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TOWN CLERK

TOWN MEETING REVIEW COMMITTEE

Thursday, January 9, 2020 – Town Hall, East Room (7:00pm) 2020 FEB 26 A 8:37

MINUTES

FAIRHAVEN,
MASS.

The Meeting was called to order at 7:02pm.

Members present:

Mark Sylvia, Town Moderator (Chair)
Chris Bunnell, Assistant Town Moderator
Brian Bowcock, Precinct Chair (Pct 1)
Eleanor Chew (Pct 2)
Sean Powers, Precinct Chair (Pct 3)
Paul Foster, Precinct Chair (Pct 4)

Others present:

Nicole Potter, Director of Technology and Finance
Derek Frates, Director of Fairhaven Television
Barbara Acksen, Chair – Cable Advisory Committee

The Committee took up the third review topic, technology. Members of the committee and invited guests introduced themselves.

Among the technology issues raised by committee members and invited guests were:

- a. Sound including hearing presenters and use by those speaking
- b. Difficulty viewing presentations on the screen (also including accessibility issues such as colors, lighting)
- c. Lack of consistency for presentations made to Town Meeting
- d. Presentation tools (e.g. LCD projector placement and operation)
- e. Lack of notification tools (email, Reverse 911)
- f. Potential for automatic voting

SOUND AND VIEWING PRESENTATIONS

Derek Frates commented that as it relates to those viewing Town Meeting on government access, the feedback on picture and sound quality as well ability to clearly view the presentations has been very positive.

In terms of those at Town Meeting, a number of Committee members commented on the challenges related to sound, picture and presentations.

- Viewing the presentations from the screen on stage is difficult from various locations on Town Meeting floor. It is also the case that the officials on the stage and the lighting may impact the ability of town meeting members to see presentations clearly.
- Some Committee members expressed concern about the sound either for themselves or other town meeting members that have expressed difficulty in hearing to them.
- As it relates to presentations, some concerns expressed were that the presentations may only be provided the day of town meeting and there is no opportunity to coordinate on how the presentation materials will be managed.

Nicole Potter commented that, as it relates to the screen, there is a substantial cost to putting a new screen at the same size. Her thought to address picture quality is to have a projector permanently installed in the Silveira Auditorium. **She is having an electrician install a higher quality projector in the projector room to improve picture quality. We can see how that works and consider alternatives if it does not improve the situation.**

Chris Bunnell suggested having a screen pointed towards the stage for officials to view so they don't have to turn around to see what is on the screen. **Nicole Potter indicated that a consultant will be coming in to evaluate technology and sound needs and could consider that.**

Derek Frates indicated that in terms of sound, David Fortin provides full sound support at Town Meeting including equipment, speaker equipment. Nicole will ask the consultant to look at the existing sound equipment in the auditorium.

Barbara Acksen pointed out that some times the sound issue is related to how close speakers stand next to the microphone. **Reminding speakers to stand close to the microphone will help.**

LACK OF CONSISTENCY FOR PRESENTATIONS AND PRESENTATION TOOLS

Nicole also commented on powerpoint presentations. **She suggested that it would be helpful to have a deadline for when presentations are submitted and then have Town staff meet with presenters to go through the material to coordinate.**

Sean Powers suggested that the Town develop a standard template for presenters to use for consistency and to ensure that accessibility issues (colors, font sizes etc...) are addressed.

Derek Frates suggested that it would be helpful to do practice runs with presenters in advance to familiarize them with the equipment, timing, etc.

Nicole Potter commented that there are number of tools to use for presentations including powerpoint, Google Earth/Google Maps that will help standardize presentations. She will work with Erin Costa on her team to develop templates and provide assistance. The Chair

will work with that team on deadlines, schedule etc. Erin will also help with social media and content.

ACCESSIBILITY

As it relates to overall accessibility, Brian Bowcock pointed out that it is important to ensure we consider accessibility improves related to sound, visual aids, colors etc.

The Chair suggested conferring with the Commission on Disabilities for guidance/recommendations.

NOTIFICATION TOOLS

The Committee discussed technology to communicate with Town Meeting members prior to, during and after Town Meeting. One tool is Reverse 911 – notifying Town Meeting members of meetings via the Reverse 911 system. **The Chair will discuss this further with the Town’s technology team and the Town Clerk.**

Nicole Potter suggested that we discuss some of these topics with the Media and Communications Coordinator for the Town/Schools Erin Costa.

WEBSITES

The Chair walked through the Town Moderator website and encouraged members of the Committee to review it and provide feedback on ways to improve it.

Derek Frates walked through the Fairhaven TV site.

SOCIAL MEDIA

Nicole Potter talked about the efforts the Town/School Department have been making on social media/providing content – Erin Costa can assist with all of this.

AUTOMATIC VOTING

The Chair shared information with the Committee on communities that use automatic voting for their Town Meetings. Several municipalities have had a good experience with automatic voting but there have been other examples where there have been challenges.

Among the benefits of automatic voting are (a) ensuring accuracy in vote counts, (b) reducing the time for vote counts, (c) allowing for roll call votes, (d) prevention of potential voting fraud, (e) real time attendance/quorum verification.

Committees that the Committee reviewed were: Belmont, Chelmsford, Manchester-By-The-Sea, Milford, Plymouth, Sandwich, Wayland and Westborough.

In most cases, Town Meetings in those towns authorized a committee to review the topic/subject of automatic voting.

Generally the same voting technology is used in these communities – hand held voting devices that are provided to each town meeting member as they check in. In some cases the devices are on lanyards.

Paul Foster commented on the benefits of automatic voting and the possibility of setting up a committee to review the issue. He suggested we should include the technology team in the discussions.

Eleanor Chew asked if we could do the review ourselves. The Chair suggested we will need other town officials involved to make the decision (Town Counsel, Town Clerk, Technology Team).

Brian Bowcock indicated that lanyards in and of themselves are good tools to distinguish between town meeting members and may be something to consider.

The Committee will consider whether to recommend that Town Meeting appoint a committee to investigate automatic voting.

The next meeting is scheduled for Thursday, January 23, 2020 at 7pm in the Auditorium at Town Hall. The topic of discussion will be Engagement.

The meeting was adjourned at 8:30pm.