

Town Government Study Committee
Minutes
April 7, 2011

The meeting was called to order by the chairman at 7:04 pm

Members present: Ken Stevens, Keith Elder, Fran Hoeg, Mary O'Donnell, Bob Ward, Wendell Chamberlain, Richard Dennehy,

Members absent: Paul Tura

On a motion by Mary O'Donnell, seconded by Fran Hoeg, the minutes of March 17, 2011 were approved as written. Vote: 7 yes, 0 no, 1 abstention

CHAIRMAN'S REPORT:

The TGSC article passed at Town Meeting. We will now have to report to Town Meeting in 2012.

The next meeting will be with the Board of Health.

REVIEW AND DISCUSSION OF MEETINGS HELD FROM JANUARY 20TH TO MARCH 3RD:

A discussion took place regarding Enterprise Funds and DPW. The following points were made:

- Bob Ward- If a DPW is in place, there is concern that dump fees could go for sewer capital plans
- People do not always think about Enterprise Funds when voting in officials
- Mary O'Donnell- Should someone "watch over" the Enterprise funds and their use. Who has the "last say" on the use of the funds.
- Richard Dennehy- What was the intent when Enterprise Funds were created versus what the fund is today. Enterprise funds are not available for the general use of the Town when needed.
- Fran Hoeg- Could the Water department enterprise fund also be a 75/25 split similar to the new green energy enterprise fund?
- Jean Landis Naumann- Enterprise funds do serve an important purpose. You can set aside monies for capital needs. Funds are well managed and supervised. An enterprise fund for the Transfer Station will be a good idea. Enterprise funds allow for capital expenditures. Capital equipment purchases have been set aside because of poor finances.
- Richard Dennehy- The water department has requirements that are more restrictive than other communities.
- Wendell Chamberlain- There should be a functional alignment and centralized governance of public works/utilities. If the Town does not grow we should plan for downsizing.
- Bob Ward- Without a capital plan scrutinized by an outside entity there is a question of what the departments are doing with their surplus. After monies are used for expenditures, excess should go to the Town
- Jean Landis Naumann- Expenditures have to be approved by Town Meeting. Excess should go to reduce rates, and not back to the Town.
- Keith Elder- Emergencies have to be addressed immediately. Monies are being used for the benefit of the rate payers. By going to a DPW will we run departments with staffing levels that are barebones? We presently have people doing everything in streets, trees and parks. If we have a DPW will there be issues with the union regarding job descriptions?
- Ken Stevens- personally is in favor of a DPW. We should have a Town Engineer to manage the DPW
- Mary O'Donnell- We presently spend a lot on engineering
- Keith Elder- Should we talk about planning and zoning boards next. Does this dovetail with our DPW discussion?
- Jean Landis Naumann suggested that we look at the Master Plan document

Discussion also took place regarding maintaining a Town Planner:

- Richard Dennehy said that we should look at a Town Engineer instead of a Town Planner
- Fran Hoeg spoke in favor of retaining a Town Planner position
- Mary O'Donnell asked if there is a supervisor of the Town Planner

- Keith Elder stated that we talk about adding positions, but where would we cut?
- Bob Ward stated that if we added up all of the money being spent on outside engineers could that amount support a Town Engineer position? The position should be revenue neutral
- Jean Landis Naumann stated that there are many different types of engineers that are required. We would need financial figures and types of services to determine if the position is feasible and could pay for itself.
- Ken Stevens-If we had a DPW, the DPW Commissioners could look at engineering fees

On a motion by Mary O'Donnell, seconded by Bob Ward, it was moved and voted to ask the Town Accountant to provide us with costs and names of engineering firms by department used in the past year. Vote was unanimous.

OTHER BUSINESS:

Next steps for the Committee will be to review the Master Plan and prepare to discuss at the next meeting

Jean Landis Naumann was questioning the breakdown by precinct of people who attended Town Meeting. On a motion by Ken Stevens, seconded by Mary O'Donnell, it was moved and voted to ask the Town Clerk for a breakdown by precinct of attendance at Town Meeting. Vote was unanimous

Discussion took place regarding the report of the TGSC:

- Bob Ward asked when the report should be ready for Committee review. Jean Landis Naumann suggested a date of March 2012
- Ken Stevens requested that the report include a "blueprint" for what happens next.
- Jean Landis Naumann also suggested that we should include recommendations for dates of future Town Elections in our report. The present Town Election always takes place during school vacation weeks.

On a Motion by Richard Dennehy, seconded by Mary O'Donnell, it was moved and voted unanimously to adjourn at 8:30 pm.