

**Town Government Study Committee
Minutes
December 16, 2010
7:00 p.m.**

The meeting was called to order by the Chairman at 7:00 p.m.

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

On a **motion by Bob Ward**, seconded by Mary O'Donnell **the minutes of December 2,2010 were approved as written. Vote 7 yes, 1 abstention**

CHAIRMAN'S REPORT:

Wendell Chamberlain discussed an online report about government studies. A common theme in all of the studies is that change is difficult. The Committee was encouraged to read the online report.

Open vs. Representative Town Meeting:

Richard Dennehy asked if the warrant can be published to allow people to respond online to representatives resulting in a combination open/representative town meeting.

Bob Ward stated that using technology could be a useful tool in a representative form of Town meeting, as people do not necessarily want to lose their right to vote.

Wendell Chamberlain stated that representative form of Town meeting would need to be studied thoroughly in order to insure that it is done properly.

Mary O'Donnell: originally committed to going to a representative form of town meeting, but now sees the growth and good use for open town meeting. Why would we want to take away the vote from all citizens? What can we do to make more people get involved in the open town meeting process?

Fran Hoeg: Would like to keep the present system of open town meeting.

Richard Dennehy: Open town meeting does not work. Committee is here to stimulate change. We should at least try representative town meeting.

Ken Stevens: Town meeting is dysfunctional because people only come for the big issues. Representative government works on the state and federal level. We should try it locally.

Paul Tura: Attendance at town meeting is stimulated when people know/ have knowledge of the articles that are to be discussed. Preparation of articles is an issue.

Wendell Chamberlain: Should there be a nonbinding ballot question to see if the community would like to abolish open town meeting and replace it with representative?

Jean Landis Naumann: The committee should seriously consider recommending representative town meeting. Elected reps take their role very seriously. The meeting becomes more deliberative and less political. People can be educated prior to the meeting. We are not a "quaint village" anymore and now is the time for change. It will take away the direct vote from the people, but they don't come and vote now. The town is basically governed by the 120 people who come to the meeting. Representative meeting will make the town run more effectively and efficiently.

Richard Dennehy: We need to take a rudimentary step towards a representative town meeting.

Fran Hoeg and Keith Elder both spoke about issues with the flow of information prior to town meeting and issues with confusion regarding the written articles on the warrant.

Bob Ward: We should make recommendations regarding the flow of information, clear deadlines, clearly written articles, pro/ con arguments posted prior to town meeting. Guidelines need to be set for the TM process.

Keith Elder: Is it possible to have OTM and also have precinct captains who could hold informational meetings prior to OTM?

Richard Dennehy: We need RTM because times have changed. People do not come to the meetings like they used to.

Mary O'Donnell: If people are elected to RTM positions they will show up.

On a motion by Richard Dennehy, seconded by Robert Ward, it was **voted** that the TGSC recommend that Kingston change to a Representative Town Meeting and that the committee will further explore and make recommendations as to implementation of this representative form of government. **The motion was approved on a 7 yes, 2 no vote.** Voting in the affirmative: Dennehy, Ward, Elder, O'Donnell, Stevens, Landis Naumann, Chamberlain. Voting no: Hoeg, Tura

OVERSIGHT OF PROPERTIES:

The committee had a discussion on oversight of town properties. Questions that arose were:

- Are records on these properties being maintained and are they accurate?
- Is this a job for the Town Administrator?
- Can one person maintain and oversee the properties?
- Can buildings be rehabbed by outside groups?
- Why isn't the Committee on building maintenance funded? Town meeting has never funded the permanent building committee.
- Could a DPW maintain buildings?

The committee concluded that a DPW could be responsible for maintenance of buildings. A Permanent Building Committee would be advisory to the DPW. The Building Inspector would serve on the Permanent Building Committee.

OTHER BUSINESS:

Conflict of interest law must be acknowledged. Committee members can send an email to the Town Clerk

On a motion by Richard Dennehy, seconded by Keith Elder, the committee voted to adjourn at 8:55 p.m.. The vote was unanimous.