

Berkshire County Retirement Board Meeting
October 22, 2021

The meeting of the Berkshire County Retirement Board was called to order at 8:29 A.M. in the Berkshire County Retirement Office, located at 29 Dunham Mall, Pittsfield, MA. Present at the meeting were Mark Bashara, Elected Member and Paul A. Lisi, Jr., Advisory Board Member. Beth Matson Appointed member and Karen Williams, Elected Member, participated remotely. Absent was Michael Ovitt, Chairman. A roll call vote was taken to open the meeting. The vote was unanimous.

NEW BUSINESS:

1.) The Board will discuss hiring for the open position in the Berkshire County Retirement office.

Paul: Good morning. It is now 8:29 on Friday, October 22nd. And I would like to open the meeting at that time. And we are meeting today to talk about the candidates that were interview in our last meeting and potentially make a hire based upon those two candidates. Karen, did you get an opportunity to look over the video? If we want to start Karen, I'll let you start by anything you may have regarding the two candidates and then we'll go around and then we'll come back to discussion.

Karen: Okay. As usual, I'm going to be honest. I wasn't overly impressed with either one. I think with training, they could probably both handle the job. I'm kind of split honestly, on both of them. I'm not leaning one way or the other, necessarily.

Paul: Okay. Beth, would you like to add anything in?

Beth: I would. I was a little more impressed with Brian only because he has some transferable skills. I didn't see anything Jennifer. I think it would take her a while to get up to speed, particularly if you're looking at filling Bill's position, which was mostly accounting. And I think Brian's education far exceeded hers.

Paul: Okay. Mark?

Mark: All right. So, we had two candidates. So, I have to base my decision based on interviews solely those two. Are there better out there that could've been better? Maybe? I don't know some of my decisions based on that. I wasn't impressed with Jennifer's interview at all. In the beginning, when I think the question was asked, I'm paraphrasing - why you want the job, something along that line. The first thing she said was regarding hours. She likes the Monday through Friday schedule. Apparently at the bank, you have to work extra hours. I remember you mentioned something along the lines, the same thing, which in my, my opinion is fine as an extra. You listed several reasons why you want the job and plus it would be nice to have these hours, but to start out with that is your first thing. I don't like that. I'm sure either one of them can do the job if trained properly. Obviously, she has a lot of experience. I wasn't impressed with when I asked a question of integrity, to me, that's a very simple answer. I don't remember if it was you or someone that we spoke. You said, you do the right thing, even if no one's looking or whatever. Basically, every question that was answered, I felt she answered it with a response of customer service. While customer service is very important in this job, I won't take that away at all. It seemed that whatever the question was, it always came back to, well, I've been there 20 years. I help these customers. I help them do a balance of checkbook or whatever. Well, that's fine. But it didn't answer the specifics of particular questions. Whereas in with Brian I think it was Karen had just mentioned now, obviously I'm not an expert on the laws and everything with the pensions, but he did seem to have more experience when he would answer the questions regarding the help and his clients you know, transfer funds or work within pensions. So, he does have more

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experience to me, at least according to the interviews, then Jennifer did. Also, any question that was asked of him, he answered and what I would consider, not quick, but he didn't seem to have to pause for a long time or overthink it. And every answer in my opinion was addressed to the best of his ability at that time. And skills answered the question that was asked. So, in my, book Brian, I think between the two would be the candidate best for the position I could go on and on. I'm not going to, I'm not here to berate anybody. That's just a synopsis.

Paul: I'll go on about my observations about the two. So, in regard to Jennifer, her interview again was not impressive. So to say at the beginning, but I did feel that she answered all of the questions honestly, and with thought. So some of them were in regards to helping possible retirees and active employees. And she helped helps her customers with decision making and understood that in this position here, she would be able to help them by giving them the knowledge or the tools they have to make an informed decision, what she showed to say, couldn't help them. Other items where she has been in with the bank for over 20 years. So that is in my opinion, integrity, and looking to be dedicated to a job. She has been promoted three times. She understood that when she didn't go get the manager's position, that bummed her out a little bit, but then she couldn't dwell on that. She had to then learn to work with her new manager, which she does effectively. Some items that she pointed out to me that stuck with me, are she's very good at training. She's a she's coach to her staff. People come to her for questions and help, she's not afraid to reach out for questions and help. She supports all fellow staff. Mark, you asked the question about integrity. And I feel she answered that pretty thoroughly. She said that integrity was trustworthiness, being honest, making prudent decisions. An example of that was she has a large following of customers due to her honesty. In fact, you asked what her interests her about the job, again, the work life balance, which we've received that for everybody we've ever interviewed. She would have no problem staying late to get work done. And the ability to learn about the retirement system and the aspect of working in the retirement system. Brian, so I've worked with people like Brian before in my position, both with the town of Richmond and the town of Egremont, and the town of Monterey. Brian does he knows how to do buybacks, but I tell you dealing with Equitable. They send a buyback sheet to Brian; Brian then forwards it on to me. I send it to the retirement system, they fill it out. Brian doesn't produce any buybacks. He just sends us the paper. They don't process the papers in regard to transfers. They send out the transfer form to the client. The client gives it to us to forward it to the retirement system. I would say that I doubt he knows how to calculate buybacks. You asked him a question Mark, like all of the interview, this one stuck out to me. A hundred percent was the fact that he was still at his job, his answer to you in regard to integrity, come to find out in that interview with Brian, it slipped that he's no longer at the job. We don't know the reason he's not at the job, but he's no longer at his job. So that wasn't a good answer to integrity my opinion, because his answer that he gave did not speak with what he described to me. So that's what I feel there. Sheila, do you have anything that you'd like to add?

Sheila: Well, I do have some things I'd like to add because I did do the reference checks. I did the reference checks for both of them. I didn't know if we wanted to discuss them? I did both of them and Brian had two references and I think that some of what we discussed would be answered by some of them. I mean, his references were good. I was a little surprised too in the interview to find out that he wasn't still employed with Equitable, but he did give me his manager that he worked directly with. And he was there for seven years, it was a voluntary separation. Equitable is performance-based compensation. And he had struggled

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with that compensation during his employment with them. And so that seemed to be the reason why he left. I didn't ask exactly what the compensation structure was. I don't know that he wasn't earning enough to support himself or he wasn't earning enough to meet the goals of equitable. I didn't ask that question. I felt that his answer with the compensation was sufficient and I didn't really need to go any further. He was very nice about it. He had good things to say about him. He worked independently. He only had a check into the office, I believe it was in Albany or in the Albany area once a week. He did do that. And he did partner with somebody here in the Berkshires to try to build that book of business and did just within the last couple of years with COVID and things like that, he just struggled with that. Brian had one other and that was with someone he had worked in construction with. And that gentleman gave him a very good reference. It was both a personal and professional because he'd known him for 20 years. He'd worked for him and felt he was very organized; He was a self-starter. So, he's done a little bit of everything with the construction business. Brian was a type of guy that would pretty much do anything he asked him to do. So he was really impressed with that. And he said he was good friends with him and found him to be an honest standup guy and that kind of stuff too. So, I only had the two people that I called. For Jennifer, she had given me four. I had four people to call. I was able to talk to her former branch manager who gave her an excellent reference. And her references, I think actually helped her a little bit because I would kind of agree that, and actually sitting next to both of the candidates they both appeared to be very nervous. So, I don't know if that was part of it. It seemed like they were both nervous. But he was her supervisor for 10 years at the bank. He indicated that he worked with her more as a co-manager together. He talked a lot about her ability to train and to coach, her ability to handle customers. She always asked great questions. She was able to make you aware of any issues that may occur. He especially liked the way that with the customers in the bank that, he felt that it, which was interesting - that she set them up for success depending how they came in. And he said it didn't matter whether it was a retail customer or a commercial customer, he felt that she had the knowledge and experience to be able to do that and did that well. All of the people were asked if they would rehire the candidate and he indicated that he would rehire her in a minute. It was a pleasure to work with her. I asked a little bit about the software, her computer issues, because she wasn't really clear on it. He said that he thought that she was really good at that. She would be able to do it. Because of her knowledge of her job, she was able to troubleshoot and act accurately evaluate software and the processes that were used in the bank. One of her other references, which was an outside reference, it was still a professional reference who had dealt with her since 2007. It was a customer of the bank that she manages. I don't know if I'm pronouncing right. What is IOLTA accounts? So, she manages the estate accounts with the Co-Op. He found her to be knowledgeable professional, very smart, knew her job very well. Had a loyal following at the bank. She does well with a variety of customers. Absolutely professional goes out of her way to help. He felt that she would be really hard for the bank to replace because of her knowledge and experience and felt that we would be getting an exceptional employee. It was funny too, because he also I commented that he was it was really nice that we actually did reference checks, and he was actually appreciative of the questions. These days, I guess it's not that easy. I kind of agree with him that to do references. People who don't do them, cheat. Had another two other employees from the bank that were either coworkers or supervisors and one worked with her for over 20 years. Again customer service all variety of people. The other thing that she and commented on was and it's not really accounting, it's the IRA. There are different things that

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the bank has to do for IRAs and apparently those calculations are quite difficult and that she does that exceptionally well on that. That is what she really does really well at the bank. And she does whatever needs to be done. Again, talked a little bit about the training and coaching. She does an excellent job with her staff and know that she is one of the most reliable employees that she had to deal with in 37 years and would be a wonderful addition for us. The other, worked with her for 11 years and was security. I'm not always sure what they do with you know, the different financial institutions have different things, but security, I think he was really impressed. And he also noted that he doesn't recommend individuals because sometimes he doesn't like the responsibility of if people don't work out, but he said he was actually really happy to provide a reference for her because he thought she would be a great fit and would be really good. So, I thought, they all went pretty well and like I said, they were very complimentary as far as the job description going. As we move forward here in the office. I think that that the person we didn't end up interviewing, was the one person that had a little bit more of what I would call accounting skills.

Mark: How many were there?

Sheila: Nine originally. So, we don't want to interview all of them. I had to pair it down to the top three. I gave you the top three based on what I believe to be transferable skills, longevity in employment, and people that would, I think would be a good fit.

Paul: If I could ask a question, for you to answer all of the board. Which one of the two candidates that was interviewed the last meeting do you feel would fit best into your office and why?

Sheila: Well, my personal recommendation would be Jennifer and it has to do more with the fit in the office. I think that it is important to have the customer service skills. I think that she does have transferable skills from the bank, whether it's the IRAs or the rollovers and things of that nature that are familiar here. The one thing that she does have that I don't believe there were anybody else in that does have the managerial experience for training and coaching. And as I move forward with some of the projects that we have here in the office, specifically the deduction posting with the treasurers, I think training and coaching is going to be really important. It's all so about having that calm demeanor in the office to not get frustrated. That was one of the things that kind of came through in her reference check. People, especially in the last two years have a short fuse. I think that's something that would be really helpful. I look at what are people going to do? What are their job responsibilities as far as the transactional skills that they need and the day-to-day operations? There's three of us. We're going to be cross trained to do everything in this office. So, as we go through that and we develop and whoever skills fit best with some of those transactional items, that's where they will go. Currently myself, I'm doing the accounting. Jill does a little bit with the receivables, the daily deposits, and things of that nature. But I want to be able to find the skillset that works for the three of us in this office the best and that's where I think things will fall.

Paul: When the board asked you to create the job description for this particular job, we created it, I believe pretty fluidly. Is that correct?

Sheila: Fluidly? I mean, I asked if anybody had accounting, There's no municipal out there. So, it is fluid, yes.

Paul: With the new starting in the office. So, let's say rebuilding of the office and rebranding of the office. So, to say. I believe the board is clear in the directive that they want all employees to be cross trained so that we don't ever get into this kind of thing again, where you just have a particular part of a job that doesn't necessarily know how to be done all the way through. Is it safe to say, now your intention to follow out that directive of the board to

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make sure, granted the job, A and job B might say this, but at the bottom, we all have that little and do whatever else is necessary? Because that's going to start bringing in the cross training. And though people may feel comfortable more with one thing than the other. We mix that up once in a while people's skills stay fresh, knowing how to do that, even though they're not necessarily comfortable, is that your intention?

Sheila: There's my intention. The intention really is, that, going forward, when you talk about rebuilding or recreating, I'm going to try to pursue what people's skillset is. And wherever that skillset lies, that's what I'll work with. I have myself the skillset to identify what I think people can do collectively as a team, individually and put those things where they belong. I will make sure that goes forward is that there isn't that sense of a silo or ownership of something. Next month, if for whatever, the reason something needs to be done differently, or as we transition, I'm not going to be afraid to make those changes.

Paul: I don't believe the board has any doubt that is what will be done here, but as you know, over 20 years of working together, people get complacent and you get comfortable with what you do, but I do have to agree with Mark and my other fellow board members, that cross training is a huge thing and there's importance in that. So just so you don't be too complacent with something cause you're comfortable with something, I would like to see it mixed now. I don't mean just like the pop quiz kind of thing. I mean, mixed up once in a while so that Jill can learn something again, just pick up on something that she doesn't do frequently. Just to remember how to do it, in case that person's ever out on a medical leave or anything or anything like that. Just so that the skills just flow all the time. And if you ever need help in here it's so to say, we can just get a temp from a regular temp agency to come in, if a person's out on medical leave and we are able to give them the basic job set skills to do because we have all the other skill sets covered because we know how to regularly do them.

Sheila: I think Beth might be able to speak to this too, we really have instructions on how to perform a transaction. That exists. But I think that the piece that you're talking about, which we need to do better, which is, I can put the down a transactional instruction, but there's a lot that goes behind that. And that's the learning curve that will be more of a team effort, than an individual effort so that there is no accumulation of knowledge in just one spot. I guess a perfect example is we just did this. We do buybacks every month. I look over the buybacks, I look at the wages, I look at what are they buying back the service for and all that kind of stuff. But I never looked at the percentage rates that were being used. And you'll see on the board this month. So, the interest rate wasn't updated. So, we had to go back and redo the buybacks for 2021. And so those are the little things, when you talk about cross training and making sure that everything's done, and complacency and you just do this all the time, you just assume, but people can forget, people can make mistakes. On my part too, is to have a clearer definition of what I do, what individuals do, are those tasks being done properly and more oversight. Because like you said, after 20 years, you just assume, that got done. And then you're like, oh geez. This year was kind of an anomaly too though because we're short people. So, without having the time really that you need to dedicate specifically to what you do, things like that happen.

Paul: And the board would be able to tell if there were any issues because we'd be able to audit, see if there's any issues about all of this stuff could be worked out prior to getting to a management letter, which happens.

Sheila: Oh yes.

Paul: Now we're going to have complete oversight. And so, I think it's the intention of the board to have a cohesive office that works together. But at the same time we put procedures

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in place. So, to say this new person that we hired, the importance of a 90-day interview is strongly important because in the first 90 days, you can usually determine if a person's going to last here or not. So, I think that those are strongly important to use. Again, for Jill, for the new person. We know the skillset people bring to the table. So, I think the board has done a great job, I think today of putting the skills, the tools in place to use. Now we just have to go about using them and using them properly. So, does anybody else have any input in regard to anything?

Karen: I feel like we've been over the 90 days, their reviews and cross training and I'm in agreement with all that. I think it's very crucial having worked for a town to have someone in place that could take over if I was out. I agree with all that. I think we've discussed that in the past and again, I'm in agreement. As far as the candidates, I've listened to what other people have had to say. I really haven't changed. My opinion. I do agree with Sheila that it might have been a case of nerves for both of them. I'm not leaning one way or the other. I haven't changed my mind on that. So that's really all I have to say.

Paul: Beth, do you have anything you'd like to add?

Beth: I have a few things that I'd like to add. And please don't take this the wrong way. I am sometimes blunt and don't mean to be. The words come out of my mouth without softening them, and I don't know how to fix that. But we're looking at two candidates. One has a high school education with some bank coursework and the other, one's got a Bachelor's degree in business administration with accounting and business writing and so on. So, on paper, Brian certainly looks much better. Personality wise. I want to see, my bottom line is, I want to see this office succeed and I believe that's what we all want. And I do want Sheila to be happy with her employees because that's extremely important. As an outsider looking in, and I am truly an outsider looking in, I am not making any accusations of any kind whatsoever. I want to put that out there, flatly. But being in a public office, you have to worry about the appearances and appearances of conflict. So, that being said, the retirement board has a bank account with the Pittsfield Co-Op. And the two employees that we are replacing currently, within six months are both from the Pittsfield Co-Op. So you're pushing. And I also found it strange that 10 million dollars set in the Pittsfield Co-Op for multiple years, and we lost an awful lot of money and interest. I'm not accusing or saying anything about anything, except for the fact, it looks like a conflict. There's the appearance of a conflict. I want to see someone in the office as soon as possible. I just wanted to point that out. I will go with whatever makes Sheila happy, but I think you should just get a different perspective on that. I just wanted to share my perspective.

Mark: The cross training, I've been a big one for that. I practice that myself when I ran a department, we had full-time, part time. When I took over, I made sure the part-timers could do pretty much everything. Full-timers too because that it was important. So I have no issue with that. The only thing, I don't have an issue with this, but I want to bring up is that while I would prefer that we're enhancing our ability to cross train already and to have learned from the past 20 years, maybe what could we tweak? But I also don't want to give the impression or have the feeling that the past 20, 25 years, the employees that were here, weren't excellent at their job, because they did do a phenomenal job. There were many times that whether it was Sheila, Denise, whatever, however, there was many combinations on spin it around, the board always, for my term on here never heard any complaints about anybody. So, while I'm all agreeing that as Sheila was saying, if we can enhance, she didn't use that word, that's word, I'm using enhance the ability to even take it to the next level. I think that's fantastic, but I don't want to leave the feeling or impression cause that's what I'm getting. And I'm not

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saying how you're doing that tension. This is talking how it felt like we had a lot of problems in the past and we really need to cross train and do that because we couldn't, there were many times it was only one person in the office and the office ran fine and things be improved, always. Can things be tweaked and learned from the past? Absolutely. I just want to make clear that we had an excellent office here. It ran very well. It was very professional, and we had a lot of good knowledge amongst the three here that I think complimented each other. Sheila: No, it's not my intention. My intention is though if there was a shortcoming, the shortcoming was the inability to cross train and the ability to do that effectively in a team atmosphere. So that is one of the things as we go forward that it is, it's about teamwork. It's about coaching, it's about unity. And so that's not a reflection of how anybody personally did their job because obviously it's very clear whether, PERAC audit or Melanson audit, we move through with shining colors. So, an audit finding whether it's above the line or below the line is a failure and we haven't had that happen. So that's certainly something that to be very proud of. So, but you're right. To some Beth's comments too, we had this conversation back in January when we were going to replace the first employee that retired. And that was, where would we find an employee to replace somebody in our office? Because we know that there isn't any chapter 32, the four or five people that have the experience are all employed in other retirement systems. So my first thought always was that the employees would probably come from a financial institution. Maybe we could pry somebody away from to General Dynamics. They have a large contingent of financial people that work there along with engineers. But the reality is that some of these larger companies offer perks that we just don't have. We don't have flex hours; we don't have remote capabilities. We don't have a fitness center. We don't have ping pong when you're bored. We don't have things like that. We're still one of those dinosaurs where it's Monday through Friday eight to four and it's in an office and you can do some things remotely, but not really. So even the financial institutions, because I think they offer a lot of remote capabilities now and people are comfortable working that way. That it's hard to recruit. I think that to some degree that education is important. But the other thing is, you do have to provide an opportunity for people who have relevant job at experience, to be able to be able to do a job.

Mark: Well, the good thing is, however, this goes, you're being given a brand-new path to create the artwork that you feel is necessary as the director for this place.

Sheila: That's right. And that's one of the things that I would hope that I have in my - one of the other jobs I had, I supervised upwards of 70 people. I did the hiring. I didn't get to do the beginning, but I was given applications. I did the interviews. I have and I hope, I think, and I feel that I have the skillset to identify somebody that could do the job. And more important to me, the most important thing is the fit in the office that calm, cool demeanor. Coming to are getting the job done, taking care of the customers, whether they're members, whether they're treasurers, whether they're vendors all of that. That people are, are treated well. And that they're happy with the service that they get from this office. That is what's important to me. I look at this as an opportunity to build, to enhance, to make better what we do. I've always kind of felt like, as we look across all the retirement boards in the state, that we've done very well, and I want to continue that. So, it's important to me to make sure that we have the staff that can do the job, because I can't do my job if they're not doing theirs. There's nothing more difficult than an employee that doesn't work out. Somebody that fails, because then you're back to square one. And first of all, you got to come to an agreement that they're not working out and have to leave, and that's always uncomfortable. We all know that this is a job that isn't something that somebody's going to be able to sit in on day one and say, I can do these

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10 things. It's going to be a transition. Transferable skills were something that was really important to me because I think that people need to have some semblance of what it is to be in the office to transactional kinds of skills. And that's really important. It's a maturity and it's a professionalism that comes with that. And so, when you talk about demeanor and professionalism and enhancement in the office, those are all the kinds of things that I'm looking forward to. I'm looking forward to build in the future. So, it is important to make sure that we have the right person and neither of these two candidates that has doesn't have something dark in their past. I'm not worried about that. I think the references were important. They worked out. I was particularly impressed probably a little bit more with Jennifer because of the genuineness of the people that provided the references for her. Our relationship with a Co-Op has been a good one. I think not only has it been a great financial institution for us, but I think that they also have a level of professionalism and you don't work there if you're not a good employee.

Mark: I just want to ask you one question. You have answered it unknowingly. You just stated, and as I think we all agree there isn't one particular between the two that like way outshine the other. So irrelevant of who's picked, do you feel you can be unbiased and treat either one the same way in your feeling?

Sheila: Oh, absolutely. If there was somebody that you asked me to hire the and to use Beth's I words, sometimes my bluntness is honesty. I'm going to tell you right up front, that there's a reason why I don't want somebody. I'm going to tell you what it is. If you go ahead and still kind of, I don't want to say force me, but force upon somebody that I don't think is going to work out for a lot of different reasons. I'm going to tell you what those reasons are and why. And then we'll talk about it. I don't have a personal relationship with either of these two individuals. I know Jennifer a little bit more because I've seen her at the bank. She's helped once in a while, a couple of times. I mean, we've been with the bank for a number of years. But I haven't really had a lot of transactional issues or anything like that with her. So, I don't know her well.

Mark: Like I said, you half answered it, but you weren't realizing it.

Paul: I don't think anybody doesn't have anything else to say, I would like to make a motion to offer the job to candidate Jay, Jennifer Vasolino.

Karen: Well, I'll second. Just for discussion.

Paul: We have a motion in a second, now in discussion. Go ahead, Karen.

Karen: I'm just curious, Sheila, when you talked with Mike, did he say that we could call him for his vote?

Sheila: He basically said if there's a tie then call him. He wasn't sure if he would be available because he's I think someplace where there's not a lot of communication, but he said you could try and get in touch with him.

Karen: Okay. And just to reiterate, you would be comfortable working with either candidate. I know you voiced your preference, but you would be comfortable with either candidate.

Sheila: Yes, I have. I definitely have a preference because I think it's a better fit in the office.

Karen: A better fit in what way again? I'm sorry. Because I think this is an important decision, obviously.

Sheila: I think it has more to do with what the information that I got through the reference checks, which is that the demeanor, the calmness, without getting into, too much and I don't know if I should talk about this, but the security officer talked about a robbery at the bank. During her career, she was robbed, she was the teller and he talked about her. How calm she was, how cool she was, how she was able to follow the very specific directions that

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employees were given. Not that I ever expect that kind of thing to happen here, but it kind of shows you a little bit of how somebody deals with pressure and for somebody coming into this job, it's a little bit of pressure because it's new, you're going to have to learn. And it can be nerve wracking to do something like that. And so, my personal opinion, that was kind of what the difference was. I think their references showed that both people, there's no dark area in either one. But I have a preference.

Paul: To be fair. You've been asked multiple times why you think Jennifer would be the person to work with. You have the opportunity now for me to ask why you think that Brian may or may not be able to be the person to work with? It's honest answer the question. I'm fine with that.

Sheila: He's worked a little bit more independently. His job, I think is a little bit more sales than it has been. While you are an advisor, and you are responsible for providing your clients with good advice with limits of the law just as we are here. I think it's a little bit more sales driven; a little bit more independent. And I was kind of hoping to hear in his interview, him a little bit about maybe that life balance of being in an office. Knowing that it's Monday through Friday, eight to four kind of thing. And I didn't really hear that from him in the interview. I know, as you all know, that that is a huge bonus asset, that's the one thing that we have to offer.

Mark: Now that you said that that was one of my issues, I said the beginning that it's a bonus. It shouldn't be your main reason why you want it.

Sheila: It's not your main reason, but I think, you know, Mark you've worked it

Mark: I've worked doubles, triple, all of that.

Paul: I get it. Let's -

Sheila: That's really kind of the difference for me. I was kind looking for that life balance to say, I think I knew that, that those advisors work independently. I know that they're out on the road. I know that they go to where the crowd is if you will. They're accumulating a book of business, that's what they do.

Karen: You would've known that when you chose the candidate from his resume.

Sheila: I did. And like I said, I was kind of hoping from the interview that I would hear a little bit more of a life balance. I know he said he was very committed to his clients, which was important to me because we should be committed to our membership. So that was there. But that was really the difference. It's just, it's a little bit more work experience with being a manager, supervising people versus working independently and kind of having to move into the fold.

Karen: I want to say one more thing. So last time we interviewed, there were two sets of interviews. This time only one I'm feeling. I know we have to get things moving, but that maybe this is why I'm struggling with a decision is because I'm feeling like another interview would be helpful. But I know that's probably not a popular opinion.

Paul: I would say this. Mark and Beth, you can back this up. I believe, we took the interview questions from, I believe these are both interviews and combine them into one and ask the questions that we had time to do. So, we didn't exclude any questions. We had them there in front of us. We had the opportunity to ask them. We did ask. I think to have another interview would kind of be just useless.

Mark: No, I agree.

Sheila: No right.

Mark: If Sheila said, we don't need to start until February, we'd have the luxury. And I say, well, there's nothing left to lose. let's do that. But I personally feel I got all I needed from the

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last interview and because of the time constraints, which we still have a little time. In the sense of you're going to be out of the office for a while. So, no one's going to start when you're not here. I don't feel it still gives us enough time to hold another interview and debate again. Because we're going to start splitting hairs and I don't want to get into that. Everybody, I think agrees that there's not a shining star either way. And I don't mean that negatively. I'm saying they're both similar. I would say where one might have a strong point, the other has a weak point. But to do it all over again, I wouldn't be in favor.

Paul: I'm not in favor of that.

Karen: Well, I wasn't necessarily recommending that. I know there was a mix of the questions. I just felt like it was nice to have that follow up meeting with them to give them a chance to express any concerns and also, we could ask Brian about the life balance or whatever, if you were concerned about that. So anyway, that's just my opinion.

Paul: To be clear in the interviews. So, if you did watch the interview, we did give the candidate every opportunity. He could ask us any questions.

Sheila: And I'll be honest, Karen too. I was kind of surprised when we went through the whole interview with him and then at the end of the interview, he said he didn't work there anymore. And I guess I was a little surprised. I wouldn't have cared. I mean, his resume said that he was working there from the time that he started until September, but he applied for the job in September. My fault for not saying, are you still employed there? But I assumed that he was, so I was a little surprised by that. But that came out. And I was just kind of surprised by that. That was the only surprise in either of the interviews.

Mark: And if we didn't know why, I definitely would have my things. At the end of the day, we all did what we did or do we do because of financial obligations and to better ourselves. I think some people, it's hard for me to remember at my age now, way back, it's been a while. But I know I wouldn't be nervous about that as far as life work balance. And if I remember, he definitely made clear, he will work the hours, he will do whatever he had to do. And sometimes people, including myself, I remember 30 plus years ago, I didn't say, well, I'm looking, this will be a nice life balance. And it would work. I said, whatever you need me to do, I'll do whatever shift I had. I know there's not shift here. Because I didn't want to give the impression. I'm not saying that's what he thought. Maybe he didn't bring that up because he doesn't want to give the appearance that you have to set hours.

Sheila: I think we all have to agree that the pandemic has, the last 18 months to two years, has given people a lot different perspective.

Paul: It has changed the employment. It has 360 degrees. People are leaving general dynamics and going to general dynamics for the fact of the great work life balance. Work life balance is a huge thing now in a job. So, we have a motion on the floor to offer the job to Jennifer Vasolino, second from Karen Williams. All those in favor, signified by saying aye, and state your name.

Paul: Aye, Paul Lisi. All us again, signified by nay and stating your name.

Mark: Mark Bashara. Nay.

Beth: Beth Matson. Yes.

Karen: Karen Williams. Nay.

Paul: Okay. So, the job is not offered to Jennifer Vasolino. Do we have any other motions?

Mark: Do we need to make a motion to pick Brian?

Paul: No, you would need to make a motion.

Mark: Okay. I would make a motion to hire Brian as the new position to be filled.

Beth: I'll second.

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Karen: Oh, sorry. Sorry, Beth. No

Paul: All those in favor, signified by saying yes and stating your name.

Mark: Mark Bashara, Yes.

Beth: Beth Matson. Yes.

Karen: Karen Williams. Yes.

Paul: All those opposed signified by saying nay and state your name.

Paul: Paul Lisi, Nay. Okay. So we will offer Brian Shepherd the job. I guess the meeting's still open, right? So, we can talk. I guess I have some questions for the board and would like to, and Sheila, do you mind if I bring you up?

Sheila: No, go ahead.

Paul: So, the board tasked Sheila to bring employees to them that she felt were comfortable and confident in doing the job and also to participate. So, to say in the interview process. The board does not work in this office on a daily basis. My question is, and Sheila cut me off if I'm just putting this on, but I just have to put it out there. Mark, you asked a question, could you work non bias with individual, correct? So, and Sheila answered yes. I then gave in her response, the opportunity, why one is better for this office than the other. So I just have to ask the question. So why a board who doesn't participate in the daily functions of this office, and we ask the executive director who they felt would be the best fit to this office. We always questioned that person's judgment because I think the board is not clear. Defended, definitely in what the rules or what? Let me ask you a question, Sheila. I just have to be honest. Are you clear as to what your job is?

Sheila: Sometimes.

Paul: I'm going to just ask you this question. You don't have to answer; do you feel the board listens to you?

Mark: I think that's putting her in a place that's not right. What is she going to say?

Paul: You've said something that is absolutely false in this meeting. You said that there were never any incidents that were brought to you in 20 years.

Mark: Well, not. Listen. I've got more court experience. You don't need to. Listen, I'm not here on trial. As far as not concerned. We may -

Sheila: I'll say this. I was asked to participate in this. I was grateful for the opportunity the last time because we had a couple candidates, and I was asked my opinion. I selected Jill; she's done an outstanding job. You asked me my judgment. I give you my professional opinion based on interviews, based on references. I give you my opinion and it just doesn't seem to be.

Paul: If there's no more discussion, I'll leave the room.

Mark: I take note with you constantly. It wasn't. No, listen. I said -

Paul: We will play the recording.

Karen: I can't follow what's going on here.

Beth: Neither can I.

Karen: I don't know what's happening. I feel like we've decided and now let's move forward.

Mark: I agree.

Sheila: That's okay. We did.

Karen: It's nothing against you, Sheila. Beth brought up some good points and everybody did.

Sheila: Right. But I guess -

Karen: It's not a personal thing.

Sheila: It's not personal. But like I said -

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Karen: It might feel like that. But honestly, I'm telling you, it's from my point of view it is not. You know me.

Mark: Sheila, you got Jill. The board has decided. I asked if you could be unbiased with both and you said yes and that you have a preference. I respect that. I think you did a great job -

Sheila: Well, no, actually you asked me if I have a preference. I gave it to you and me -

Paul: No. I said, I mean, I asked if you work with both.

Sheila: And I will because I'm a professional person.

Karen: And you can look at it like we do trust you to do that.

Sheila: I would hope that you would. But I think that without getting into anything, I think I've been through enough in the last year. I am looking for no drama. I am looking for a calm, cool, demeanor. I am looking for somebody who's going to work in a team environment. That's what is more important to me, quite frankly. That is the most important thing. You know, what has transpired given last the year prior. So, it is very important to me.

Mark: That's why you were given a clean sheet to work with what you, which we've all agreed on. I'm good with that now.

Sheila: As long as going forward, my opinion is respected and I am going to do, as I have been asked performance reviews and things of that nature, to make sure that the people are doing the job and this would doesn't make any difference, who we hired, that my opinion and my observations are respected in the future.

Mark: Well, I believe many times they have been showed many times. We've agreed with you. In the time I've been here. I can't say more than that. Many, many times we did, but I want to make it clear here. This is a board of five members, Mike isn't here today. And while your opinion is important, while I feel that we've respected your view, many times, there are times we disagree. That's why there's a board. And to me, if we're going to just rubber stamp, I'm not saying you're an issue. I'm saying the feeling I get in the air. If we're going to just rubber stamp, everything that the director wants, well, why do we have a board? The purpose, the board is for us to talk about things, discuss it, and to make the best decision that we can as a board. Sometimes those decisions will be agreed upon and sometimes they won't. But I will not sit here and I'm not saying this is you. But my feeling is that we haven't been respectful to you or listen. Sometimes you're going to agree with us sometimes you're not, but we have listened to you many times. A lot of things you have brought up over the years, we may have debated about out as a board, but in the end, they come through. We've listened to you for advancements, with technology, with this, with that. So I'm not going to sit here and make it sound like nobody respects you. And nobody listens to you. This is one time where the board as unit made a choice. The first time we got an employee you wanted. Time, it was quite clear that there, it wasn't like, well, this people from skid row and the other one is not.

Sheila: Absolutely. And I want to make that perfectly clear. And one of the three individuals that were, were selected had the tools to do the job. I want to make that perfectly.

Paul: I wasn't thinking you weren't, but I'm just saying, we didn't like -

Karen: Is Paul still there?

Sheila: Oh yeah. I'm sorry.

Mark: You just said yourself, if you had an issue, which I'm happy, if there was a major thing, like, listen, this guy, you know, whatever, this woman, whatever. Yeah. So, this was a decision it was made by the board.

Karen: And I feel we need to show a united front. Paul, I just think that was very inappropriate.

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Mark: I mean, I literally felt like I was back in court and you don't want to play that game with me. Okay.

Sheila: Hey, Hey. Enough, enough.

Mark: I'm just telling you, do not make that kind a comment like we're at court. You're like feeling like she's a defendant.

Sheila: Look, here's the thing. I'm going to leave it at this. Brian Sheppard is a qualified candidate. I like him. He's a gentleman, he's mature. I am sure that with my guidance and instruction, that he will be fine and he will be able to do the job. All I'm asking is that, and it would be with any employee, as we move forward, like I said, we're building a team. This is a team effort. And that's what I need. Again, calm, cool, no drama, demeanor. We're going to concentrate on our membership. We're going to concentrate on doing our jobs as we're paid to do. And going forward, it's my responsibility to make sure that I build the best team that I can for our membership. And that's what I'm going to do.

Karen: But Sheila, that –

Mark: The Board is here for you. If you have things regarding that, and we always have been.

Karen: Those characteristics, Sheila, also apply to the Board. Like the no drama, the professionalism.

Paul: Those characteristics do apply to Board. And apply to the board meeting outside, of three board members, which is a majority after a board meeting is ended. That applies from the board as well. So you should take that advice.

Karen: You don't even know what was going on there.

Paul: It doesn't matter. Read the regulations and the rules.

Mark: I want to state for the record just before you had brought that up, Paul, when we made our choice, please at least listen to this. And I'm telling you this, honestly, just before you started doing what you did. I was literally, on the tip of my tongue going to say, well, you know what? I'm very pleased with how we made our decision. I'm very pleased, Sheila. And your part. I'm telling, I mean, this I've got nothing to gain by this. I was thrilled. And then when you did what you did, I'm just saying. I was going to compliment everybody here that we did it as the board, we made our choice. And I think we had some great discussion. I think everybody was involved in it. And then you said what you said, I'm going to leave it at that. So, I make a motion to adjourn this meeting, unless Sheila, you have anything else?

Sheila: No, I've had enough for today. And I'll just say, thank you to the Board for your participation in this. Before you adjourn, I do have a couple of questions for you though. So, I will contact the two finalists today. The one that got the job, that one that did not. But for the person that got the job, I need to know what am I offering? When I say you've got the job, I need a little more guidance as to what I'm doing on the phone with him today or in person. There was a salary posted up to \$55,000. Is that where he starts? What are we going to do for prorated PTO time and vacation time between now and the end of the year? Is that just divided by 12? Is that what he'll get.

Mark: Let me ask this. Is this something you could tell him that he's got the job and get back to him with things and we can discuss this Wednesday?

Sheila: Well, quite frankly, if offered somebody a job and they didn't have the details. I would feel a little uneasy.

Paul: So, the high is 55, correct? Yes.

Sheila: I think it was posted from, up to.

Paul: In my opinion, you're both coming in at the same time.

Sheila: Yes. Pretty much. Yeah. So, offer \$55,000. At least give me the salary.

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Paul: And do the benefits the same way.

Sheila: That's all I'm asking. That's fine. And I will talk to them about the start date. It won't be before November 16th because I am not here.

Paul: Fine. I mean, the salary has to be discussed at the board so.

Sheila: And so, is everybody in agreement with that? With what was posted and what I offer? Karen and Beth?

Beth: I am.

Karen: Yes.

Mark: Yeah, okay I'm fine with that.

Paul: So, it will be the same starting salary as Jill. The benefits would be the earned time off for the rest of 2021 would be pretty.

Sheila: Right, it's going to be prorated. And in January it just starts with the same benefits. Yes.

Paul: And they would still get the same medical benefits and all that.

Sheila: Yeah. I'll find out what they would need. It's 60 days to start. I'll find out what he has for insurance right now.

Mark: Basically, just a carbon copies of what we did with Jill. They both start about the same time, unless one job was specifically more intense than the other, but because of the cross training, I think it's going to be pretty equal.

Sheila: And quite frankly, I don't have all the information for the budget for, I'm going to give you one, but I don't have it on the agenda for this month, but I want to prepare it. But I can't if I don't know what salaries are.

Mark: I'm with what everybody said. This way, any strangling things we can discuss Wednesday.

Sheila: Yes. Absolutely.

Paul: All right. So I made my motion. You brought your things.

Sheila: So, I'm good.

Paul: Anybody second to adjourn? All those in favor, signify by saying aye and your name.

Mark: Aye, Mark Bashara.

Beth: Beth Matson, aye.

Karen: Karen Williams, aye.

Paul: Adjourned at 9:32.

Sheila: Before you guys leave we have to figure out just to think about what you want to do for our November meeting. Because I know Beth said she can't do Tuesday. Michael can't do Monday. The day before Thanksgiving, I know that Tom Gibson is not available, and we will potentially have the Bartini hearing so we will need his presence here for that hearing.

Karen: How about the Monday before Thanksgiving?

Sheila: That would make it too short, Karen, I don't come back until the 16th of November and that would only give me about 5 working days to prepare for that.

Karen: Here's a question. Do we have to have it in November? Could it be like December 1st or how does that work?

Sheila: I know that Beth said she couldn't do Tuesdays, but maybe Mike has got something on Monday and Tuesday morning. Maybe we could do later on a Tuesday afternoon?

Beth: I could certainly do Tuesday afternoon.

Mark: What's the date?

Sheila: It would be the 30th of November.

Mark: Yeah. I can do Tuesday afternoon.

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Sheila: We do a Tuesday afternoon. It's just as we're getting to the end of the year and Beth can speak to this a little bit. I just want to get as much as I can on the agenda.

Sheila: Everybody can check their schedule if Tuesday works. We could do later in the afternoon.

Mark: I could do Tuesday afternoon. So preferably earlier, one o'clock or 12.

Beth: Anytime from 12 on is fine with me.

Karen: That's good. Because I'll be working so I can just bring my laptop to work.

Sheila: Okay.

Mark: All right. Very good. Everybody has a good weekend.

Meeting Adjourned at 9:34 am

RESPECTFULLY SUBMITTED:

Sheila LaBarbera, Executive Director

APPROVED BY:

Michael Ovitt, Chairman

Mark Bashara, Elected Member

Karen Williams, Elected Member

Paul A. Lisi, Jr., Advisory Council Member

Beth Matson, 5th Member Appointed