early departure, though White will be available to assist and will continue to be paid through the end of June. Chenard has been acting town administrator since late last year.

Chenard has a long history with the town in two stints dating back to 1995. He led assessing and public works operations before becoming a deputy town administrator in 2013.

Chenard was a finalist last year for the Norwood general manager job but was not selected. He said he hopes to advance in the municipal government field through becoming town administrator.

"I obviously am excited about it," he said of being named a finalist. "I think I'm a

good fit for the town. It's a terrific opportunity.”

Natick is attractive because of its strong financial management and excellent town department heads and staff, he said.

“I think I can bring those folks together with community leaders (and) members of the community who haven't necessarily participated in recent years,” Chenard said.

He would also like to do more strategic, long-term financial planning. Chenard highlighted his knowledge of municipal finance and software programs in his cover letter.

Walters Young worked for Natick from 2008-2014, serving as deputy town administrator and deputy town administrator/finance director. He has held several positions with the city of Franklin, Tennessee, in recent years, including overseeing budgeting.

In his cover letter, Walters Young highlighted Natick's accomplishments during his tenure, including weathering the recession without laying off employees. He said he brings ethics, hard work and transparency and has “more vision, enthusiasm, and experience than ever.”

Walters Young left to be with his wife as she pursued a PhD., but she is no longer bound by residency requirements. They now have a newborn and would love to live in Natick.

“I have a deep affection for the people, the community and the organization and have never forgotten and never lost sight of the hope and possibility of one day returning,” he said in an interview.

Natick, he said, “is a model community in so many ways - its spirit, its participatory democracy, its history and its opportunity.”

If selected, Walters Young said he would focus in his first 90 to 180 days on listening so he can learn what has changed and stayed the same since he left. He would also listen to the Board of Selectmen as he works to shape the town's future.

He said he is “thrilled” to be a finalist.

Malone has been Providence’s COO since August 2017. She has prior experience in several roles in Rhode Island state government, including as general counsel/deputy treasurer in the Office of the General Treasurer.

“While different in size and scope, municipalities across America face similar challenges meeting the demands of the present while planning for tomorrow,” she wrote in her cover letter. “Families and individuals want to live in communities with high-performing schools, where businesses thrive, and there is a sense of shared values and communal space.”

She touted her knowledge of municipal finance and experience with legal matters and labor contracts.

She has an “appreciation for the past with an eye to the future – a positive sense of urgency and willingness to spend the time and the energy necessary to ensure strategic goals are met,” she wrote. “The Town of Natick like other municipalities must live in the present and look beyond the immediate.”

Natick selectmen praised the screening committee for its work in providing three strong candidates. Levinsky encouraged selectmen to keep an open mind.

Selectmen plan to publicly interview the candidates beginning at 6 p.m. Thursday at Town Hall. The board plans to finalize the interview process at 5:30 p.m.

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