

Ad Hoc Government Study Committee (Westborough, MA)
Minutes of September 13, 2006

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

Absent: Manohar Vichare

As directed in the charge to the Committee from the Town Moderator, G. Barrette acted as Chairman and J. Arnold acted as Secretary for this initial meeting of Westborough's Ad Hoc Government Study Committee.

G. Barrette called the meeting to order at 7:03 pm with a quorum being present. The Committee was reminded that M. Vichare had previously indicated that he would be out of town and unable to attend tonight's meeting.

Ms. Allen introduced herself to the committee since a prior commitment prevented her from attending the Sept. 6, 2006 meeting.

The Committee reviewed an organizational chart of Town departments and functions that had been developed by Maryanne Bilodeau (Assistant Town Coordinator). The Committee thanked K. Allen for bringing this to the Committee's attention and Ms. Bilodeau for the work involved in producing it. Discussion of the organizational chart led to questions about the appointing/electing authority vs. managerial reporting relationship. There were some questions about the meaning of the dotted lines and solid lines in the diagram and whether any meaning they have was applied consistently. The Committee also noticed that some areas of interest to the Government Study Committee were not present on the chart. (Ex. Chief Zoning Officer, Wiring Inspector, Plumbing Inspector, Town Counsel, Housing Authority, Cable TV Commission are not shown on the chart.)

The Committee indicated that having a complete chart of the information that it found relevant to its discussions would be useful in future meetings. Therefore, it was decided that J. Arnold would attempt to use Ms. Bilodeau's chart as a starting point and enhance it with information and relationships that are understood by the Committee from its review of the Charter and Bylaws. Mr. Arnold will begin work on the chart in October.

During the review of the existing organization chart, some mention was made of the terminology of 'strong chief' and 'weak chief'. It was explained that a 'strong chief' is a chief with authority to appoint his/her own personnel and a 'weak chief' did not have the authority to appoint her/her own personnel. The distinction is not intended to convey different management abilities but instead conveys the use of oversight in the hiring of personnel. In these terms, it was mentioned that Westborough has uses the 'strong chief' model for its Fire Chief but a 'weak chief' model for its Police Chief.

Other questions that arose during the discussion was the goal of getting a better understanding of where the Town does and does not have the authority to determine the

electing/appointing authority for town departments in terms of local rule vs. state statute. The Committee would like to investigate this further in order to work productively in areas where the Town has a choice in its organizational model.

After the discussion at the Sept. 6 meeting about the wide variety of topics that the Committee could consider, J. Arnold thought about some 'high level' questions or topics that seemed appropriate and presented them as possibilities for helping the Committee develop an approach to its work. (See attached document that was distributed at the meeting.) In discussion of this document, the following topics were highlighted:

- Understanding the similarities and differences between Town Coordinator, Town Manager, Town Administrator, and other titles. Are there different levels of responsibility and authority that the Committee should review?
- Understanding the current structure of Town government and identifying any implicit effects/relationships on the structure would seem to help the Committee understand whether there are recommendations that would improve the structure.
- In terms of reviewing what positions are elected and which are appointed, the Committee would find it useful to know statutory requirements vs. options and what regulations affect how any boards or committees are organized.

During the discussions there was also a question about whether the Town has a Chief Procurement Officer. G. Barrette and K. Allen indicated that the Town Administrator acts as Chief Procurement Officer. This led to some discussion of how this role was utilized by Town departments that are not under the direct supervision of the Selectmen and Town Coordinator.

The Committee then turned its attention to resuming the discussion from the Sept. 6 meeting about who the Committee would like to meet with during its future meetings. The discussion was interleaved with comments about questions that could be asked. Included in this discussion were the following categories of experience/expertise and people:

- Elected officials (past/present): Joe Harrington (Town Moderator), Nancy Yendriga (Town Clerk), Jim Tashjian (former Town Moderator)
- Appointed officials (past/present): Henry Danis (Town Coordinator), Dennis O'Neil (former Town Treasurer), Dexter Blois (former Town Coordinator), Glenn Parker (former Police Chief), Les Olsen (Assistant Superintendent of Schools, member of Town's financial team)
- Town Government (other towns): head of the Massachusetts Municipal Association, Dan Morgado (Shrewsbury Town Manager), Steve Madaus (has done legal work for the Town)

In terms of public comment to the Committee, the Committee discussed ideas for how to productively include members of the public in the Committee's discussion and deliberation. Some ideas that may be considered as the Committee develops its process include the following:

- Announcing specific time periods during which written comments can be submitted to the Committee.
- Conducting public hearings and community forums – especially when the recommendations are to be discussed and considered.
- Inserting a specific invitation for town employees to contribute their expertise and viewpoints to the Committee via an insert in the Town's paychecks or other communication vehicle.

The Committee reviewed the specific milestones that are expected in order to help understand the constraints that will drive the creation of a committee 'project plan'. The key milestones are (a) a report to Selectmen on the Committee's progress in January and (b) recommendations in time for inclusion in the Warrant for the May 2007 Town Meeting.

With these milestones in mind, the Committee considered the following as guidelines for its work in the coming months with the expectation that a more specific set of tasks will be discussed and decided upon during upcoming meetings:

- Now through December 2006: Information Gathering
- January through March 2007: Develop alternatives and recommendations
- April and May 2007: Prepare for and participation in Annual Town Meeting

The Committee reviewed the minutes of the September 6, 2006 meeting. K. Allen moved and C. Senie seconded a motion to approve the minutes. The motion was approved by a unanimous vote.

[G. Barrette left the meeting at 8:50 pm]

The Committee concluded the meeting with a discussion of its own organization. The Committee agreed that the primary responsibilities of the Chairman would be to run the meeting, to set an agenda for each meeting based on Committee input, and contacting/coordinating people who are invited to speak to the Committee. It was also agreed that the primary responsibilities of the Secretary of the Committee are to record the business of the Committee at its meetings and to produce draft minutes to the Committee for its approval.

Following this discussion, C. Senie made a motion to name Thomas Shea as Chairman of the Committee. The motion was seconded by B. Casemyr. The motion was approved by a unanimous vote.

T. Shea then made a motion to name Brigitte Casemyr as Secretary of the Committee. The motion was seconded by K. Allen. The motion was approved by a unanimous vote.

The meeting was adjourned at 9:11 pm. (Motion: J. Arnold; 2nd: K. Allen; unanimous vote)

Submitted,

Mtg 10/13/06

APPROVED
Sept. 20, 2006

John E. Arnold, Secretary