



A new direction

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Posted at 10:07 AM

Updated at 10:07 AM

Youth, diversity, and commitment to the town were some of the qualities residents want from their new general manager.

With John Carroll, who has held the position for four decades, announcing his retirement this year, the town has begun the process of finding a replacement for a Norwood staple.

“The Board of Selectmen has the crucial task of finding a replacement for the general manager,” Bill Plasko, selectmen chair, said. “We have a daunting task ahead of us.”

As part of the process to get input on what residents are looking for in a manager, the selectmen held a community meeting facilitated by Bernard Lynch, a consultant with Community Paradigm Associates. The forum, held this past Thursday Sept. 14, allowed members of the town to share their thoughts and ask questions about the process of selecting a new general manager.

Plasko said the ability to hear the public’s opinions would be helpful for the selectmen in eventually making a decision. Lynch said he was impressed by Norwood’s willingness to solicit input from the public.

“I was particularly pleased that the board was supportive of the idea of engaging the public in the process,” Lynch said. “There’s always something you learn about the town when you go through this process... that I can then convey to people who are interested in the position or who I feel would be a good fit for the position.”

In order to gather information on what the town is looking for in a manager and what the needs are, Lynch said he has discussed the matter with many of the town departments and members of the school department.

He added that public input had been helpful in other towns that he had worked with in choosing the best possibly candidate, despite the challenges associated with finding a manager at this time. Aside from needing a candidate to fill the shoes of Carroll, there are about 12 open town manager positions open throughout the state, creating a competitive market.

“There’s a very tight market right now for town managers across the country and particularly across Massachusetts,” he said. “Norwood should be a pretty easy sell for us in order to get candidates, but we want the best candidates.”

The community members present expressed a desire for a candidate who would be dedicated to the town and have a plan to elevate Norwood through a solid plan for the future and a knowledge of how to best allocate resources and create a strong financial and housing market.

Some area speakers wanted the new manager to focus on included building commercial business in order to maintain the residential property tax rate, a strong technology initiative for the town, and an ability to act as a steward for the town.

Resident Paul Eysie compared Norwood to Brookline and said the way the administrator in Brookline is running the town should be a standard for how the new Norwood manager operates.

“The most important thing for me is to keep politics out of it. Norwood deserves the best and the brightest,” Eysie said. “I really feel that we need someone who’s smart, educated... I want someone who can think ahead and keep politics out of it.”

The selectmen present at the meeting, Tom Maloney and Alan Howard, along with Plasko, said they would take diversity into consideration while selecting the next town manager, but overall would choose the best possible candidate.

Lynch said the town could expect an average of 40 applicants, with finalists being selected and interviewed in November and the new manager beginning in January. However, the selectmen reiterated, based on concerns from the audience, that a plan was in place in the event the search needed to continue for longer than anticipated.

