

**Government and Charter Study Task Force  
Meeting Summary 12/16/2009  
Selectmen's Meeting Room**

**Attendance:**

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

**Meeting Summary**

Approval of Meeting Summary 12/02/2009

Introduction of School Board Committee members: Barbara Delisle, Ellen Mason, Jack O'Brien and Superintendent John Antonucci

**Significant Points presented by School Board Committee and Superintendent Antonucci**

**Committee Overview**

The School Committee is a five member board with three year terms, uncompensated. The Committee agreed that five members works well and does not recommend a change. It was noted that it has been nine years since the last contested race for a school committee position.

Three specific functions of the committee:

- 1.) Hire/fire the superintendent
- 2.) School Budget
- 3.) Establish policies for schools. Currently in the process of reviewing the policy book guided by state and federal mandates.

## **BUDGET**

The School Committee and Supt. Antonucci voiced their concern of the role of the Finance Commission with respect to the School Committee's budget. The committee felt that the Fin Com's role is not clearly defined and their level of inquiry can be onerous and personality based.

Supt. Antonucci stated that the budget consumes the School Committee. He stressed on several occasions the need for flexibility in presentation of their budget to Town Meeting. The School Committee basically presents an assumption-based budget at Town Meeting due to the timing of the passage of the state budget.

## **TOWN MEETING**

The committee felt a Town Meeting held later in the year and or two Town meetings (spring and fall) would be helpful for them to present a more realistic budget to Town Meeting. Again, the idea of flexibility was stressed.

## **TERM LIMITS**

A brief discussion of term limits transpired. The school committee generally felt it took at least a couple of years to become acclimated and another few years to adequately perform their functions on the committee. The committee benefits from the institutional history of longer serving members. Term limits were not formally endorsed nor rejected by the committee.

## **OTHER**

Completed questionnaires were submitted and emailed.

### **Significant points presented by Treasurer Jim Gavin**

#### **Treasurer's Office Overview**

The Treasurer is elected to a three year term. This is a part time position which Mr. Gavin feels is a value added role because you receive expertise in finance with an outside perspective and no agenda other than to focus on the needs of Westwood. Feels it is important to keep town treasurer an elected position. While he believed that the position should include some experiential requirements, it's hard to do so with an elected position. So far, Mr. Gavin feels that people only run for the position if he/she has the qualifications.

The office has custody of all the town money, manages, invests, monitors funds, tax collection, payroll, debt management and works with financial advisors. The office is staffed with the Assistant Treasurer and a clerical staff person. Treasurer Gavin believes his office is structurally sound and working well.

There is no direct interaction with Fin Com or the Assessor's office and the Treasurer's office.

The office has a great working relationship with Pam Dukeman, the Finance Director, on day to day fiscal operations and responsibilities. Ms. Dukeman acts as a liaison between the treasurer's office

and Fin Com. Treasurer Gavin believes that the Finance Director function is working well, but the role is not clearly defined and needs to be.

## **TOWN MEETING**

The Treasurer felt that an extra Town Meeting would be helpful: in the spring, address the financial issues and in the fall, policy and planning issues. He felt there are too many articles on the warrant and that attendees are less focused on the key issues.

Treasurer Gavin also felt that flexibility would be essential. It would be helpful to be able to push an issue back to fall if not ready in the spring.

## **OTHER**

Treasurer Gavin said he would take a look at the audit as described in the Charter and get back to the Task Force with his thoughts.

Treasurer Gavin will email his notes.

### **Significant points presented by Moderator Anthony Antonellis**

#### **Moderator's Office Overview**

Moderator Antonellis handed out an article from the book Town Meeting Time: A Handbook of Parliamentary Law entitled *The History of Town Meeting* to each Task Force member.

Mr. Antonellis stated that the number one job as moderator is to actively recruit competent people to serve on town committees. He believed that this should be the number two job for the Board of Selectmen.

The Moderator is the only elected official with a one year term. Mr. Antonellis was fine with this and had no preference of a one or three year term.

The Moderator appoints three committees:

- 1.) Finance Commission: 15 members overlapping 3 year terms. He feels Fin Comm is the most important commission in town because this committee evaluates and makes recommendations on the articles on town warrant.
- 2.) Permanent Building Committee: 7 members. Feels this is a very arduous committee to serve on. The committee now is a very good mix of expertise. There are numerous Ad Hoc committees.
- 3.) Personnel Board: 5 members, 3 year terms. A quiet yet important role with tremendous responsibility, they serve as a liaison to Board of Selectmen on labor issues. Added staff four years ago which was definitely needed and may need more staffing with increasing regulations. More intense training is also required today.

## **TOWN MEETING**

A Town Meeting held later (June) would be a good idea for school budget and overrides. Felt that a Special Town Meeting would be better than holding two Town Meetings. People will attend "Special" rather than another meeting that is dedicated to housekeeping issues. Moderator Antonellis likes the Town Meeting: he thinks it works well and prefers it over Representative Town Meeting which can become too political.

Moderator Antonellis prefers to have a quorum. He would not increase the amount needed to have a quorum, although he feels a zero quorum would probably get people to the meeting on time. He would need to think more on this idea.

## **BORD OF SELECTMEN**

Moderator Antonellis feels that a three member board is less political than a five member board. He also feels that precinct-based selectmen may divide the town rather than unite it as each would be more concerned with their own precinct as opposed to the best interest of the town.

## **TERM LIMITS**

Feels that there is an advantage to have people with an historical and working knowledge of the office, yet it is good to get new people. Did not fully support nor reject the idea.

## **OTHER**

Mr. Antonellis will order Town Meeting books for Task Force.

Mr. Antonellis will email his notes

A brief Discussion on the speakers and their points took place after guests left.

The Board of Selectmen will attend the meeting scheduled on January 20, 2010.

A vote was taken and approved the scheduling of the Public Forum for February 3, 2010.

Mike Jaillet reminded the members that Monday January 4<sup>th</sup> is the close of the warrant and to have letter requesting a placeholder for the articles.

Motion to adjourn the meeting.

**\*\*COMPLETE RECORDED VERSION OF MEETING AVAILABLE ON TASK FORCE NETWORK\*\***