

Town Government Study Committee Minutes

FINAL

Date: September 23rd, 2015

Date Minutes Approved: October 14th, 2015

TOWN GOVERNMENT STUDY COMMITTEE (TGSC)

Meeting held at the Duxbury Free Library - Setter Room at 7:00PM

Present: Gay Shanahan, Chair; Gene Blanchard; Alex Chin; Ted Flynn; Kathleen Glynn; John Tuffy; Anne Ward; and Susan Curtis, Clerk for this Meeting.

Absent: Marty Desmery

Guest Speaker for the Meeting: Friend Weiler, Sr. – Town Moderator

I CALL TO ORDER – The TGSC meeting was called to order at 7:10PM at the Duxbury Free Library / Setter Room

II OPEN FORUM – nothing was brought forward for discussion.

III NEW BUSINESS

Invitation to the Concerned Citizens of Duxbury

Gay Shanahan, Chair, began the meeting by letting the TGSC know that she had reached out to the group, Concerned Citizens of Duxbury, to come to one of the TGSC meetings in order to discuss their concerns and, perhaps, the concerns of the folks they have communicated with around town. The TGSC is hoping they will be able to join us sometime in the future.

Guest Speaker

Friend Weiler, Sr. attended the TGSC meeting as a guest speaker for an informal discussion. Mr. Weiler is the Town of Duxbury's Town Moderator. He is a Member of the Massachusetts Moderators Association. Mr. Weiler began the discussion by informing the TGSC that Duxbury's Annual Town Meeting is governed by Massachusetts General Law and the Town of Duxbury by-laws that have been on the books for several years. Mr. Weiler informed the TGSC that Duxbury uses the book, *Town Meeting Time: A Handbook of Parliamentary Law*, as the "Bible" for conducting our Town Meetings. *Town Meeting Time* can be purchased from the Massachusetts Moderators Association for anyone interested in getting a better understanding of how Town Meetings are conducted in the State of Massachusetts. Mr. Weiler told the TGSC that tradition plays a huge role in how our Town Meetings are run. He said that 250 towns in the State of Massachusetts, out of 312, still hold Open Town Meetings. Town Meetings are unique to the Northeast. Mr. Weiler said the warrant is to warn the citizens of the upcoming articles to be voted on at the Annual Town Meeting. He said the warrant, articles, and motions have pretty much stayed the same although the motions can sometimes paint a different picture from the articles.

Mr. Weiler then discussed ways to improve Town Meeting; the style we presently use, and trends he has noticed when gathering with other Moderators at the Massachusetts Moderators Association meetings. He said, overall, he felt Duxbury does a very good job at conducting Town Meeting. Mr. Weiler did note that the smaller Towns tend to have better attendance and that is one thing he would like to see improve in Duxbury, greater attendance.

Mr. Weiler thought that there may be a link to the length of Duxbury's Town Meeting and our Town Manager form of government. Mr. Weiler and the TGSC spoke in length about possible ways to reduce the length of Town Meeting. Mr. Weiler spoke about the impact that Electronic Balloting has had on Town Meeting and felt that it has been instrumental in speeding up Town Meeting. Mr. Weiler would like to see the use of Electronic Balloting added to our by-law. Mr. Weiler noted that perhaps in the future, FinCom could possibly not have to move every article to save time, but must do so for the present time because of our by-law.

Mr. Weiler then discussed the scheduling of the Annual Town Meeting, which has been traditionally held on the second Saturday in March, with the Annual Town Elections following two weeks after the Town Meeting. There was some discussion about changing the date for various reasons and he thought that that may be another topic of discussion that the TGSC should delve into further.

Gay Shanahan gave the following statistics, regarding when Towns in Massachusetts hold their Annual Town Meeting, from the Secretary of State's website : 3% in March, 18% in April, 70% in May, 10% in June. May 6th was the most popular date. The TGSC found those statistics to be very interesting.

Mr. Weiler is the appointing authority for several Boards and Committees including the Cemetery Trustees, Duxbury Beach Committee, Finance Committee, Fiscal Advisory Committee, Personnel Board, and the Water and Sewer Advisory Board. The Town Moderator was also the appointing authority for the Town Government Study Committee. There was some discussion in regards to eliminating some of the Committees and Mr. Weiler thought that that may be a discussion that the TGSC may want to consider looking into further.

Mr. Weiler also discussed changing our Town Meeting form of government to a Representative form of government. He explained that the backlash of a Representative form of government was that some towns are having a difficult time getting citizens to run for Representative seats and that sometimes they are also unable to get a quorum because of absent Representatives.

Some other items that were discussed while Mr. Weiler was still present:

- There was no consideration to hold Town Meeting more frequently unless a Special Town Meeting was in order;
- There is a zero quorum in Duxbury;
- Duxbury's by-law does not allow members of FinCom to hold any other Town offices;
- Duxbury only has a "yes/no" vote at Town Meeting;
- Reconsideration can only happen immediately during Town Meeting;
- Consider making the Town Moderator a three-year term as opposed to the present one-year term;
- The TGSC/Town Meeting Subcommittee may want to look at reconsideration; and
- The general feeling was to keep the Annual Open Town Meeting.

Other Business

The minutes of the meeting of August 26th, 2015 were discussed with a few minor changes.

The TGSC agreed that the next three (3) meetings will be held on October 14th, October 28th, and December 16th with the location of the meetings to be determined but most likely will continue to be held at the Duxbury Free Library – Setter Room.

The TGSC discussed what the topics of future meetings might be and who they would like to invite as guest speakers. The potential topics and speakers are as follows:

- Review of Conservation, Planning Board, and Agricultural by-laws;
- Consider looking into consolidation of personnel and departments where there may be overlaps such as the IT Department at the School District/Town level; and
- Guest speakers: Dr. Ben Tantillo, Duxbury School District's Superintendent; Betsy Sullivan and/or Frank Mangione of the Town of Duxbury's Finance Committee; and John Madden, Town of Duxbury's Finance Director.
- Invite Town Manager, Rene Read and Duxbury School District's Superintendent, Ben Tantillo to review the progress/status of the independent IT study approved by the March 2015 Annual Town Meeting and what might be the next steps.
- Both Anne Ward and Susan Curtis hoped that the TGSC would consider having the Massachusetts Department of Revenue do an independent evaluation of our Town. The service is free and the reports they have reviewed were quite thorough and comprehensive.
- The Meeting adjourned at 9:15PM.
Respectfully submitted by Susan Curtis.

Approved on October 14th, 2015, by a vote of 8: 0: 0.

Gay Shanahan, Chair _____