

Statement by Fairhaven Selectboard Chairperson Daniel Freitas as read on 3/15/21 (transcribed). See "Conflict of interest complicates Town Administrator hiring" in our 3/18/21 issue

"I would like to address some issues that have been falsely put out by some people about the search. I nominated myself to be on the committee because I had heard some rumors about the process and some people who had been put on the committee to sabotage certain people's chances of getting in the short list.

My role, as I saw it, was to sit back and listen. I gave advice when asked about it, I did not ask a whole lot of questions.

When the minutes are released you will see that for myself. I want you to know that there are some things that I can speak about right now and some things that are still under executive session that, so that I cannot speak about.

I hope to have another statement after this is done, so let's get to what I can talk about.

We started off with, I think, 39 people that sent in resumes. We held interviews; the committee brought it down to nine. I missed that first meeting. The original committee brought it down to, I believe, nine people they put them in tiers. We interviewed those nine people over three days. The interviews lasted about 5-6 hours total. Some nights we had three, other nights we had two candidates; each interview was about an hour and a half to two hours each. All the potential candidates were asked a series of questions, and for the most part, no questions were any different from the first candidate's, which is pretty much a law, and we have to go by. After we had interviewed all the candidates, we had a meeting and we voted for our top three candidates. The top three candidates were then notified that they had been chosen. Ms. Graves was notified that she was chosen. I can tell you this because Ms. Graves was notified by Bernie Lynch, so it is not in the executive session; it is outside of that.

Shortly thereafter, an article came out in the Neighborhood News Somebody had given Beth David Ms. Graves's personnel file for the town. This was highly unethical. Whoever turned that over, we're still looking into finding out who did that.

There were only two to three people who could've gotten their hands on that file. The file was published and the rumor of some people looking to sabotage some people's chances of getting the job went for rumor to fact.

When the executive session meeting minutes are released, you will see an email that was sent to all committee members letting us know that Ms. Graves was a terrible candidate and we should exclude her. This was before we voted. This email was sent to us before we voted for who we should send to the Board of Selectmen. The email was extremely inappropriate. I have done close to 20 interviews, and this was the first time I have seen anything like this happen in this case.

After the article was published, we had another emergency meeting and Ms. Graves was then voted off the TA search committee (list). I tried to explain that some of the paperwork in the file was false, but each time I tried to explain, I was shut off. So, when Keith brought up that Wendy should be given a chance to be interviewed, I thought it was appropriate that we at least give her a chance. Unfortunately, the rumors have no end. I have an email from a member of the [FinCom]. This email claims that Ms. Graves is racketeering and giving me cash payments. It goes on to claim that Keith is only voting for her to get the building inspector's job. Let me be clear: If Keith was to leave this position today, he couldn't, by law, get the building inspector's job for at least a year.

This email was sent all the [FinCom] members, and you can only imagine who else got it. I won't mention the member at this time, but I will be asking him to resign from the [FinCom]. If he does not within the next weeks, I will be asking him to come in front of us to explain this email.

I was also upset that this email contained emails from myself and Mr. Espindola.

The email he sent me ... that I responded to that was used to make it look like I was holding off the [DOR], from Bob, because I was afraid of what they might find out.

I will explain to your this: The [DOR] was asked to be on the agenda. It was voted on. It was voted on again, and we had to explain ourselves why it was, and the DOR request has nothing to do with our finances. The DOR report doesn't look into out finance. It looks into the structure of town government and gives us advice on how to make it better. If you recall the last time this came up, the ... report caused a lot of problems, and out of 12 recommendations, only one passed Town Meeting.

The town has an accounting firm that we bring in. That firm comes to us every year and the last five years that I've been on this board [we've received a clean audit]. They find no problems with our reporting, with our finances, and over those five years, we've had no recommendation. Nothing that needed to be done of any significance.

The folks doing the work for our A+ rating are Ms. Graves and Ms. Carreiro. These are the two that have been working for this over the years.

Tonight, Ms. Graves will be given a chance to interview for the [TA] position not because of bribes or promises to get people jobs.

Shell be given the chance because the folks who have tried to sabotage Ms. Graves's chances will not be allowed to succeed."