

**Government and Charter Study Task Force  
Meeting Summary 02/24/2010  
Selectmen's Meeting Room**

**Attendance:**

Peter Cahill  
Thomas Daly  
Margery Eramo  
Charles Flahive  
Ken Foscaldo  
Frank Jacobs  
Karen Manor Metzold  
Alice Moore  
Michael Jaillet  
Anne Marie McIntyre

**Absent**

Paul Fitzgerald

**Meeting Summary**

Meeting was recorded by Westwood Cable Access.

Meeting Summary 01/20/2010 was provided for members to review.

**Permanent Building Committee:**

Permanent Building Committee members John Cronin, Jr. and John Cummings were introduced. Mr. Cronin is the current Chairman and served on the Economic Development Advisory Board for a number of years.

There are seven committee members appointed by the Moderator. There are also ad-hoc members appointed for certain projects; they are non-voting members. The Committee works with the schools and outside organizations as well as the Town to choose the best course of action for building projects within given guidelines. Mr. Cronin stated that the Charter gives the Permanent Building Committee the necessary authority to make its decisions. Mr. Cronin likes the size of the Committee and the diversity of its members. He encourages the Moderator to continue to appoint a diverse committee and recommends stating this in the Charter.

Mr. Cronin noted that the Thurston Middle School addition was very successful: on-time and under budget. The new library and the Obed Baker House barn on High Street are other projects that the Committee is working on now.

Mr. Cronin explained that a Clerk of the Works is required by Massachusetts Law for larger construction projects. Town employees, such as Tim Walsh (ex-DPW Director) or Heath Petracca

(WPS Director of Business & Finance) report back to the Permanent Building Committee as to a project's status.

The Permanent Building Committee does not have a representative on the Long Range Planning Committee. Mr. Cronin stated that, since the Westwood Station project, the communication process between boards and committees has improved. The Committee has discussed possible long-term projects if funds were available, for example, a redesign of buildings along Route 109 such as the library, police and fire stations, etc.

Mr. Cronin commented that the support staff is wonderful. However, they might be able to use more help.

Mr. Cronin commented that volunteers in Westwood are vital to the future of the community.

Mr. Cummings stated that the Permanent Building Committee provides positive checks and balances for the Town.

Mr. Cummings supports Open Town Meeting. Mr. Cronin and Mr. Cummings concurred that the Moderator's term should be increased to three years.

Mr. Cummings mentioned that petitioners should be afforded an opportunity to make edits or changes to petition articles before Town Meeting. On the size of the Board of Selectmen, he would consider increasing the number of members; we're asking a lot of three people.

### **Discussion on Proposed Warrant Article**

Mr. Cahill presented a draft of the proposed warrant language for a fall Town Meeting. A discussion ensued among the members about the proposed article. The members agreed that there has been recurring expression of a need for a second Town Meeting. Mr. Cahill tabled the discussion to meet with the Planning Board members that had arrived.

### **Planning Board**

Members Steven Olanoff, Chairman, Jack Wiggin and Nora Loughnane, Town Planner, were introduced.

The Planning Board operates under M.G. L. Chapter 40A that defines the Planning Board's responsibilities. Mr. Olanoff noted that, according to the Charter, the Planning Board is responsible for the general, physical, and environmental planning of the Town. A public record shall be maintained for all proceedings and decisions. The Planning Board governs all town zoning, subdivisions, and special permits. Ms. Loughnane stated that the Board spends most of its time on site plan review matters for commercial and industrial structures.

Mr. Olanoff explained that the completion of the Comprehensive Plan is the responsibility of the Planning Board. A consultant is usually hired to undertake this project which can cost \$50,000 to \$100,000 to complete. Mr. Olanoff referred to the Plan completed ten years ago; topics addressed included housing, economy, general planning, and town facilities.

The Planning Board gets very involved in housing and Chapter 40B (affordable housing) issues. The Selectmen are in charge of existing roads while the Planning Board monitors new road development.

Nora Loughnane is the part-time Town Planner and Janice Barba is the Land Use Assistant.

Mr. Olanoff expressed concern about the Town Engineer's position. This person works partially for the Department of Public Works and partially for the Planning Board. The Planning Board relies heavily on the Town Engineer's advice regarding new subdivisions, parking lot drainage, etc. The Planning Board also works extensively with Town Counsel for legal writing, interpretations, revising zoning bylaw, etc. The Planning Board sponsors zoning bylaw articles at Town Meeting.

Mr. Olanoff commented that the Sewer Commission often works on its own resulting in the installation of more sewers and enabling more development ( in a sense - planning). Mr. Olanoff recommended that the Sewer Commission be eliminated because the goal to sewer the town has been completed. Mr. Olanoff commented that the three people filling these elected positions could serve the town in other ways. The Department of Public Works and the Town Engineer could fulfill any of the Sewer Commission's current responsibilities.

Mr. Olanoff explained that there are certain special permit requirements specifying that four of the five members must be in favor of the project. If one member leaves the board, then all four need to vote in favor (super majority). Associate members were considered in the past, and Mr. Olanoff commented that associate members would have been useful during the Westwood Station permitting process, but that it can present certain challenges.

Mr. Olanoff stated that it is important for the Planning Board to remain elected, but that a five-year term may be better than the current three-year term.

Mr. Olanoff said that the information about the Planning Board in the Charter should remain general and not be too specific. He did not feel that it was critical to have two Town Meetings each year. In general, it is difficult for the Planning Board to prepare zoning articles in less than a year. Mr. Wiggin concurred. Mr. Wiggin also noted that there would be merit to placing zoning articles earlier in the Warrant as many of these articles are important.

Mr. Olanoff questioned the role of the Finance Commission and whether the Finance Commission should have the authority to make recommendations on zoning issues. He also commented that the Finance Commission's name may be a misnomer and suggested renaming the Commission to more accurately reflect its duties.

Mr. Wiggin recommended that the Charter should state a timeframe by which the Planning Board should complete a revised Comprehensive Plan - possibly every ten years. A current Plan results in improved direction and coordination among boards and commissions. In addition, the likelihood of being considered and receiving grants is increased.

Mike Jaillet pointed out that the Town Planner position is relatively new and not in the current Charter.

Mr. Olanoff stated that, in some towns, the staff is cross-trained to assist residents with permits, town building processes, etc., at one central location. Ms. Loughnane followed up that the Land Use Committee now fulfills that role informally. She also affirmed that the staffs from the Conservation

Commission, Board of Health, Planning Board and the Permanent Building Committee meet monthly to discuss issues and perform coordination duties for all boards. Janice Barba, the Land Use Administrator at Carby Street, is able to help residents in all those departments if the need arises.

Mr. Wiggin stated that a three-member Board of Selectmen is not a problem. Mr. Olanoff doesn't see a problem with three but feels that there are advantages to having a five-member board particularly with providing new and differing views.

Mr. Olanoff questioned if the Treasurer and Tax Collector positions should be elected. Also, should these positions be combined into one for efficiency? He commented that the people in these positions, in the past, have liked their jobs, and hence they have been effective. He further questioned why some positions are elected and suggested that the Selectmen appoint people to the positions if it relates to the operation of the Town.

Mr. Olanoff discussed the Moderator's position and term. He questioned what other towns do for this position. In Westwood, few people have run over the years – and often unopposed. He also questioned if the Tree Warden should be elected. Per State law, the Town needs a certified arborist for this position. Lastly, Mr. Olanoff recommended that the Conservation Commission have a management plan for each of its properties to enforce the protective provisions.

#### **Discussion on Proposed Warrant Article**

Mr. Cahill presented a draft of proposed warrant language for a fall Town Meeting based upon a recurring expression of a need for a second Town Meeting. The Task Force decided that there is due diligence work remaining before any articles can be brought before this year's Town Meeting. The consensus was that the Task Force should not submit individual articles at this time but instead prepare a comprehensive report including all findings and recommendations to the Board of Selectmen.

#### **Miscellaneous**

Mr. Foscaldo suggested that, before the Task Force begins to make specific Charter revisions, we identify any State statutes that require or prohibit certain Charter provisions. Paul Fitzgerald or Marilyn Contreas may have this information already.

Mike Jaillet mentioned that the Task Force has a budget for next year. Consultants are available who can provide assistance at a relatively low cost.

Next Meetings:

March 3 at 7:30 p.m.

March 24 at 7:00 p.m.