

Minutes
Town Government Study Committee
June 16, 2011
7:00 p.m.
Kingston Town House Room 203

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

Members present: Paul Tura, Bob Ward, Ken Stevens, Jean Landis Naumann, Frances Botelho-Hoeg, Wendell Chamberlain, Richard Dennehy

Members absent: Mary O'Donnell

On a motion by Jean Landis Naumann, seconded by Paul Tura, the minutes of June 2, 2011 were accepted as amended (to include mention that the job description for Health Agent can be found on the MA Board of Health website, add statutory authority, and fix typo of "mottled" to "modeled"). The vote was unanimous.

CHAIRMAN'S REPORT:

The following items were in the Chairman's Report:

- The schedule for future meetings with Town Departments was reviewed. The Economic Development Committee will be added to these meetings.
- Paul Tura asked that we consider asking the BOS for funds to have a professional writer write our report. He suggests that this will ensure continuity.
- Ken Stevens stated that we should request funds for printing of reports. Jean Landis Naumann stated that we can request funds from reserve funds, but we would need to know what we want and solicit the FinCom. She also stated that if we want to put any articles on the Warrant they would need to be ready by January 1, 2012.
- Ken Stevens suggested that we look at the MMA website as they have writers listed on that site who can write this type of report.

REVIEW AND DISCUSSION OF PREVIOUS MEETINGS:

The following comments were made during the discussion of the meetings held with the BOH and the Police Chief:

Board of Health:

- Keith Elder- structurally it appears that the BOH operates on their own with no interaction with the Town Administrator
- Jean Landis Naumann- the BOS can require meetings between BOH and the TA
- Bob Ward- How would we structure the chain of command to allow for department meetings with the Town Administrator?
- Fran Hoeg-Departments need solid job descriptions, professional development and evaluations
- Wendell Chamberlain- BOH can be appointed and requirements can be set for people who sit on the Board.
- Bob Ward- That would require well written job descriptions for the staff.
- The Committee is in agreement that job descriptions for staff need to be implemented and reviews should take place
- Paul Tura discussed the issue of death certificates being taken over by the BOH. That was a task the BOH used to perform until the Town Clerk asked to take it over in the 1980's. Now it is back with the BOH. He also questioned how did the work load increase now that the Town is sewerred, and building permits are down. He stated that these two factors should result in a decrease of the workload.
- Fran Hoeg questioned the issue of multiple office holders and the impact this has on folks who meet with one Board and appeal to another, when some people sit on both boards (example BOH and Selectmen). She questioned whether this creates a conflict and gives an unfair advantage to the Boards versus the person appealing decisions.
- Bob Ward- Their (BOH) present structure is not efficient.
- Fran Hoeg- Would an appointed BOH be more "professionalized"?
- Ken Stevens- Appointed BOH could result in fewer clashes with the BOS. The present structure has

- the Health Agent very involved in inspections.
- Jean Landis Naumann- Appointments can be very political with little regard to qualifications. BOS would have the authority to replace.
- Richard Dennehy- I don't know if I want to give up autonomy for an appointed Board.
- Wendell Chamberlain- Some appointed boards do have separate authority because they have an expertise. Selectmen who tread on Boards who do a professional job, led by professionals will probably get a backlash.
- Bob Ward- It could be stipulated that the BOH have a physician. You can get a breadth of knowledge with members with select qualifications.
- Ken Stevens- Appointments can be from specific disciplines
- Fran Hoeg- If the BOS had a concern with members of a Board, it would take more than the vote of one selectman to remove someone from a position.
- Richard Dennehy- That is true, but we already had a board- the ZBA- completely removed by the BOS.
- Paul Tura- sometimes government does not make things easy or effective for the people.
- Richard Dennehy- A civil engineer hired by the Town could make things easier for the people. The Civil Engineer could "shepherd" a towns person through the process for permitting.
- Bob Ward- The BOH thinks that everything is working and there are no issues with their Board. A recommendation from us could be that each department write up policies and procedures for what the public needs to make the process more effective and efficient.
- Richard Dennehy- There already is a procedure in place where each department signs off.
- Keith Elder- This goes to the elected vs. appointed issue. If elected, they don't have to create procedures. If appointed they would have to answer to the appointing authority.
- Ken Stevens- BOH can write their own regulations and make it law within 3 days.
- Bob Ward- I would like to ask for the policies and procedures of the Boards.
- Fran Hoeg- Policies and procedures manual should be available to all new members of Boards. If these don't exist, the Town should create them.
- Richard Dennehy- It should contain the policies and procedures the department operates under.
- Ken Stevens- I'd like to see the internally promulgated policies and procedures
- Richard Dennehy- Sometimes the Town has taken a bylaw and it becomes the procedure.
- Jean Landis Naumann- To summarize, we are looking for the following:
 - Request from the BOS copies of the Policies and Procedures internally promulgated
 - Job Descriptions
 - Evaluation and review process

Police Chief:

- Keith Elder- How would a Chief Information Officer work with the present set up of the Police Department?
- Ken Stevens- The police presently use Paynet. I am concerned that the license is "forever". How can that be?
- Bob Ward- There could be holes in their system. A CIO could make sure that there are no holes or errors in the system. It could be more secure with a CIO.
- Jean Landis Naumann- Are we talking about hiring a CIO or a hardware/software tech?
- Ken Stevens- You can have a CIO who knows who to call when systems go down
- Keith Elder- The Chief is happy to run his own and does not want anyone from Town House being involved.
- Fran Hoeg mentioned that in Whitman Hanson the technology services of the public schools are now shared by the communities of Whitman and Hanson. The Tech department services not just the schools, but the towns as well. It is a good use of shared resources.
- Jean Landis Naumann concurred that shared resources would be a good idea
- Ken Stevens stated that there is more than enough work to justify hiring our own person. It is also an area that can have the potential for abuse. The Town should adopt Chapter 41 D which allows the Town to establish a technology board.
- Keith Elder- What about the Police Chief and negotiations. Do you agree that the Chief should be the chief negotiator for the unions?
- Richard Dennehy- No department head should be the negotiator for those under his purview.

- Fran Hoeg- No *one* person should be responsible for all of the negotiations. There should be a negotiating committee, and the Town Administrator should be a part of that committee.

Other Discussions:

Richard Dennehy gave an update on Health Insurance:

- The only difference between the House and senate bills on health insurance is the set aside amount.
- Employees want to know if they have the right to go into other plans if they are willing to pay the difference
- Bob ward stated that if the Town can negotiate a similar plan to the State, then they can offer that but employees would have to choose the Town or State plan. The GIC plan had every insurance plan except Blue Cross.

The next meeting will be July 7, 2011. The meeting will be with the Fire Chief.

On a motion by Bob Ward, seconded by Jean Landis Naumann, the Committee voted unanimously to adjourn at 9:10 pm