

Ad Hoc Government Study Committee (Westborough, MA)
Minutes of December 6, 2006

Present: John E. Arnold, Thomas Shea, Brigitte Casemyr, Kristina Allen, Manohar Vichare, Christopher Senie, Susan Abladian

Chairman Shea called the meeting to order @ 7:10 pm.

Mr. Shea opened the meeting with agenda items, which included the following topics:

- Each member to state the specific topic(s) that they wish to further address
- Firm up the committee's schedule starting January 2007
- Firm up interview schedule starting January 2007

Topics identified for further discussion:

T. Shea	OTM vs. RTM
B. Casemyr	How to streamline the reporting structure and preserving checks and balances
J. Arnold	a) Review policy making and administrative aspects of each dept/board, b) optimum structure to manage town-wide coordination of finances and c) infrastructure suitable to address the future mix of town services
S. Abladian	a) Responsibility for town buildings and structures and b) volunteer coordination
M. Vichare	a) Appointed vs. Elected positions, b) reporting structure and c) finance, planning and personnel boards
K. Allen	a) Human Resources Director vs. Personnel Board, b) Town Manager vs. Town Coordinator, i.e. form of town management
C. Senie	a) Investigate need for different treatment of staff for elected and appointed boards and b) Board of Selectmen as a Board of Directors

Mr. Vichare further commented that the committee's discussions would be well served to keep in mind the following tenets: would a recommended change increase or decrease efficiencies; would the change mean a cost to the town; is the change feasible? Would a state law prevent any particular change? Does the change fit within the town's strategic plan?

Mr. Arnold pointed out that no one except for current town managers had advocated for a strong town manager.

Mr. Shea suggested that the committee attempt to get closure on the OTM vs. RTM discussion, since we have not received but one single comment in favor of RTM.

Mr. Vichare agreed that keeping OTM appeared to be the recommendation, but that we still would need to understand why people are looking at RTM. Ms. Casemyr pulled out one comment from a resident who strongly argued in favor of RTM, and she pointed out that while we have not heard any input in favor for RTM, we should not too quick to close that issue. Ms. Allen commented that the committee would have to research any issue that appears to be one-sided. Ms. Abladian reported that Shrewsbury often has a quorum problem with their RTM, which is strange considering that the representatives ran for election to speak for their district. Also, she stated that there are plenty of open positions, and that since the town is represented by elected residents, many believe that 'it's somebody else's responsibility' to speak up. Ms. Allen inquired about any business issues that have been affected by OTM. Ms. Abladian recalled the influx/outflux of voters at some issues, mostly surrounding school budget items. Ms. Allen also recalled the high school lights issue, which led to a strong organized showing from both sides, and pointed out that this shows that OTM works. Ms. Abladian suggested that when issues might be confrontational, that voters should be allowed to vote by paper ballot. Mr. Arnold offered a new position, that the committee may wish to investigate an improved process for the OTM.

Ms. Allen mentioned that public hearings, or a form of open forum to gather more input, might be needed. Ms. Casemyr suggested that we might need to develop SWOT analysis for some of the topics we prioritized, to ensure that we thoroughly cover pros and cons. Mr. Arnold recommended that the committee schedule community forum to gather input, once the committee has submitted its interim report to the Board of Selectmen.

The committee next debated the need for its members should start writing down some of the preliminary findings that fall more into a housekeeping category. Mr. Shea reminded the members that we were scheduled to submit our interim report beginning of February, despite the fact that the committee got a late start. Mr. Arnold suggested a format to proceed, to document all the issues that the committee has identified as worthy of further research and for which we are not ready to make recommendation. This interim report will then form the basis for community outreach and further interviews with professional town staff. Mr. Vichare offered to take the topics and put them in open question format, so as not to appear having already formed an opinion. Ms. Allen added that we should also include those housekeeping items previously identified.

Mr. Senie then commented on the potential risk of carrying the CEO/COO analogy too far, as we've seen that corporations do make a lot of bad decisions, because boards do not always properly supervise their CEOs. Ms. Allen added that performance evaluations need to be prioritized, and performed by someone who has first-hand knowledge of the employee's day-to-day work performance. Mr. Senie volunteered to take the organizational chart created by Mr. Arnold and put together a strawman that will show a

streamlined reporting structure and reconfigured appointment responsibilities, to be used by the committee as a starting point for deliberations.

Mr. Shea confirmed that Mr. Ed Newton, chair of the Planning Board, is attending the committee's December 13th meeting. Mr. Shea will clarify with Mr. Newton that the committee welcomes the entire board.

The next committee meetings will be January 3, 10, 24 and February 7, 21. The committee will continue weekly meetings in January to ensure the members can pulled together their interim report, but will move on to a bi-weekly schedule starting in February.

Mr. Shea took the action item to start a draft report based on the minutes of this committee.

The committee identified a number of professionals that will be invited for interviews: dpw manager, police chief, fire chief, town clerk, and senior center director.

Mr. Arnold made a motion to adjourn. Ms. Allen seconded the motion. The motion passed with a unanimous vote and the meeting was adjourned at 9:18 pm.

Submitted,
Brigitte Casemyr, Secretary