

Ryan Strategies Group, LLC

February 14, 2017

Ms. Carolyn Smart, Chair
Townsend Board of Selectmen
272 Main Street
Townsend, MA 01469

Dear Chairwoman Smart:

Pursuant to the scope of services outlined in the December 1, 2017 Executive Coaching proposal, we arranged meetings with the Chief of Police, members of the Board of Selectmen, and the Town Administrator to diagnose the management/communications challenges, and to develop key objectives moving forward.

Preliminary Meetings

Police Chief

I first met with Police Chief Eaton. I advised him that I had spoken with BOS Chairwoman Smart and that she was willing to invest valuable resources to help him succeed and to improving the various working relationships.

Chief Eaton was absorbed with an on an ongoing investigation relating to alleged misconduct of police officers relative to alleged unauthorized access to criminal offender record information. His opinion was that the investigation ordered by the Board of Selectmen was politically motivated and that it lacked merit. I made it clear that my role was not as an investigator but as an executive coach tasked with improving the working relationships and communications between the parties moving forward.

We had a lengthy discussion about the various issues and relationships in town government, and it is abundantly clear that the chief, for real or perceived reasons, does not trust the leadership of the town (BOS and Town Administrator) and that an "us vs. them" culture exists. In fact, Chief Eaton pulled an audio recording device from his shirt pocket to illustrate the seriousness of the mistrust that he has for his superiors.

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We closed this initial meeting and I "coached" him to refrain from making immediate and emotionally charged decisions moving forward, and that my goal was to improve the working relationships among the parties. I advised him that it was my professional opinion that he should cooperate fully with the independent investigator(s) and that he should not do anything that to interfere with or give the appearance of interfering with the investigation. I advised him further that I was available to speak with him if any sensitive issues should arise, and that the BOS Chairwoman and the Town Administrator had authorized me to act as a sounding board and "coach" to help him succeed in his position.

Selectmen

I met independently with each member of the Board of Selectman and each of them demonstrated a strong desire to help the police chief succeed in his position. Without exception, each Selectman voiced concern about the culture of the police department and the alleged unwillingness of the police chief to exercise the leadership necessary to positively challenge such culture. The common concerns voiced included, but were not limited to, the following:

- Chief is rigid and unwilling to compromise on complex issues;
- Chief makes emotional and sometimes irrational decisions;
- Chief lacks organizational sensitivity as to the impact of his decisions to the organization and the community as a whole, and;
- Chief is unwilling or unable to work productively with the Board and the Town Administrator.

Town Administrator

Mr. Kreidler voiced many of the same concerns as the Board of Selectmen and added that the police chief is frequently not responsive to his legitimate business requests. Mr. Kreidler advised me that since the time I had met with Chief Eaton there had been a subsequent business meeting between he, Chief Eaton, and BOS Chairwoman Smart wherein the chief pulled the electronic recording device from his pocket and recorded a portion of the conversation.

Mr. Kreidler indicated that he was very concerned about the pattern of emotionally charged and professionally immature conduct of Chief Eaton, and that it was having an adverse impact on the efficiency of the organization. Mr. Kreidler, like each of the Selectmen, communicated a

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strong desire to establish a productive working relationship with Chief Eaton but that the chief's alleged unwillingness to reciprocate was very concerning to him.

Follow Up Meeting with Chief Eaton

I met again with Chief Eaton and sought his perspective on the recent meeting with Chairwoman Smart and Town Administrator Kreidler. He spoke of pulling the recording device from his pocket half way through the meeting. I reminded him of our conversation about not making emotionally charged decisions that might reflect negatively on him and potentially have adverse consequences on his career should he consider seeking employment elsewhere. He said that while he was emotional when he recorded the conversation he didn't feel that it was an emotional decision. The distinction between the two was not made clear.

I reminded the chief that the internal investigation was being conducted by a highly-regarded law firm and attorney and that it was highly unlikely that the firm and/or attorney would compromise their professional reputation and credibility to satisfy some alleged unethical wishes of local politician(s) and/or the Town Administrator. Interestingly, the chief agreed with that assessment.

This was a critical point in my analysis. The chief agrees that the investigation lawfully ordered by the Board of Selectmen was being conducted by a professional and ethical law firm, yet he is unwavering in his opinion that his police officers are wrongfully being investigated and/or disciplined for politically motivated purposes. The chief was unable to explain this contradiction, and he remained irrationally fixated on this issue. At the conclusion of this meeting I asked Chief Eaton if he was ready to refocus on the future rather than the past and whether he was willing to work on improving the relationships with his superiors. He said that he didn't trust them and he didn't think my services would be helpful to the situation.

Discussion

Under normal circumstances, chiefs of police would await the outcome and final report of the independent investigator (in this instance Town Counsel) and then evaluate it on its merits, and make employment decisions moving forward.

On February 10, 2017 I read a press release issued by Chief Eaton criticizing the BOS about the ongoing investigation. The release was, in my opinion, inflammatory and completely unprofessional. It is clear that my many conversations and meetings with the chief were

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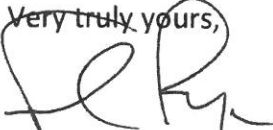
ineffective. I had specifically advised that he refrain from these type of public outbursts and that he seek the counsel of me, or other veteran police chiefs, when considering decisions that he may later regret.

Recommendations

Given that the chief has decided to take the "scorched earth" approach to these working relationships, combined with the fact that he has indicated that he does not believe that my coaching would help him overcome his mistrust of the BOS, there is nothing further that I can do in this situation.

I wish the Board the very best with bringing this troubling situation to an effective resolution. Please do not hesitate to contact me if you have any questions.

Very truly yours,



Frederick Ryan
Ryan Strategies