

**Minutes: Boxborough Town Government Study Committee: February 15, 2017**

Main Meeting Room Sargent Memorial Library      Approved 3/3/2017

1. The meeting was called order at 7:00 pm by Susan Bak of the Board of Selectmen (BOS). Present were: Susan Bak, Sheila Bauer, Thom Begin, Jennifer Campbell, John Fallon, Hugh Fortmiller, Nancy Settle-Murphy, Selina Shaw  
Absent: Bob Stemple
2. The Committee went around the table and introduced themselves.
3. Susan was unanimously elected chair; John was unanimously elected clerk.
4. The Committee reviewed Open Meeting Law requirements especially as related to e-mail/electronic communications:
  - a) All “deliberations” must take place in a meeting open to the public which has been posted 48 hours in advance.
  - b) E-mail can be used to set dates, set agenda items, and distribute material.
  - c) E-mail cannot be used to discuss material. For example, if a member of the Committee has a comment on material it should be sent only to the person who sent out the material. As a general rule “reply” is Ok; “reply all” is forbidden.
5. The Committee reviewed the background and charge of the Committee
  - a) Current Town Administrator (TA) is retiring July 31, **2018**.
  - b) Before interviewing for the TA replacement, the Board of Selectmen (BOS) felt it would be useful to review current and alternative town government structures for positions and departments reporting to the BOS.
  - c) The Committee is an ad hoc Committee appointed by the BOS to help in this review.
  - d) The Committee has an end date of July 30, **2017**. Report is due to the BOS in that time frame and will be used by the BOS in their deliberations.
  - e) Issues to be discussed include, but are not limited to:
    - i) Whether the TA position should stay the same, become a Strong Town Administrator (STA) or a Town Manager (TM)
    - ii) Whether an Assistant Town Administrator (ATA) is needed
    - iii) Nature and role of BOS liaisons going forward[Definition: A STA position is one in which all BOS department heads (including Police, Fire, DPW) report to the BOS through the Town Administrator; in the current TA position these department heads report directly to the BOS with primary communication through BOS liaisons.]
6. The Committee reviewed the documents Susan sent out before the meeting.
  - a) Before 1998 there was a 3 member BOS with an Executive Secretary.
  - b) From 1998 to 2006 there was a 5 member BOS with an STA and a position that became an ATA.
  - c) From 2007 to present there was a TA; the ATA was eliminated and a formal program of BOS liaisons was established.

7. Susan, Selina and John reviewed the context and conclusions of three prior Town Government studies. (Susan will distribute electronic copies of the studies to the Committee.)

a) Town Government Study Committee 1998: appointed by Moderator after a Sense of Meeting vote at the May 1997 Town Meeting in response to wide-spread public dissatisfaction with Town Hall. Chief results were a 5 member BOS and establishment of a STA position and a position that became an ATA. All department heads including Police, Fire and DPW reported to the STA.

b) Town of Boxborough Financial Management Review 2001: prepared by the Massachusetts Department of Revenue Division of Local Services as a result of a request by the STA and BOS and Tax Collector. Results were a number of strategies for improving the Town's financial management and the establishment of the Boxborough Leadership Forum and more frequent scheduled meetings between the BOS and Finance Committee.

c) Town Government Structure Study Committee 2006: appointed by the BOS after the resignation of the STA to take a position in another town. The task of this Committee was to review and validate reorganization directions proposed by the BOS. In 2007 the BOS implemented the current structure with a TA, Police, Fire and DPW heads reporting directly to the BOS with primary communication through formal BOS liaisons, and elimination of the ATA position.

8. The Committee briefly discussed general Town government items that were outside the scope of the Committee charge including:

a) Flow of information at Town Meeting. (John will distribute to the Committee items developed by the Town Meeting Study Committee.)

b) Strong versus weak Police and Fire Chiefs. This is a function of the responsibilities of the chief positions. Boxborough adopted the sections of Massachusetts General Law (MGL) making both Chiefs "strong" in the early 2000's. This has nothing to do with reporting line; strong chiefs can report to a STA and did so in Boxborough until 2007. (Selina will distribute a "strong versus weak" comparison to the Committee.)

c) Role of the Finance Committee (FC). The role of the FC is defined in the Boxborough Town by-law. As happens in the overwhelming majority of towns in the State, the Boxborough FC presents the budget to TM in conformance with MGL Chapter 39 Section 16. (John will distribute the By-law and MGL text to the Committee.)

d) Internal organization of Town Hall. All current Town Hall employees report directly or indirectly to the TA; this arrangement will continue under all options being considered. (Selina will distribute the current Town Hall organization chart to the Committee.)

9. After discussion the Committee decided that there should be two main areas of data gathering: internal and external.

10. Internal efforts should include interviews and/or survey to determine what works now, what can be improved, etc. Sheila and Nancy volunteered to be the internal team.

11. External efforts should include talking to other similar towns to determine their structure, particularly TA versus STA versus TM, and how they feel it works. Thom, Jennifer and John volunteered to be the external team. It was pointed out the Personnel

Board had developed a list of Comparative Towns; Selina will distribute to the Committee.

12. The meeting adjourned at 8:45 pm

13. Next meeting: FRIDAY March 3 at **7:00 am** at Town Hall.

Respectfully submitted,

John Fallon  
Secretary