

TOWN GOVERNMENT STUDY COMMITTEE

Thursday, August 1, 2013 - Minutes

6:00 p.m.

BPW Meeting Room

Present: Chairperson: Phil Washko, Vice Chair: Bernie Roderick, Eric Dawicki, Dick Douglass, Dan Freitas, Andy Jones, Linda Meredith, and Pattie Pacella

Meeting called to order by the Chairperson at 6:05 p.m.

AGENDA:

- **Recording Disclaimer:** Chairperson, Phil Washko read a disclaimer for recording
- **Review/approve minutes from 7/25/13 Meeting:**

Andy Jones made a motion to approve the minutes of 7/25/13 and was seconded by Bernie Roderick. The motion passed unanimously.

Chairman, Phil Washko announced this was a Special Meeting.

- **Introduction of Joe Markarian from MA Department of Revenue – Presentation/Review of Financial Management Review Report**

The Board introduced themselves to Joe Markarian; who then explained that he was active in his own hometown and is the current Town Moderator. He said that his town had a Study Committee and as a result a Charter and additional subcommittees were formed.

Most importantly to the Board: be objective, open minded, thorough in work process & try to be unanimous.

-Think about appetite of Town Community

-Interviewing the people who are day to day (Exec. Secretary/Finance Director, etc)

-It's important to understand the NOW (who/what)

-Pretty favorable report

-How did we get here? How do we sustain it?

-Jeff Osuch functions as a Town Administrator not as Executive Secretary

-In eyes of public, what is the difference between Town Administrator & Executive Secretary?

-Not many By-Laws in Fairhaven for Executive Secretary

-No Charter in Fairhaven

-Important to understand Town Administrator in other towns

-Even if you didn't change anything else, change the name from Exec. Secretary to Town Administrator (compared what 'types' of executive secretaries would be applying in future vs. the management skills of what you are looking for in a "Town Administrator")

-In review of other Mass. Towns in the \$52 million budget realm, Fairhaven is only one working with an Executive Secretary & not a Town Administrator.

What is a charter?

--Has force of law. Stable. Voted by people in Town. Continuity. Not real detailed – Structure government among people. General. (By-Laws less strict)

2 Ways to adopt Charter:

--Legislative – Special Act – Draft charter, voted on & sent to legislation for approval.

--% of Voters – 9 Member Charter Commission approx 2 year process

Dick Douglass asked about talking to Head Hunters available for Town Managers/Administrator's?

Joe responded it wouldn't be a bad idea. Colin Institute of UMass Boston

What should the responsibilities be for a Town Manager/Administrator?

What's the most important part of a TM job? Most appealing?

Phil Washko said that there was some momentum to go to a Town Manager, if proposing change.

Joe suggested going on-line and checking out different TM responsibilities.

Town Manager/Administrator is about Management.

Eric Dawicki suggested it would be good for the Committee to visit with other Town Managers.

Joe advised to just get the permission from other towns Board of Selectman to speak to their Town Managers/Administrators.

Joe answered some of the questions asked by him in a previous email. Specifically a question was asked about Jeff Osuch, if he was 47 & in good health, would it still be a question to put in a Town Manager?

--Joe answered this saying, it wasn't about Jeff Osuch directly; but more about a job description.

Phil Washko asked about a big part of the DOR report was elimination of DPW & asked Joe to elaborate.

--DPW is a big budget

--Not a good structure; Elected BPW board feels independent as elected

--Setting priorities = \$\$

--DPW Superintendent should be tied in with Town Manager

--How good is your superintendent?

Phil Washko asked, how common is a DPW advisory board?

--Not common but is a validation thru Townspeople.

Joe Markarian went on:

--Important Relationships/Accountability

--More important that the Planning Director and Health Agent, etc. report to a Central Management Authority on a Day to Day basis.

--Appointed vs. Elected

--Appointed you get talent, cohesive working people; experienced, recruit

While Elected – restricted to pool of Town people.

3 vs. 5 Selectman –

- suggested it would be best to talk to communities that have made the change
- some would say better representation with 5 vs. 3; others would say more conflict
- most all communities Selectman are part time.

Dan Freitas asked about what if BPW eliminated. Who would resolve?

Joe suggested decision making structure to resolve issues; because you still want government to be responsive.

In reference to Dick's metric questions/quantitative questions. There are some out there. City Stack – Mechanism to check performance. (No one likes statistics)

Phil Washko asked about statics among other towns just to get information?

- There is databank – Comparison Communities – can look at Data – can help identify criteria; all on-line. He can help get info back to Phil.

Dick Douglass asked about statistics for a town, say among business failures vs. new businesses?

Joe said he wasn't sure if those types of statistics would piece up enough information to give you a good picture of your town.

Dan Freitas brought up discussion regarding "Strong" Fire Chief, whereas Fire Chief does hiring, etc. and has ultimate authority. Vs. Chief of Police, where the Selectman choose who gets hired, etc.

Other thoughts:

- Job Descriptions are essential. Systematic
- Department Performance

--Department Heads are in better position to hire – to get people to work for them; they know what the work is directly.

Eric Dawicki agreed, it's been perception of our town, "Fairhaven Townies" rule. Good Practice is needed; Good Government = Management Model

For long range planning – Capital Improvement Committee

- Usually pushes out a 5 year plan
- Special Purpose Stabilization Fund (for bldg & repair, vehicles & replacement)
- You give the committee the authority- Priority, Objective. Criteria

Brief discussion on regionalization & sharing costs

Discussion on our current Finance Committee:

- Usually appointed by BOS or Moderator
- with ours, not sure if people who are serving really want to..
- 13 members is Huge.. can get bogged down.
- Finance Committee should be "Watchdogs" – Credibility.
- Bigger issues: Debt Ratio? Budget-Consistent? Global higher issues.

Appointing authority with a "job" description – so Committee understands their role.

Dick Douglas asked if most of the colleges who help with surveys, do it pro-bono?

Joe said they probably do not, and do charge something. (Clark's & Umass)

Joe discussed the process of the Committee's proposal to Town Meeting for changes; Special Act Charter. Special Act need not be a Charter

Discussion on Personnel Board:

- If Town Manager/Administrator going to handle, don't really need a personnel board.
- Personnel Policies should be a By-Law – be in Charter

Phil Washko asked how does the Committee explain to some what makes DOR come into our town & give their review? (to the skeptical in town)

- they have the experience, only deal with Towns & Cities
- Non Controversial; Financial Management Review from an objective eye
- It's only recommendations!

Everyone thanked Joe Markarian for coming in.

The Committee had further discussions/thoughts:

Linda M. suggested hearing from people in Town. She also suggested two people in town who would be good resources, current or ex-Town Moderators.

Bernie R. suggests that everyone just take time to digest all that was reviewed this evening.

Eric suggested maybe reaching out to Mattapoisett Town Manager as he has experience from Dartmouth and now Mattapoisett. He may be a good resource.

It was suggested to really take a meeting to Plan & Discuss questions for our own interviews of Department Heads; how we were going to go about doing that.

Charter – standards/continuity

Charter Commission

Interviewing Process – how to?

- **Reviewed Action Items from 7/25 Meeting**

- #3 Phil still needs to go in front of Board of Selectman for "Special Municipal Employees"
- #8 Phil will contact Mark Sylvia about appointing another member as a non-voting member. Still a few people who need to submit or ask Eileen Lowney about their certificates.

- **Review Action Items for Next Meeting**

ACTION #1: Everyone to write down ideas how interviews can be achieved for specifically Town Employees..WHO? HOW?

Brief discussion on if meeting venue will be changed to FHS Library? Is there opportunity to meet at another room at Town Hall (banquet or East Room). **ACTION #2:** Bernie Roderick agreed to take this over, in emailing Meghan (cable access person) or Town Hall to ask availability.

Next Meeting: Thursday, August 8, 2013

Andy Jones made a motion to adjourn and was seconded by Linda Meredith. The motion was unanimous.

Meeting adjourned at 8:15 p.m.

Respectively submitted,

Patricia A. Pacella

ACTION ITEMS
7/25/13

#1: **Phil** to go in front of the Selectboard to ask they designate this Committee as Special Municipal Employees. (continued from 7/25/13 Action Items)

#2: **Phil** to question Mark Sylvia on status of non voting member to be appointed.

ACTION ITEMS
8/1/13

#1: **Everyone** come back with some ideas on HOW? WHO? To interview .. town specific employees.

#2: **Bernie** to email Meghan (Cable Access coordinator) and/or Town Hall representative to verify options at Town Hall for open meeting rooms on Thursdays.

Thank you.