

Town Meeting Procedures Review Committee

Minutes of Meeting

April 15, 2010

Wayland Town Building

Members Present

Peter Gossles, Chairman

Dennis Berry

Steve Correia

Miranda Jones

William Steinberg

Richard Stack

Guests Present

Ira Sager

Mark Greenlaw

Alan Reiss

The Chairman called the meeting to order at 7:30 p.m. and noted that all members were present.

Mr. Berry volunteered to take the minutes.

The Minutes of the meeting of April 8, 2010 will be distributed and acted on at the meeting scheduled for April 22.

The Chairman requested that the Committee review the recommendations of the 2005 Town Meeting Study Committee and the Moderator's response to those recommendations, both of which had been distributed with the initial material. Each of the members of the Committee spoke in turn regarding items in that report the member felt important. Some measure of discussion followed each point as raised.

Among the items discussed were:

- Sunday sessions for the meeting
- Review of the Moderator's rules
- Set up of the floor of the Meeting
- Use of technology including a projection system
- The Culture of Town Meeting
- Whether Childcare could be provided
- Entertainment before the meeting

- Consent Calendar
- Limitations on the motion to terminate debate
- Use and procedures on reconsideration; this engendered a lengthy discussion.
- Need for general education regarding Town Meeting procedures
- Abuse of the procedural microphone
- Unorganized seemingly private conversations with the moderator
- The potential for an ongoing committee to improve the general experience of Town Meeting.

The Chairman noted that these and similar items would be discussed further at a public hearing at an unspecified date in the future.

The Chairman then requested comment and committee action on the three warrant articles that had been discussed, which he would take up in the order they appear in the Warrant.

Article #20 – Official Ballot

The Committee discussed the article which proposed a form or what is commonly called the Australian ballot. Under the process proposed in the Article, there would be a Town Meeting, where some articles would be finally voted on, but certain significant articles, as determined by the Selectmen would be discussed and possibly amended but would be actually voted on at a referendum some time later.

The article had been the subject of a public hearing and discussed by the Committee. There was further discussion, with each member of the Committee expressing his or her respective views.

It was MOVED by Mr. Berry and seconded by Mr. Stack:

That the Committee Support Article 20 as presented in the Warrant.

The motion was defeated by a vote of 2 in favor, 5 opposed.

Article #21 – Electronic Voting

This article had also been the subject of a public hearing as well as extensive discussion and consideration by the Committee by means of discussion and review of written material. At the request to of the Committee, the proponent had provided a quote for rental of the electronic equipment so that it could be tried out by the Town.

The Committee once more discussed the proposal with each member speaking in turn. Several members expressed support for the concept of electronic voting but great concern about the cost, whether purchase or rental.

It was MOVED by Mr. Steinberg and seconded by Ms Jones:

That the Committee support Article 21 dealing with electronic voting as presented in the Warrant.

The Motion was defeated by a vote of 6 opposed and 1 abstention.

It was thereafter MOVED by Mr. Bernstein and seconded by Ms Jones:

That the Committee support the expenditure of up to \$25,000 for rental of the electronic equipment for use at the 2011 Annual Town Meeting

The motion was defeated by a vote of 2 in favor, 4 opposed and 1 abstention.

Article #23 Town Meeting Web Site

As with the other articles, this had been the subject of a public hearing and previous discussion by the Committee.

Each member of the Committee commented on the proposal with comments focusing on the difficulty of monitoring the web site, the potential liability of the town, whether this would put the town in an improper position with regard the dissemination of article debate and would it be better that this remain in the private sector.

It was MOVED by Mr. Correia and seconded by Mr.Stack:

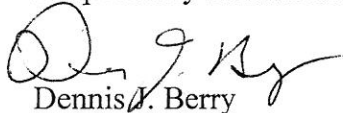
That the Committee support the Article #23 calling for the acceptance by the Town of the ownership and operation of the Town meeting website as proposed in the Article.

The motion was defeated by a vote of 1 in favor and 6 opposed.

The Committee agreed that at its next meeting it would discuss the report to be given to the Selectmen on April 26, and would continue the discussion of other factors that could improve Town Meeting.

There being no further business before the meeting, the meeting adjourned at 9:50 p.m.

Respectfully submitted:


Dennis J. Berry