

When I first heard that Josie Henry was interested in the interim town administrator role, I was ecstatic. Her strong knowledge of the town administrator position and current board issues as a recent board member as well as her tremendous work ethic would be more than enough to keep the town running smoothly. I opposed her candidacy for the permanent role of town administrator citing concerns to my fellow board members over the optics of her having created that position and later coming back to fill it, her brother-in-law, Damien, sitting on the board potentially creating a multitude of conflicts of interest, and primarily, her strong and persistent personality potentially creating confusion between the roles of board member and administrator. This would inevitably evolve into a situation where Josie would be orchestrating the decisions of the board beforehand, not implementing them after the fact. The board members agreed with my concerns unanimously and while we all appreciated Josie's current and past contributions to the town, we felt following a normal hiring process to fill the position was the best route forward.

Before the board was able to meet to interview candidates as a group, Josie Henry had proposed a new type of permanent town administrator position that she would be interested in filling. In fact, Josie would likely be the only candidate capable of filling said new position if it were to be created. Josie Henry's brother-in-law, Damien announced before we began the first interview of candidates that he would not be supporting anyone for this role other than his sister-in-law. Damien served as a champion of his sister in law's candidacy in private discussions as well as board meetings. When I privately suggested that Damien should recuse himself from any vote on his sister-in-law's candidacy, he stated that he did not intend to do so. By exercising a vote on his sister-in-law's candidacy, Damien would be directly violating the town conflict of interest policy and potentially opening the door to a host of future violations. The policy specifically addresses sister in law as a familial relationship from which conflicts may arise and was in fact signed by his sister-in-law Josie during her time as a board member. Both Damien and Josie griped to me during their time on the board about Russell Duchaine being Road Commissioner in spite of having friends and family working for the highway department. I entertained their complaints and acknowledged that the situation was less than ideal. Ultimately, this was a motivating factor in replacing Duchaine as road commissioner and installing Damien Henry. Therefore, in the interest of fair and consistent application of the conflict of interest policy and ultimately in adherence to the political norms and operating procedures of any free government, I am formally requesting that Damien Henry recuse himself from any vote with regard to his sister-in-law's candidacy.

Shortly after the interviews, I spoke with fellow board member Russell Duchaine about a text he had received from interim town administrator Josie Henry's husband. This text was not about Henry's merits as a candidate, but rather a reminder of the loyalty that he had shown the Henry family in the past and their willingness to reciprocate that loyalty. Duchaine explained to me that there would likely be severe personal social consequences as well as financial consequences if he did not vote "yes" when the time came to hire Josie Henry into the newly proposed role. This interaction as well as the impression it left on Duchaine has created conflicts of interest under sections 1a and d of the town conflict of interest policy. I am therefore formally requesting that Russell Duchaine recuse himself from any vote on Josie Henry's candidacy.

While I have the most sincere appreciation for Josie Henry, Damien Henry and Russell Duchaine's contributions to the town of Alburgh, I feel strongly that in order to maintain the integrity and public credibility of the board and the town administrator role, we must adhere to and apply the town conflict of interest policy uniformly no matter how difficult it may be.

Sincerely,

Elliot Knight



Town Of Alburgh Selectboard Chairman