

**TOWN OF HAMILTON  
BOARD OF SELECTMEN  
MARCH 5, 2010**

The Board of Selectmen met at the Hamilton Town Hall at 2:00 p.m. on Friday, March 5, 2010 with David Carey, William Bowler and Jennifer Scuteri present.

**Town manager finalist candidate interviews**

The Board interviewed three finalists for Town manager. Candidates were questioned about their people management skills, background or interest in regionalization and what they foresee as plans for the future in Hamilton including business development. Also discussed was what the candidates thought they could get done for the Town during a three to four year contract period. Candidates were told that the Town's goals are to reduce costs, increase revenue, manage people and risk as well as the Town's assets and improve services.

Michael Lombardo

He worked in corporate banking, county government in Schenectady, New York and New Hampshire state government. In Washington, D.C. he wrote a business plan and set up performance measurements for a national project for local government managers.

Lombardo has undergraduate and graduate degrees with a background in municipal finance and local government management. For four years as city manager and finance director in Augusta, Maine he refined financial systems, brought in capital planning and new management processes.

In Allegan County, Michigan as county administrator Lombardo found bringing a management system into a county with 120,000 people in seven municipalities challenging. There was strong focus on agricultural business and conservation. Lombardo served in emergency management, was public information officer and assisted with regional dispatch system implementation.

He worked with an 11-member board and changes occurred resulting in a confrontational environment. Six months into Lombardo's tenure he defended the county against a lawsuit where the former county administrator was suing for wrongful

discharge. Another lawsuit involved a reorganization that Lombardo had done where positions were eliminated. A woman sued the county who had an ongoing relationship with the board chair.

Lombardo moved on due to the level of infighting and contention and limited ability to get anything done. He consulted for an Ohio-based company for a year but found it created hardship for his family.

Recruited and hired as city manager for Iowa City, Lombardo worked there for 11 months when he was abruptly notified they were canceling his contract. His tenure followed a city manager that had been in the position for 25 years. The organization was used to the former manager's style but wanted more community engagement and involvement in policy decision-making.

Three weeks on the job, Lombardo had to deal with an epic flood and hadn't had time to build relationships. His recommended protocol for evacuating people from 200 homes in harm's way was not well received. It was a cultural change to have him at the briefings versus the mayor. FEMA and the state were involved with the emergency.

When the emergency was resolved, Lombardo put organizational changes in motion, and reached out to engage the community but found resistance. Another challenge was setting priorities with a 67% budget deficit. Lombardo believes the perception was he was moving too fast. He would have welcomed the opportunity to change course. He supplied the Hamilton Selectmen with strong recommendations from the Univ. of Iowa, and the chamber of commerce and local banks in Iowa City.

Lombardo is interested in Hamilton and New England culture and history. He thinks his direct and straightforward personality when discussing and vetting issues would work well. Hamilton being a turnaround situation is exciting with commitment to community building by local government, and the change to Town manager and how the Town does business.

He sees many process changes with roles and responsibilities for committees and how decisions are made in the next year or two. Lombardo said limited assets are pervasive when funding local government.

In Augusta, Lombardo managed the budget working with the elected body to understand priorities and determine willingness to raise revenues and communicate to department heads about available funding resources.

In Hamilton, he would use community input to determine the historic level of service provided and then determine what is desired to construct a budget. Lombardo looks to staff for recommendations where efficiencies and savings can be realized. He believes regionalization is important and will occur more to maximize limited resources.

As a manager, Lombardo gives clear guidance for a municipality working with departments to structure business plans, use resources and plan for the future. He would hold regular weekly meetings and work with elected officials to create the vision for the Town. He has created goal documents, used performance measurement data and evaluation tools as well as helped structure departments.

Lombardo thought there were a lot of boards and committees in Hamilton. The Town manager structure would change decision-making as part of community outreach and conversation. The Town manager would have to understand the threshold for change and help evolve the Board of Selectmen's role. Line authority is different than what has occurred in Hamilton in 150 years.

Discussion was on how the Selectmen will become advisors with the Town manager in place and they will no longer be involved in the day-to-day operations. They'll focus on important initiatives that the Town manager cannot do alone. Lombardo reiterated the importance of outreach to the community and press.

Lombardo is available to sign a contract on April 1 and could shadow Town Administrator Candace Wheeler until the position transitions as late as the beginning of June.

Jason Hoch

He is a graduate of Williams College and worked in the regional planning program at Cornell. Hoch did downtown revitalization work in Littleton, New Hampshire and served as assistant town manager and manager directing the budget along with the advisory budget committee and three-member board of selectmen. He presented the town budget at town meeting for the 6,000-population community.

Littleton is the retail and service hub of the region where there was substantial commercial growth. Littleton won a national main street center award for revitalizing its downtown.

Hoch was one of the few managers involved in regional efforts such as police prosecution, three-town industrial park development and cable franchise negotiation/management.

Littleton was one of the first town's in New Hampshire to have a joint town and school annual meeting. A study committee was formed to look at regional options for a middle/high school but didn't receive enough votes from both school districts.

Hoch then moved to Plaistow where he currently lives and served as town manager for two years. The town is similar in size to Littleton with a \$7 million town budget and \$14 million school budget. He developed policies, procedures and analyzed internal controls working with a five-member board of selectmen.

Due to his wife's career opportunity, Hoch has been staying home with his young daughter. He is interested in getting back into the municipal workforce and working with the public.

Hoch is interested in the regional collaboration already going on in Hamilton and the village center that needs improvement. A challenge is the Town wants to grow but it needs to understand the impact. He thinks the form of government changing is an important time for the Town. Hoch believes his background developing a budget and presenting it at Town Meeting along with his ability to cultivate relationships would be useful to help the adjustment to a new form of government. Hoch doesn't micromanage but fosters collaboration across departments.

He described an unwieldy situation where there was a regional police prosecutor and no clear-cut chain of command making this difficult to manage. In regard to goals for the Board of Selectmen, Hoch said he would shorten the list and make it manageable so progress could be made.

The most challenging situation Hoch had encountered was when there was a serious capital requirement and dire need to renovate a police station in the town hall basement and none of the Town Meeting warrant articles passed.

Hoch reiterated what he had done to foster economic development in his management positions. He would be available to start the job on April 1 and shadow Wheeler until Town Meeting on May 8 and work until the transition is complete sometime in June.

Charles Kostro

Kostro was an Acton selectman in 1986 and worked for the state highway department for many years. He leveraged highway maintenance services, private financing and a managed competition program where highway employees could bid on jobs and do their own work. He also worked for the highway department in Virginia.

Kostro then became the finance director for Newbury, Mass. and shortly thereafter was appointed as town administrator. Newbury went from a three to five-member board of selectmen.

Newbury has been trying to increase commercial growth working with its planning board. The research center at Endicott College presented a proposal to the town about its downtown. The community has done a lot with few resources.

Kostro said Hamilton was a beautiful town and had an excellent school system that would be interesting to work for. The Town manager's position would build on what he has already been doing in Newbury with a bigger budget. In Newbury when crafting a budget, Kostro has tried hard not to lose the people who are committed to serving the community.

The challenge of Hamilton's position is that employees are used to working a certain way for a long period of time. Once the new structure is in place then the substantive issues can be addressed. The new manager should work not to overwhelm the staff by changing too much, too fast.

Kostro is town administrator and treasurer collector in Newbury. Since these are separate roles in Hamilton, Kostro thought he could do more in a leadership position. Newbury follows a budget process recommended by the Department of Revenue. Town boards meet and discuss the proposed budget in an open process. Targets are outlined for departments including cuts. Regular meetings are held and expectations are clear.

Newbury is part of a three-town regional school district. It shares a board of health with Georgetown and has a regional ECO. Volunteers supplement the staff. The goal setting focuses on financial aspects and procurement, areas Kostro likes working on best.

Kostro's most difficult situation in his career has been when Essex County privatized highway maintenance so private contractors did the grass cutting and tree trimming. This went from confrontational to an example of labor management cooperation, saved a lot of money and created a trusting environment.

Kostro has been involved with new revenue development and capital purchases for the DPW, paving with Chapter 90 money, state grants, selling town land for engineering projects, and river dredging by the Army Corps. When Newbury repaired the highway that goes by Governor's Academy, the private school donated via a PILOT effort, a \$29,000 pickup truck to the highway department.

Transition period was discussed as to when Kostro could begin working in Hamilton. He is available May 1 or June 1 to ensure there is a transition in Newbury.

Carey entertained a motion at 4.54 p.m. to continue the open session until tomorrow morning at 10 a.m. Bowler so moved. Scuteri seconded the motion. VOTE: Unanimous.

Respectfully submitted by Jane Dooley, Minutes Secretary

ATTEST: \_\_\_\_\_  
Clerk