

Town Government Study Committee – July 17, 2014 Meeting Minutes

The meeting was called to order by Chairman Rick Neely. Other members present were John Cronin, Kathy Fagan, Robert Hiss, Peter Mullin, and Leroy Walker. Mary McNamara was absent. Note: Two committee positions await appointments.

Acceptance of the June 24, 2014 meeting minutes was voted with amendments which had been accepted by the drafter, Kathy Fagan. John Cronin abstained.

Leroy Walker reported on the first few of his fact finding interviews with the chairs of five person Boards of Selectmen in towns with representative town meetings. Benefits mentioned included a broader perspective, workload sharing, better decisions, facilitated communications, etc. There was consensus that responsibility and work for the Town Administrator increased with a five person board over a three person board. None of those interviewed expressed interest in changing to a three person board. Additional interview results will be presented at future meetings.

A proposal to interview Chairs of the three member Boards of Selectmen of Belmont and Hingham was discussed.

Rick Neely, Leroy Walker and Robert Hiss reported on their meeting with Town Treasurer James McAuliffe regarding recommendations in the State Department of Revenue report. McAuliffe did not support the DOR's report recommendations to establish a chief financial officer position nor convert the elected Treasurer position to an appointed Treasurer position. He contended that his office is efficient and relatively thinly staffed. He would oppose any proposed changes.

The Committee discussed the Assistant Town Treasurer's position for which a major duty is the administration of the Group Insurance employee benefits program. This function more commonly is managed by the human resources office.

The Committee decided to seek legislation to define quorums as a majority of appointed Committee members. Town Counsel opined this would cure problems when vacancies remain unfilled, as happens from time to time.

The Committee discussed the desirability of consolidating the Cemetery and Park Departments with the Public Works Department. It was suggested that the Chair have exploratory talks with a key member of each of the two governing Boards. Also mentioned were shortcomings by the Public Works Department in budgeted tree planting, water hydrant painting and garage maintenance, results which were not intended when the Forestry and Water Departments were consolidated with the Department of Public Works.

The next meeting will be held on August 4. The agenda may include reports from the subcommittees organized at the June 24 meeting, discussions on the Finance Functions Chart, additional B/S Chair surveys.

The meeting adjourned at 9:15 PM

Submitted by John Cronin