

**Government Study Committee
Meeting Minutes
Wednesday, October 27, 2010
Norwell Town Hall**

In attendance: Betsy Gordon; Don Shute; Daniel Collins, Paula White, Eric Russo

1. **Administrative Issues** – Betsy Gordon asked the committee to review all our past minutes for information or content that is incorrect. The committee unanimously voted to accept the minutes from the meetings on 10/06, 10/13, and 10/20. Paula White will submit the accepted minutes to the Town Clerk. Eric Russo prepared flyers to post around town inviting citizens to the open meetings. It was suggested that the committee extend an invitation to the town's moderator.

2. **Overview of Government Study Committee**
Betsy Gordon reviewed this committee's activities this far in the process and the plans going forward.

3. **Open Meeting with Several town committees**
Michele Bickford –Disability commission
Mary Lizotte – Cemetary Committee
Donna Cunio – Cushing Center
Bruce Graham – former Planning Board Member
Skip Joseph – former member of several town boards including Advisory Board, Conservation, ZBA, and Planning

Mary Lizotte voiced her concern that the selectmen have limited involvement with town committees. There is no coordination or communication between town government and the committees. If the committees need something from the BOS, they need to ask for an audience. In the current structure there is no one accountable to ensure that the committees are doing their job. Ms. Lizzotte also believes that the appointment process is insufficient and that there needs to be a more streamlined process for appointing residents to boards, and more marketing/awareness in the general population of volunteer opportunities.

Michele Bickford gave examples of the lack of coordination between committees. The Disability Commission needs to deal with the building inspector, the parks and recreation department, the planning board, and the highway department to ensure that the rights of the disabled are addressed. However, her committee cannot get anyone to call back or get anyone to come to a meeting. The new clock in the town center was installed with a hard curbing where there was previously a ramp. Now that crosswalk is no longer accessible to wheelchairs or walkers and is in violation of code. Without proper coordination and communication between the town departments, their ability to do their job is diminished.

Bruce Graham is concerned that changing to a town manager would diminish the Planning Board's ability to hire the town planner. He wants to preserve the right of the planning board and chair to make that hire with the input of the town manager. He believes the planning board works well with the committee creating policy and the town planner handling the administrative and operational issues while reporting to the town administrator. It is all about coordination of responsibilities.

Skip Joseph voiced his opinion that term limits are important. If a person is in a position too long they forget who they are representing. There are no checks and balances if someone has the same authority long-term. Mr. X's taxes are low because he is friends with the assessor, this can go unchecked if there are no new people to take on that role. If a person holds a job too long they become autocrats. Mr. Joseph pointed out that the Office of President of the United State has term limits and that job requires specific skills, why would the offices in Norwell be any different.

Mr. Joseph also believes that if some boards receive stipends and pensions then all boards should. It is an issue that he urges this committee to look at very closely.

Group discussion

- The group consensus is that:
- The school structure works well.
- Not all elected officials are equipped to negotiate contracts – that needs to be left to the experts.
- There are vacancies on many town boards that need to be filled that have been left open too long.
- Greater coordination is needed between town departments and town committees. The selectmen need to meet with the committees. The Advisory Board meets with each committee and seems to know more about what is going on in committees than the selectmen.
- That a five person board of selectmen would lighten the workload for the current three members. With a five person board, there is room to do outside work in subcommittees, there can be discussion and deliberation without breaking the open meeting laws, and that there would be a broader range of qualified people to run for BOS.
- With five members the BOS can have better coordination between all the town committees as they would have time to keep themselves abreast of each departments issues.

4. Adjourn

The meeting was adjourned by unanimous vote.

8. Next Meeting

The next meeting of the Government Study Committee will take place on Wednesday, October 28, 2010 to meet with the School Committee.