

**Ad Hoc Government Study Committee (Westborough, MA)**  
**Minutes of November 14, 2006**

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

Chairman T. Shea called the meeting to order @ 7:07 pm.

Mr. Shea welcomed Mr. Dan Morgado, Shrewsbury Town Manager, and Mr. John Lebeaux, Chairman of the Shrewsbury Board of Selectmen.

Mr. Morgado gave a quick history of Shrewsbury's town management, and brought 3 pieces of documentation [included in these minutes in hard copy only]:

1. Appendix A of Chapter 553 – An act to establish in the town of Shrewsbury representative town government by limited town meetings;
2. Appendix B of Chapter 559 – An act establishing a selectmen-town manager form of government for the town of Shrewsbury; and
3. The official elective-appointive and administrative chart of the Town Manager Act, Chapter 559 Acts of 1953.

Mr. Morgado confirmed that the Board of Selectmen now appoints the Shrewsbury town clerk. A special act allowed both the treasurer and town clerk to be appointed. None of the current elected officials is full time. Per Mr. Morgado, state law in Massachusetts allows wide latitude to determine what is best for each town.

Ms. Allen inquired whether professionalism was an issue. Mr. Lebeaux responded that the Board of Selectmen publicly stated at that time that the board's intent was to appoint the current elected official. Ms. Casemyr asked about the CMC certification, and Mr. Lebeaux confirmed that the current town clerk holds that certification (Certified Municipal Clerk). The current town clerk has worked in town for over 20 years and brought many years of excellent knowledge and experience.

Mr. Morgado explained that the town of Shrewsbury has enjoyed great stability in town government. The town recently celebrated its 50th anniversary, and all former selectmen who still lived in Shrewsbury attended.

Mr. Morgado was previously 10 years with the town of Grafton. Mr. Morgado said Grafton's town charter – which has great provisions - was gradually enhanced, and Mr. Morgado's advice to this committee was to recommend gradual changes, to ensure their success, and that the first person in place to effect these changes must bring in all sides.

Per Mr. Morgado, the town manager is the most powerful variation of administrator, followed by the Executive Secretary, who basically does the bidding of the Board of Selectmen. The Administrative Assistant holds the least power. In Grafton, the Board of Selectmen appoints the town clerk, treasurer and counsel. The Planning Board is elected

and the Town Manager makes all other appointments, which are then confirmed – or disapproved – by the Board of Selectmen within 14 days.

The Town Manager steers the ship, explained Mr. Morgado, though it's not clearly spelled out how the department heads interact with the town manager. The Board of Selectmen spends time with candidates to go over the culture of the town, so that they are clear about the fact that all operations go through the town manager.

Ms. Allen inquired about other towns where the town manager makes most of the appointments. Mr. Morgado named Grafton, Easton. Most towns that Mr. Morgado is familiar with have had primary operations under the town manager, with policies and checks & balances resting with the Board of Selectmen.

Mr. Morgado went on to discuss evaluations, which are not a formal process but an ongoing process, to avoid paperwork nightmare. The Board of Selectmen evaluates the managers. If a person is running astray, they deal with it, and the benefit to the town is the tenure of department heads: there is little turnover. Further, most department heads are coming up through the ranks. Junior staff is encouraged to get out to other towns to get more experience, and they come back with a better perspective.

Mr. Morgado broached the subject of hiring process. The town of Shrewsbury has just taken the police chief position out of civil service, and the town has a huge focus on engineering, since the town owns its light and power plant. The process is to go through applications, select 4-5, and introduce the candidates around, to meet with the Board of Selectmen, department heads, residents, etc. An interview room is set-up, so that candidates and others can mingle. The town does not want to act unilaterally, and both department heads and the public have to have confidence in the candidate that's ultimately chosen. Mr. Morgado noted that Shrewsbury does not make use of search committees. The town is big on respecting tenure, so that people who were at one time very active in town are actively consulted for input: they have a lot of knowledge.

Ms. Allen remarked that in Westborough, many committees and boards appoint their own director. Mr. Morgado does not believe this is the best option, but that these boards should be involved. Ms. Allen followed-up with a question to find out if any state statute requires any board to hire its own director. Mr. Morgado believes that the Library Trustees appoint their director, but that in Shrewsbury, it is a joint process.

Mr. Shea next wanted to hear about the current charter, and how well it's working. Mr. Lebeaux stated that it was working quite well, as there are not too many levels of management. He has been involved a number of times in the type of discussion that Westborough is currently holding, and his perception is that Westborough's Board of Selectmen has a lot more appointing authority than the Shrewsbury Board of Selectmen.

Ms. Allen inquired about the responsibility of site plan review. Per Mr. Morgado, this falls under the Planning Board.

Mr. Arnold inquired whether the Planning Board was and should be a policy making board. Mr. Morgado believes that this depends on where a community stands in its development cycle, with regards to sub-divisions for instance, in a broader context. The Shrewsbury Planning Board deals with policy in about half its work. Shrewsbury has implemented a one-stop shop process, to deal with conservation, sewer/water, etc. Mr. Lebeaux interjected that these positions are now appointed. For the system to work well, said Mr. Morgado, it's important that policy and operations can be dealt with in tandem. It's important to not get too far ahead in the policy discussions. Lots of consultations are required. The Board of Selectmen does a lot of reading, that process cannot be cut short, and the board has to be kept informed.

Ms. Casemyr inquired about the Board of Selectmen's capacity to handle its workload. Mr. Lebeaux stated the board concentrates on policy. For instance, the selectmen are relieved to not have to hire a new chief: with the model of managers hiring their own staff, this frees up time. Together with the finance board, the Board of Selectmen is very active in the review of annual public works. They are also dealing with the fire station issue, that's now a higher priority. The board's goal is to seek information and understanding.

Mr. Morgado stressed the role of the Board of Selectmen, as elected officials, is to provide oversight and input to town affairs. Longevity on the board is important in order to provide continuity. The Board empowers committees and department heads. And the board hired a professional manager who respects this structure.

Ms. Allen inquired about the use of a Personnel Board versus an HR director. Mr. Morgado said the town of Shrewsbury has a very good personnel board that enjoys huge credibility with town employees. It is noted that the bulk of town employees in Shrewsbury are not unionized. Personnel Board members are appointed by the Moderator, and are independent. They focus on pay classification plan, internal equity across different departments, and on external equity so that Shrewsbury does not pay more than median salaries.

The discussion continued with the topic of financial management. The Town Manager influences and prepares the financial management of the community. The budget drives everything else, and if the finance committee drives the budget that's a problem. It's important to have fair hearings for all department heads to come and present to the finance committee and the Board of Selectmen. Separate warrants are not encouraged. The budget is an executive-driven process, and it includes the school budget. The Town Manager encourages the department heads to submit a budget that they think they need to operate their departments, reviews the budget and if found out of balance, provides an outlet for the department heads to revise. The Town Manager asserts that everyone who's elected understands that compromise is part of the process, and tries to avoid huddles right before town meeting. The numbers presented in the Shrewsbury warrant are the finance committee's numbers.

Mr. Lebeaux added that this process works, but that tensions are growing, as the town refused to support an override last year, and that's still an issue this year. The school department feels that they are taking it on the chin. When there are issues, the chairs of the three principal boards attempt to get them resolved. Mr. Morgado added that it is his job to bring them together. The advantage for Shrewsbury is that all departments and the town manager are in a single building.

Mr. Shea asked about Shrewsbury's Representative Town Meeting. Mr. Morgado observed that the great advantage of RTM is that it has a conscience: only 1/3 representatives change each year. There are 9 precincts in Shrewsbury, each with 24 or 27 representatives. Mr. Morgado does a mailing ahead of time to the representatives, who view themselves as legislators. One disadvantage of OTM, when 1200 people attend, is that the proceedings can be stacked, and the process breaks down or is abused. A low quorum is very important, Grafton has a 0 quorum. Per Mr. Lebeaux, town council is not the way to go, as evidenced by the cities of Worcester and Franklin. Mr. Shea asked about the timing of representatives taking office, i.e. if it'd be beneficial to have newly elected representatives take office after that year's town meeting. Mr. Morgado is not familiar with this structure. Mr. Lebeaux confirmed that the Board of Selectmen reorganizes prior to town meeting, and the chair that led the warrant process will not be presiding.

Ms. Allen inquired if there were enough people willing to be elected to RTM. Mr. Morgado said that there usually are enough people, and some precincts become more active based on the issues at hand. If a representative wishes to be re-elected, there's no need to obtain signatures. The requirement is to obtain only 10 signatures to run for election. If too few people turn in their papers, the town manager inquires about their plans. If he sees holes in some precincts, he'll take a proactive role in reaching out to people.

Ms. Casemyr asked how the town polls citizens? Mr. Morgado responded that the Board of Selectmen fills a big role in that area, and its members spend a lot of time in the community. Three board members are small business owners in the community and have many communications throughout the town. If a member works in Boston, that's not as good, as there is a need to be seen at town hall, by the employees.

Mr. Morgado said that people wanted better communication and a blind email link was enacted on the town web site. That site shows names and addresses of town officials, the Board of Selectmen does a cable TV show, the town moderator too. As Shrewsbury is quite large with 33K resident, the email facility has made a huge difference. The members of the Board of Selectmen have even listed their personal email on the town web site.

In closing Mr. Morgado recommended that the town of Westborough prioritize the four or five principles that need to be resolved, and to focus on those in order to get results.

Mr. Shea thanked Mr. Morgado and Mr. Lebeaux for their extensive comments and contributions to the committee's work.

Mr. Shea next informed the committee that Mr. Barrette has signaled his intention to resign from the committee due to newly accepted professional obligations, and that Mr. Barrette has recommended that another selectmen be appointed for the committee.

Ms. Allen then made a motion to adjourn. Mr. Arnold seconded the motion. The motion passed with a unanimous vote and the meeting was adjourned at 9:12 pm.

Submitted,  
Brigitte Casemyr, Secretary