

TOWN GOVERNMENT STUDY COMMITTEE

*Thursday, November 14, 2013 – Minutes
Public Forum with NFIA & FIA*

Meeting called to order by the Chairperson at 5:30 p.m. & read the recording disclaimer.

Present: Chairperson: Phil Washko, Vice Chair: Bernie Roderick, Dick Douglass, Andy Jones, Siobhan Henebury (arrived at 5:43 p.m.) Linda Meredith (arrived at 5:56 pm), Pattie Pacella & G. Steve Riley.

Absent: Dan Freitas

Bernie advised he would be out of Town for the weekend, therefore Pattie agreed to email Anne Kakley with the dates for the next few meetings. November 21, 2013, December 5th, 12th & 19th.

Dick reported he's updated the Survey and will send out for everyone to review, and to be discussed at next meeting.

A brief discussion on the survey questions and demographics question. More discussion on what information we are trying to gather for what purpose.

Some members were concerned the asking for the household income might be a turnoff.

Bernie spoke to Paul Kitchen. Mr. Kitchen advised him the School Committee pays \$1800.00 for the survey to be printed and sent out. It is assumed that our Committee would have to pay the difference.

Dick asked members to forward any word document of any interview information that people have, so he can continue to plug it in the spreadsheet.

Pattie gave members the information that Planning Board is willing to meet with the Committee at their next working meeting on November 26th. Pattie will be out of Town, however Phil will meet and all are welcome to attend. Bernie expressed interest in attending. November 26th at 7pm.

ACTION #1: Phil will post the meeting as an open meeting.

Dick stated that he had done some research with Colin Institute, who actively does IT assessments, HR assessments and suggested a possible visit? (They are located in Boston near the Kennedy Library). D

ACTION #2: Dick will forward the website for Colin Institute to everyone for review.

At 6:10 p.m., Phil opened the Public Forum Public Hearing.

Members introduced themselves. Phil reviewed the TGSC, who we are & how we came about.

Linda reviewed the slide presentation.

Andy went over the public forum rules.

Q&A's:

Antone Lopes, Precinct 6 - Mr. Lopes stated that in the early 1970's there was a committed who made suggested changes to Town Meeting and they said, "no." And then it was again done at another time with same consequence. Mr. Lopes suggested that perhaps any recommendations the Board makes should go to a whole Town vote, vs. just Town Meeting members.

Jeffrey Lucas, Precinct 1 – Asked if Town Meeting can ask for proposals to go to Town vote. (Mr. Lucas concurs with Mr. Lopes)

Bernie advised there are 429 Town Meeting Members and only approximately 272 in attendance.

Phil stated because we were created at a Town Meeting, we would have to make our recommendations back to Town Meeting. However, we could also make a recommendation that the Town Meeting members put any recommendations to a town wide vote.

Everyone was in agreed that this is what's needed now. A Town Government Study Committee.

At 6:30 p.m., Pattie Pacella left the meeting to attend another meeting; Andy Jones took over the minutes.

Ann Richard, Precinct 2 – Asked a question relative to who else will be interviewed (ie: employee level vs. department heads). She also asked if dept head interview results will be public information. (Yes)

Mike Silvia (Former Selectman) – Agrees with the Town Administrator concept, enhance position to get better candidates to apply, need to buy into the enhanced responsibilities of a Town Administrator position. Thinks hiring might be better done by Town Moderator, as it may be less political.

Mr. Silvia went on to give his opinion on the BPW – Most people wouldn't understand weak points of current system until you compare with other municipal system. (ie: issues with water service to Pope's Island) He is in favor of doing away with BPW Board.

Mr. Silvia had comments on the Finance Committee – thinks Fairhaven is one of only municipalities that chooses fincom members the way we do. Current setup may exclude other people who would want to join, as membership is limited by precinct style setup. Alternative might be is to have Town Moderator choose members, might help to balance Committee.

Dick Douglass asked how Mr. Silvia felt about a 5 person SelectBoard.

Mike Silvia stated he doesn't think bigger bodies are any more effective and might bring dysfunction. As an executive body, doesn't think more would be better.

Phil W. went over previous information on appointment methods.

G. Steve Riley question re: Does the Board create more problems that it solves? Re: BPW. Why single out BPW & Personnel Board?

Mike Silvia – thinks dissolving those Boards might create a unity of purpose.

Phil talked about arguments that have been made in favor of BPW dissolution.

Antone Lopes – Compared BPW to School Committee and asked how much they really are different, and points out why a move to dissolve BPW has not had the same outlook on other dept's like School Committee. He stated the School Committee has Board & Superintendent, nobody says anything about that, but look at other Boards and say they need full time personnel to operate. Why are we satisfied on one hand and dissatisfied on the other when discussing these Boards?

Bernie spoke about School Committee, it's history and it's charges.

Mike Silvia – spoke about even number of School Committee members and some issues that occurred in the past. Thought it might be a good time to fix the 6 Member issue to favor an odd # of members.

Phil asked if anyone had considered where the Town wanted to be in 5-10 Years?

Bernie spoke about how the DOR Report says the services requested and required have grown beyond the current government structure. Also spoke about historical studies that have been done in Town.

Gayla Riley, Precinct 1 – Spoke to Town Planner re: a plan on how Town is going to grow and was told last one was done in late 1990's. She was shocked that a town this size has not been keeping up with the plan. Ms. Riley asked if the Planning Department has been working with the TGSC.

Phil spoke about the "Master Plan" and agreed the need to plan ahead, not just from the Planning Department but for budgets and capital planning.

Gayla – thinks that departments need to look at positions and job descriptions and the actual needs of the Town. Can it be streamlined, contracted, etc. Without the plan, budget & personnel just keep growing.

Phil – Concept of running things differently has been discussed in DOR and that one answer is to make Town work more like a business, such as using best practices akin to how it's done in business. Also expressed need to have public information so changes are done the right way.

Dick – Discussed personnel, budgets, planning for needs. Thinks deterrent to proper planning is lack of long term budget.

Steve Riley – Spoke about long term planning, and the challenge which is capturing resources, like money. Also thinks egos by Department heads need to be checked at door. Also spoke about dismantling BPW.

Dick asked the group re: "Threats" to Town such as businesses leaving Town and wondered if the economy is threatened.

Sharon Lacroix worried about closed businesses along Route 6.

Phil spoke about balance if bringing in or dissuading businesses in Town/Economic Development.

Bernie thinks town is "land poor". Not much in area left to develop. Thinks Town might be more proactive in getting new businesses to replace ones that leave.

Mark Badway thinks marketplace will determine a lot of the business issues.

Antone Lopes – Think the businesses we relied on is a way of the past as a lot of employment is being replaced by automation. Retail needs are diminished by population growth or lack of it. Not sure a master plan can actually predict the market.

Phil believes Master Plan needs to be updated.

Antone Lopes – asked about growth industries and how to predict.

Phil – circled back to what TGSC could do. Asked if Town Meeting members have enough information to make decisions.

Crowd – many felt "NO".

Mike Siliva – As a legislative body that only meets infrequently it might not be realistic to think Town Meeting could be vastly improved. Worked about other means to get the information to the Town Meeting members.

Phil discussed having a pro/con argument to each article.

Steve Riley – had some issues with levels of deliberations on varying articles and how they are not equitable. Also has issue with Town Meeting members who are in union or such that can vote on their issues.

Phil – we are looking into it, but State has something to say about it as well.

Gayla – had issue with attendance in Town Meeting and when articles were discussed.

Andy – expressed that he thought Town Meeting should check attendance in AM & after lunch!!

Antone Lopes – joked that articles should be chosen from a hat, rather than a warrant.

Sharon Lacroix – Why can't articles and information be put on the internet to get the information out?

Gayla – Mentioned that there is no training for Town Meeting members.

Bernie said that a manual used to exist.

Phil – Thinks web is vastly underused as a tool to get information out.

Dick – Asked if group had any questions they'd like to see on a Town Wide Survey.

Phil – explained survey and that it is currently being drafted.

Gayla asked about results complying.

Phil thanked everyone for attending.

Most of audience left to attend an improvement association meeting.

Andy Jones made a motion to adjourn and was seconded by Bernie Roderick. The motion passed unanimously.

Meeting adjourned at 7:28 p.m.

Respectively submitted,

Patricia A. Pacella
& Andrew Jones