

**Ad Hoc Government Study Committee (Westborough, MA)**  
**Minutes of May 23, 2007**

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

Chairman Shea called the meeting to order at 7:05pm.

Chairman Shea noted that the Committee needs to deal with the backlog of minutes for prior meetings. Mr. Arnold noted that his notes indicate that the minutes of the 2/7/07 meeting were approved at the 3/7/07 meeting. The meeting minutes to be acted upon include the following meeting dates: 1/24/2007, 2/21/07 (which most on the Committee didn't seem to have), 3/7/07, 3/21/07, 4/4/07, 4/18/07, 5/2/07 (which have not been distributed yet).

Mr. Arnold moved that the Committee approve the minutes for the meeting of 1/24/07. Mrs. Allen seconded. The committee voted 5-0 in favor of the motion.

Mr. Shea then mentioned that tonight's agenda will include a discussion about the possible direction of the committee's work. This will happen after the discussion with tonight's guest: John Badenhause (Director of Youth and Family Services). As a prelude to this discussion, Mr. Shea made the observation that a few topics that seemed to be possible areas for group deliberation seem close to being settled. That is, the committee seems to be reaching a consensus opinion and more discussion of these topics may not be necessary. For example, the question of Open vs. Representative Town Meeting seems to be to the point where the consensus of the group is that Open Town Meeting remains the preferred form for Westborough. Similarly, it seems that the committee's discussion about the roles and responsibilities of the Town Clerk is leading to a consensus that the Town Clerk should remain an elected position. The committee agreed to discuss these observations and the implication on the committee's future work after the discussion with Mr. Badenhause.

The committee then discussed future meeting dates. The committee agreed to schedule meetings for: June 6 (in the Forbes Auditorium), June 20, July 11, August 1, August 15, and September 5.

At this point, Mr. Shea welcomed Mr. Badenhause to the meeting and thanked him for coming to the meeting. Mr. Shea and Mr. Arnold gave a brief overview of the committee's purpose and work and mentioned that, specifically, the committee had noticed that, for a number of town committee's with full-time staff, the process of hiring the staff member is not clearly laid out in the town charter or by-laws. Therefore, in addition to providing any insights into the overall structure and process of the town's government, the committee was interested in the hiring process as Mr. Badenhause remembers it.

Mr. Badenhause began by recollecting the process by which he was hired. He does not recall precisely who appointed him but does recall being interviewed by the Youth Commission. The Director's position was an interim position at the time since the previous Director had left a few months earlier. Mr. Badenhause recalls that he started work as the interim Director of Youth and Family Services sometime around Dec. 1995 and that the previous Director had left in approx. October of the same year. He recalls no interviews with the Selectmen but indicated that he may have been recommended to the Selectmen by the Youth Commission with the Selectmen

voting on the action to appoint him. However, he is unsure of this and suggested that the committee review the minutes from the Selectmen and Youth Commission meetings at the time to verify this.

Mr. Badenhausen continued explaining his interaction with the Youth Commission and other parts of town government. As Director of Youth and Family Services, he interacts primarily with the Youth Commission. He works directly with the Youth Commission in terms of developing the policy for the department. The policy is developed in discussion with the Youth Commission with the Youth Commission voting to set the policies and priorities which guide the department's day-to-day activities.

Mr. Badenhausen interacts with the Town Coordinator when necessary. This is most common with regard to budget issues or specific personnel or procedural matters. The department's budget is put together with discussion with the Youth Commission. The Youth Commission approves the budget that John then submits as the department's budget to the Town Coordinator. The Youth Commission and the Director then present the budget to the Advisory Finance Committee and Town Meeting.

Mr. Badenhausen was asked to describe the process that is used to evaluate the Director's job performance. He explained that his job performance appraisal is done by the Youth Commission and, after discussion about the performance appraisal between the Youth Commission Chairman and himself, the appraisal/review is sent to the Personnel Board where it is placed in his personnel file.

Mr. Vichare asked if there were any overlaps with other groups. Mr. Badenhausen answered that, although he and the department work closely with many groups in town, there is no real redundancy in terms of the work that is performed. There may be some intentional overlap with the School Psychologist or Adjustment Counselor but that this 'overlap' is really a handoff in responsibility where the Youth and Family Services personnel can go beyond the scope of school-specific work (to include such aspects as family counseling, etc.).

To further clarify the question about appointing authority for the Director's position, Mr. Shea asked who would appoint a new Director of Youth and Family Services when the time comes. Mr. Badenhausen believes that the Youth Commission would take the action to advertise for and interview candidates for a new Director and would then bring a single recommendation for an appointment to the Selectmen for approval.

Mr. Senie asked if Mr. Badenhausen had ever appeared before the Selectmen in the course of his duties and asked how many people were on the Youth Commission. Mr. Badenhausen answered that he has appeared before the Selectmen on occasions when the Youth Commission's work has required approval of the Selectmen for things such as permission for 'Hot Summer Nights' program signs on town property, accepting donations, and typical pre-Town Meeting activities in years when the budget and/or programs has needed to be explained or presented. He also stated that the Youth Commission is comprised of 5 members appointed by the Selectmen.

When asked about the distinction of interactions with the Youth Commission and other town departments, Mr. Badenhausen indicated that for policy matters and departmental priorities, he always works with the Youth Commission. He consults with the Town Coordinator, Assistant

Town Coordinator, and/or the Personnel Board for specific questions about the mechanics of running the department – especially with regard to human resources questions.

Mr. Shea asked for Mr. Badenhausen's opinion of how town government, in general, works now. Mr. Badenhausen began with the story of his initial hiring as Director of Youth and Family Services and noted that, back then, there really wasn't anyone who provided any kind of orientation in terms of being a town employee and that one learned by asking their peers on an as-needed basis. At some time prior to his hiring, Mr. Badenhausen noted that the Youth and Family Services department had been housed at the Pazo building on Fisher Street that was somewhat isolated from other town departments. By the time he was hired, however, the department had moved to the Forbes Municipal Building which made it easier for Mr. Badenhausen to consult with his peers. Mr. Arnold noted that aspects of the orientation problem seems to have been recognized and improved as the committee has heard with regard to the Assistant Town Coordinator taking on the HR orientation role and related duties.

Mr. Badenhausen agreed and continued by explaining that it has been good for the department to now be in Forbes Building along with other town departments. It is now much easier for him to have interactions with others such as Paul McNulty (Board of Health). This has also led to his creation of a 'Human Service Alliance' that gets together people from his department, the School department, senior center, police, religious organizations, victim advocates, etc. to know and understand each other and what roles/services they can provide. The creation of this alliance (founded under the impetus of the Forbes/Kirkside Foundation established to help those in town who need some assistance) has really helped identify gaps in service and detect overlaps in services.

Mrs. Allen mentioned that the Forbes/Kirkside Foundation approached her when she was Selectmen who then referred them to Mr. Badenhausen. The idea for the alliance actually came from the people like Mr. Badenhausen who provide the assistance and created the alliance to better help people in need.

In terms of the overall process of the way the town works, Mr. Badenhausen thinks of the town government as a kind of 'distributed processing' model. Mr. Badenhausen described this model as an idea that comes from his prior background as an electrical engineer and a kind of problem-solving that is used in engineering. In a previous job, Mr. Badenhausen had designed windmills and had worked on an approach to wind energy with a design calling for many smaller windmills rather than a single, giant windmill. The advantage to this approach of power production is that one can distribute the job of power production to a number of small power producing windmills and that small improvements in one windmill can be made to the other windmills thus multiplying the effect of each small improvement. In another, later job, Mr. Badenhausen was a 'Field Engineer' doing technical support for a company that applied the same principal to distributed microprocessors.

Mr. Arnold noted that another advantage of a distributed processing model is that it tries to minimize the presence of a single point of failure,. In terms of the windmill design, any one windmill could break and some power would continue to be produced by other windmills. The analogy is applicable to the town's government because it appears that part of the success of the current town government structure is that there is no single point of failure that breaks the entire system. For example, it appears that any single bad decision or under-performing person or

department does not cause the entire town's ability to provide service to break. This allows energy, attention, and focus to be brought to bear on fixing any problems while the aspects of town government that function well can continue to function well.

Mr. Badenhausen added that, personally, he feels a tremendous amount of ownership for the work that he and his staff do and believes that the staff feels the same way.

Mr. Senie asked about a hypothetical change to the appointment/reporting of the Director of Youth and Family Services. He asked how and what might change if a Town Manager appointed the Director but that the Director still worked with a policy-oriented Youth Commission. Mr. Badenhausen responded that a lot would depend on the Town Manager in that situation. He noted that it would create a dual reporting structure – especially if policy development was done differently from the performance review mechanism. This could lead to confusion over priorities.

Mr. Senie asked if there as a network of Directors of Youth and Family Services (and similar titles) and asked, if so, if any had worked for a Mayor or strong Town Manager like this and had problems. Mr. Badenhausen answered that there is an informal network of people who act in his role and similar roles. In terms of working for different styles of appointing authority, Mr. Badenhausen indicated a belief that people will adapt to whatever structure they are presented with. For example, the towns of Northborough and Bedford have Town Managers that are more involved with the Youth Commission-like work than the Town Coordinator's position in Westborough is.

Mr. Shea asked if, in Westborough, does Mr. Badenhausen see that things are working pretty well. Mr. Badenhausen answered that he would agree that things are working well. He sees that the Youth and Family Service function varies widely across Massachusetts. Some are more oriented toward youth activities which is more like the Recreation Commission in Westborough. Others are more counseling-centric which is how the Westborough Youth Commission has evolved.

At this point, Mr. Shea thanked Mr. Badenhausen for his time and his thoughts.

The committee then turned to the topic of the possible direction of the committee's work (as mentioned earlier in the meeting).

Mr. Vichare noted that, although there seems to be consensus that the town government is working well in terms of the services provided, perhaps there are opportunities for financial efficiencies that would save money. We could consider looking for repetitions or duplications in things like administration. This could be an area that could look at and comment upon in our final report.

Mr. Shea commented on the group's reaction to Mr. Badenhausen's discussion – especially the 'distributed processing' analogy – and found that tonight's discussion has really helped focus his thinking on the committee's progress and direction.

Mr. Vichare suggested that we could consider whether the structure of the town's government would need to change if there was more turnover in staff. He pointed out that we have seen that the current structure works well when there is little year-to-year turnover – especially with the

department heads. Mr. Senie commented that the town is about to undergo a significant transition as the department heads approach retirement age. He also commented on how it is striking that, though it works so well, there are some foggy details about how it works in some specific areas. Therefore, the committee could consider documenting how it works.

Mr. Vichare noted that, though we have discussed many boards and committees that do 'policy work', there does not seem to be a central place where the various boards' and committees' policies are kept. Mr. Arnold commented that, we could consider a recommendation of a mechanism or repository that would make it easy for an interested person or business to get all of the various policies from a known source or location. Some consideration could be given to whether the Town Clerk's office or the Public Library could be a possible place for the policies to be gathered.

Mr. Senie noted that, to him, it seems that the Board of Health and the Board of Assessors should be appointed by the Selectmen given the belief it is good for 'policy-making' boards or committees to be appointed by the Selectmen (or elected by the voters, as opposed to appointed by the Town Coordinator). Conversely, it seems that more of the administrative appointments could be made by the Town Coordinator or a Town Manager.

Mr. Arnold commented on the frequent observation that has been made about the Selectmen having too much to do by adding that, if we arrive at the conclusion that this is the case, then it would seem that one wouldn't want to give up the Selectmen's own policy-making and appointment authority over policy-making boards and committees. If anything, he would prefer that the Selectmen spend more time on developing the vision for the town and setting policies they believe will achieve that vision. This would steer us in a direction of looking at off-loading some of the Selectmen's work in other areas (such as permitting, etc.) to the appropriate administrative body.

Mr. Arnold also noted that one possible consideration for the committee's future work would be to see to try to specify a team approach to specific areas of town government that would clarify who the 'team leader' is (e.g., the Town Coordinator is the authority for the development and submission of the town's budget) and making explicit the expectation that other department heads will take direction from the 'team leader' in that area without having to change the appointing/reporting/performance appraisal structure that is in place.

Mr. Arnold also strongly agreed with Mr. Shea's earlier statement on the positive impact of Mr. Badenhause's observations – especially with regard to the town as a 'distributed processing' model. Mr. Arnold commented on the strength of the town's current structure as minimizing the chance of a single point of failure and that the current structure minimizes the harm that any single person or group can do while providing an avenue for those same individuals and groups to excel and take ownership of their responsibilities.

Mr. Senie summarized that we could study how it would work if we consider that the Board of Selectmen acts as the Chief Executive Body of the town and a Town Manager having more authority than the current role of Town Coordinator while remaining a peer of other key department heads. Mrs. Allen noted that this could be thought of as the town Chief Operating Officer and we could work on how to define that such that it worked well.

As the meeting concluded, Mr. Senie suggested that – prior to the next meeting – we could each try to write a few paragraphs about the themes that have developed from tonight’s discussion as well as earlier meetings. Then, we could use these themes as the starting point to find similarities, differences, overlaps, etc. to help guide the next meeting and the future direction of the committee’s work.

Mr. Vichare noted that we could structure this in the following manner: (1) What are the key topics we want to address, (2) for each topic, mention what we would like to change or what we would like to keep the same, and (3) explain why we would like to discuss that change (or leaving it as is).

The committee agreed to this approach and asks that each committee member prepare this kind of write-up to bring to the next meeting.

The meeting was adjourned at 9:10pm after a motion to adjourn was made by Mrs. Allen, seconded by Mr. Senie and approved with a vote of 5-0.

Submitted,  
John E. Arnold. Acting Secretary