Town Meeting Study Committee

Minutes 2/8/2018

Committee in Attendance: Erin Underhill, Beth Murphy, Jim McCaffrey, Mary Russo, Craig Schultze

Others in Attendance: Lisa Hardin

Meeting called to order by Erin Underhill at 7:30pm

Meeting Topic: Efficency – stated goal of improving Efficency is to decrease meeting time, in an effort to increase turn out at Town Meeting.

A suggestion was made to keep two lists, one to be potential By Law changes the other to be suggestions to the moderator (while recognizing that these suggestions are non-binding).

Ideas (none of these are recommendations, this is all in the discussion stage):

1) Grouping Votes:

   a. Consent Agenda – a grouping of items that are either all recommended for approval or dismissal with one vote. For example, the Approval list would consist of all mandated articles (for example; the annual Town Audit, paying of prior year bills, installment payments on previously voted leases). Articles recommended for dismissal due to lack of funds could similarly be grouped. This would free up more time for discussion of other articles.

   b. Single vote on Capital Articles – much like the Consent Agenda, a single article from the Capital Planning Committee would lay out the Capital Plan for the next several years, with a recommendation to fund the current year's needs. Amendments could be made at Town Meeting to move a future years funding item to the current year, but moving new items onto the list may be out of the scope of the article (based on the moderators discretion).

2) Limit or otherwise streamline discussion of articles:

   a. Limit speaker time – the moderator will allow a set amount of time for a single speaker.

   b. Limit total time on a single article – the moderator will set a total amount of discussion time for a single article.

   c. Limit number of speakers on an article – this would tie in with the pro-con-pro debate, and allow a set number of speakers to address the issue, unless the town meeting moves to extend debate.

   d. Use Pro-Con-Pro discussion – allow one person to present the Pro side an article, followed by somebody speaking against the article… continue this process until there is no longer any pro or con speakers. This would avoid a large number of speakers addressing one side of an article and make sure all voices are heard.

3) Streamline the process:

a. Better management of the Warrant – this fell into line with the Consent Agenda and the Capital Article. The goal is to still provide Town Meeting with a wide selection of funding options, but to keep the total number of votes needed to a minimum.

b. Provide a "Town Meeting Process" guide – a one page handout from the Moderator explaining motions, amendments, and voting.

c. Start on time – start the meeting at the posted time, even if people are still checking in.

d. Reduce "overhead" in reading a motion - urge Finance Committee to be more concise in their opening discussion of the motion (less than three minutes per "typical" article). Investigate (through Town Council) if we can eliminate the second reading of the motion.

e. Distribute copy of Town Report at Town Meeting, as well as a copy of the Warrant and FinCom report.

4) Make meeting more "Fun" – can we do a 7th inning stretch or some other activity to break up the meeting?

The suggestion to provide transportation to seniors was made, but this was tabled until the "Day and Time" discussion (to be discussed next meeting – 2/22/2018).

For next meeting – discuss the "Day and Time" of Town Meeting. Is there a better meeting time than 7:30pm on Monday? Will another time increase turnout? Is our current Town Meeting repetitive of the registered voters in town, or do the demographics skew younger or older? How do we define an Ideal or Fair turnout?

Adjourn at 8:50.

Next meeting at 7:30 on 2/22/2018