

Town of Milton -Town Government Study Committee

March 24, 2014

Milton High School Supt. Conference Room

The Town Government Study Committee (hereinafter "The Committee") met on Monday, March 24, 2014 in the Superintendent's Conference Room of the Milton High School. Members John Cronin, Mary McNamara, Rick Neely, Leroy Walker, Kathryn Fagan, Peter Mullin and Robert Hiss were present. Absent member: Marvin Gordon

Guest present by invitation: Town Moderator Brian Walsh

Chairman Neely called the meeting to order at 7:11 p.m.

MINUTES OF PRIOR MEETING- On a Motion duly made and seconded, the Committee VOTED unanimously to approve the Amended Minutes of the Meeting of March 6, 2014 as submitted by John Cronin.(Amendment being a change in the date of the prior minutes to read : October 21, 2013.)

IMPROVING THE TOWN MEETING EXPERIENCE AND EFFICIENCY- Moderator Brian Walsh updated new members on prior discussions he had had with the Committee regarding the challenges of limiting extensive and sometimes repetitive discussion at Town Meeting without stifling the opportunity of TM Members (hereinafter TMM) to speak . The Moderator and several Committee members stated that they believed this issue was causing TMM to disengage from the process and discouraging potential new TMM to run for this office. Committee Members further agreed that the present "move the previous question" rule, that limits , after passage , the length of a speaker's time on a particular question , does not do enough to address the perceived issue. Moderator reminded the Committee that TM does not follow Roberts Rules of Order, but instead uses "Town Meeting Time" as a guide and also relies on Town bylaws. Moderator also confirmed that he had received guidance from Town Counsel (Copy of email distributed to Committee members) and that he had researched other by-laws of the Towns of Bedford, Natick, Norwood (copy of summary of this research distributed to Committee members) before preparing a draft rule to address this issue . Moderator had announced at the Fall 2013 TM that he would be asking for permission from the TM to enact a new rule to take effect at the Spring 2014 TM with the goal being to pass a rule that would allow for a time limit and also limit the number of times that a particular speaker could speak on a particular question.

The Committee then discussed, at length, the draft language presented by the Moderator. Several questions then arose as to the best way to enact this new rule, whether this proposed time limit would also apply to "presenters" of articles and/or Department Heads and/or Committee Chairs and whether this rule was intended to result in quantitative or tactical improvements to the TM process or both. There was also a question as to who would keep track of speakers so as to be sure the Moderator could enforce the new rule.

The Committee and the Moderator resolved that this rule was intended to be more in the nature of a "tactical improvement " rather than directly trying to limit the length of TM by any quantitative measure and the following new draft rule language was created in response to the other questions raised by the Committee .

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The new TM speakers rule language is as follows:

Each Person speaking to an article or amendment is limited to ten (10)) minutes and no person may speak on a question more than once when any other person desires to be heard, or more than twice on the same question without permission of the Moderator. Preapproved presentations will not necessarily be limited to ten(10) minutes at the discretion of the Moderator .

TRACKING SPEAKERS AT TM – Moderator agreed with the Committee’s suggestion that the Town Clerk or Assistant Town Clerk might be called upon by the Moderator to keep track of speakers at TM . Moderator will follow up with the Town Clerk about this plan.

IMPLEMENTATION OF THE NEW RULE AT TM - Moderator confirmed that he would check with Town Counsel to confirm that this rule could take effect at least for each TM in which permission was given by TMM without the need to pass a new bylaw to this effect.

ABILITY OF COMMITTEE TO SUBMIT OWN ARTICLES TO TM - Chair Neely reported that he had discussed with Town Counsel John Flynn , a question from the March 4, 2014 Committee meeting as to whether the Committee can now submit articles directly to TM via the Warrant rather than through the BOS. Chair Neely reported that Town Counsel believed this to be the case, but would research the question in more detail and provide an answer to the Chairman for the Committee in the near future.

SURVEY - The Committee discussed the possibility of conducting one or two surveys to determine either/or (a) if the new rule proposed for TM regarding time limits on speakers was effective or ineffective – such a survey to be given to TM participants if emails were available from the Town Clerk . and or (b)the committee to develop a separate survey to help the Committee to list and prioritize other issues that affect the Town Government of Milton that the Committee should study and make resolutions upon – such survey to be given to former elected officials such as Selectmen, Warrant Committee members , etc. Committee resolved that survey (b) should be explored once the white board exercise is completed and that questions and the pool of possible respondents should be discussed in more detail at future Committee meetings. Member RH was to look into the practicality of survey (a) and to report to the Committee at it’s next meeting.

WHITE BOARD DISCUSSION:

Given the amount of time taken in the meeting to discuss the TM “speakers “ Rule, Committee agreed to delay the white board “brainstorming” exercise to the next Committee meeting. Committee members did agree to follow a particular structure for the exercise as follows:

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- 1) Members to confirm the charge of the Committee (Chairman Neely to distribute the charge to all members prior to the next meeting).
- 2) Committee members agree to apply the general goal of seeking solutions /methods for Milton Town Government that would best increase revenues and reduce costs AND/OR increase efficiencies that would result in increased output at the same cost.
- 3) Committee members agreed generally to conduct the white board exercise to determine the list of topics for the committee to focus efforts on going forward. The priority level assigned to each topic is to be discussed by the Committee as part of the white board exercise with a conscious effort to apply #1 (the Committee charge) and #2 (revenue/cost/efficiency formula) listed herewith.
- 4) Once topics of focus have been established, Committee to create a survey with questions related to the chosen topics with sufficient background data to generate direct answers and establish the pool of possible survey respondents in more detail. Survey results would be used by the committee as the members determine.

NEXT MEETING: Members agreed that the next meeting of the Town Government Study Committee will take place on **Thursday, April 17th at 7 p.m.** at the Milton High School - Superintendent's Conference Room .

On a Motion made and duly seconded, the Committee voted unanimously to adjourn at 9:14 p.m.

Submitted by :

Kathryn Fagan

March 28, 2014