

Minutes: Boxborough Town Government Study Committee: March 3 2017

Morse/Hilberg Meeting Room Town Hall Approved 4/5/2017

1. The meeting was called order at 7:05 am by John Fallon Clerk of the Committee. Present were: Sheila Bauer, Thom Begin, Jennifer Campbell, John Fallon, Hugh Fortmiller, Nancy Settle-Murphy, Selina Shaw, Bob Stemple
Absent: Susan Bak

2. The Committee reviewed the Minutes of the February 15 meeting and voted unanimously to approve them after one change.

3. John noted that Susan had sent the Committee copies of three prior studies which studies had been discussed at the February 15 meeting.

- a) Town Government Study Committee 1998
 - b) Town of Boxborough Financial Management Review 2001:
 - c) Town Government Structure Study Committee 2006:
- There were no questions on or discussion of these studies.

4. Comparative Towns Statistical Data: The Personnel Board had developed a list of 20 Comparative towns for analysis purposes. Between meetings Selina distributed the list with original data; Susan distributed a second version with statistical information updated to FY 2017. The Committee agreed that the 5 statistical items (EQV, Population, Income per Capita, Operating Budget and Average Tax Bill) were sufficient and no more work was needed in that area. The table also included Form of Government.

5. Comparative Towns “Strong versus Weak” Data: Between meetings Selina surveyed the 20 towns to determine the extent of powers held by the Town Administrator (TA), Police Chief and Fire Chief. Data had been received from about half of the towns and Selina distributed a table with the results. It is pretty clear there is no real correlation between the strength of the TA and the Police/Fire Chiefs.

6. Continuum of Town Administrator Responsibilities: In addition to asking questions, Selina asked towns to send her copies of Town Administrator job descriptions and organization charts. After reading some of these it became clear to her that there was no single description of a typical “strong TA”. There are several characteristics which may describe the “strength” of a TA position among which are:

- a) Extent of appointment authority over boards and committees.
- b) Extent of appointment authority over department heads.
- c) Extent of supervision and performance review over department heads.
- d) Authority for the direction of budget and capital plan process (*).
- e) Assumption of certain duties previously assigned to the Board of Selectmen (BOS) for example approval of spending warrants, execution of contracts.

In essence, the BOS can pick and choose from an “al a carte” menu when writing the TA’s job description.

(*) including versus role of Finance Committee

7. The Committee agreed that it would be critical to extract data from the comparative TA job descriptions and organization charts and create a matrix of responsibilities by town. Jennifer will work with Selina on this project. The Committee decided not to make any contact with other towns until reviewing the matrix at the next meeting. Thus Selina will remain the sole point of contact with other towns for now.

8. Internal Interview Process

- a) Prior to the meeting Nancy and Sheila had distributed a handout outlining the purpose, method, proposed interviewees, and proposed questions for the internal interview process.
- b) The Committee discussed the handout including some comments that Susan had sent to Nancy in advance of the meeting.
- c) The Committee agreed with the method. It was agreed that Susan as Chair of the Committee will send a letter to the interviewees explaining the project with a statement of purpose.
- d) The Committee reviewed and slightly modified the questions.
- e) First priority will be the Department Heads, Finance Committee representatives and Town Clerk. Thom will obtain the names of the two Finance Committee interviewees.
- f) Current members of the Board of Selectmen will be the second priority starting with the three people who are not on the TGSC.

9. "2006-2007" Selectmen:

- a) Before the meeting John distributed a table of members of the BOS from 2003 to 2008. There are three people who were on the BOS under the STA structure in 2006 and the current structure in 2007 and 2008 and were part of the decision to change the structure. [There is one further person on the BOS at that time but he is still on the Board so he will be covered under the "current member" interviews.]
- b) John will reach out and interview these three people on their reasons for making the change and experience before and after. Hugh will be his backup if needed.

12. Selina left the meeting at 8:15; the meeting adjourned at 8:35 pm

13. Next meeting: WEDNESDAY April 5 at 7:00 am at Town Hall.

Respectfully submitted,

John Fallon
Clerk