

**Town of Needham
Select Board
Special Meeting
Minutes for Tuesday, April 1, 2025
Town Hall, Powers Hall and
Via Zoom**

<https://us02web.zoom.us/j/82601013229>

6:00 p.m. Call to Order:
A Special Meeting of the Select Board was convened by Chair Kevin Keane. Those present were Vice Chair Heidi Frail, Marianne Cooley, Cathy Dowd, Joshua Levy, Katie King, Deputy Town Manager, and David Davison, Deputy Town Manager/Director of Finance, were also in attendance.

6:00 p.m. Town Manager Appointment

Mr. Keane stated that the Town was fortunate to have three highly qualified candidates for the Town Manager position, two of whom were internal. He thanked all who served on the Town Manager Screening Committee. It has been 20 years since the Town last chose a Town Manager and the process was thoughtful and thorough.

Each member then provided brief remarks on the candidates and provided their recommendation.

Mr. Levy made a prepared statement (attachment 1) and noted that he believes Benjamin Branyan would be the best choice to serve as Town Manager.

Ms. Frail stated that she believes Katie King embodies the entire package for a Town Manager.

Ms. Cooley stated that she believes Katie King will best serve the Town at this time.

Ms. Dowd stated that she believes Katie King rose to the top of the candidates.

Motion by Ms. Dowd that the Board vote to appoint Katie King as Town Manager effective July 5, 2025 subject to successful negotiation of an employment contract; and further to appoint the Chair and Vice Chair as a subcommittee to work with Town Counsel to conduct contract negotiations with Katie King. The final terms of employment shall be approved by the Board. Second: Ms. Cooley.

Discussion:

There was discussion regarding the timeline for negotiations and allowing the existing team to stay on through the negotiation period. It was agreed that the Chair and Vice Chair for the negotiations subcommittee would be Mr. Keane and Ms. Frail.

Approved 4-1 with Mr. Levy against.

- 6:16 p.m. Executive Session
- Exception 2: To conduct strategy sessions in preparation for negotiations with non-union personnel or to conduct collective bargaining sessions or contract negotiations with non-union personnel (Town Manager).

Motion by Mr. Levy to enter into Executive Session at 6:16 p.m. per Exception 2: To conduct strategy sessions in preparation for negotiations with non-union personnel or to conduct collective bargaining sessions or contract negotiations with non-union personnel (Town Manager), and not to return to Open Session prior to adjournment.

Second: Ms. Frail. Unanimously approved by roll call Levy – aye; Frail – aye; Dowd – aye; Cooley – aye; and Keane – aye; 5-0.

A list of all documents used at this Select Board meeting is available at:
<http://www.needhamma.gov/Archive.aspx?AMID=99&Type=&ADID>

The next Regular Select Board meeting is scheduled for Tuesday, April 15, 2025, at 6:00 p.m.

A video recording of https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=sZsy6WrNU_M or at <https://www.needhamchannel.org/2025/04/needham-select-board-4-1-25/>.

Attachment 1 – Statement by Joshua Levy, 4/1/2025

Select Board Statement
by Joshua Levy
April 1, 2025

I'd like to thank all the applicants, and especially our finalists Ben Branyan, Katie King, and Carys Lustig. The screening committee presented three highly qualified candidates for our consideration, each of whom would bring different strengths to the role, and any of whom would more than capably fulfil the role. On January 21, we asked the screening committee to make our jobs difficult in selecting among the Town Manager finalists, and they have delivered upon that request in triplicate.

Needham is a great place to live, and with very few exceptions is a very well-run town. Kate, our Town Manager, ensures smooth operations on a day-to-day basis. Katie, our Deputy Town Manager, is diligent in her detailed process implementation and research. Carys, our Director of DPW, has mastery of her department's capabilities, and delivers on them to their fullest.

The area where I think our Town can most improve is in how we make unprecedented decisions – not the typical day-to-day decisions, but one-off decisions that can have a lasting impact. These decisions must balance both residents' needs and operational considerations for the Town as a whole. In the

year that I have been on the Select Board, I have sometimes seen that there is an imbalance between these considerations, with the needs of residents too often taking a back-seat.

A new Town Manager is a crucial component in bringing balance to how such unprecedented decisions are made. Among our three excellent candidates, I feel that Ben Branyan stands out and best fits the needs of Needham at the current moment. I really appreciated Ben's answers to the questions last week regarding how he would work with the Select Board. I feel that his emphasis on teamwork and collaboration is needed right now in Town. He also has impressive experience in analogous roles, having served nine years as Town Administrator in Greenwich, CT and a previous two years as Town Manager in Stratford, CT. I also think that Needham can benefit from his learnings focused on process management and service value.

Change is hard, and moving on from our first and only Town Manager will be particularly hard – whoever fills the role. I understand the appeal of choosing a familiar face in the midst of change, but I think Mr. Branyan's experience in similar roles and his ability to bring best practices from other communities are what Needham needs in the current moment.