

Town Government Study Committee

SEPTEMBER 11, 2017

Charge

Study, review and explore town government structures including reporting relationships, responsibilities, authority and communication between and among the Board of Selectmen, departments and the public to ensure the best structure for the Town.

Committee Members

Member	Board, Committee or At large
Susan Bak	Board of Selectmen
Sheila Bauer	Personnel Board
Thom Begin	Finance Committee
Jennifer Campbell	Library Trustee
John Fallon	Town Moderator
Hugh Fortmiller	Personnel Board (alternate)
Nancy Settle-Murphy	At Large
Selina Shaw	Town Administrator
Bob Stemple	Board of Selectmen

History

1990s

Comparable towns changed to TA as COO model

1999

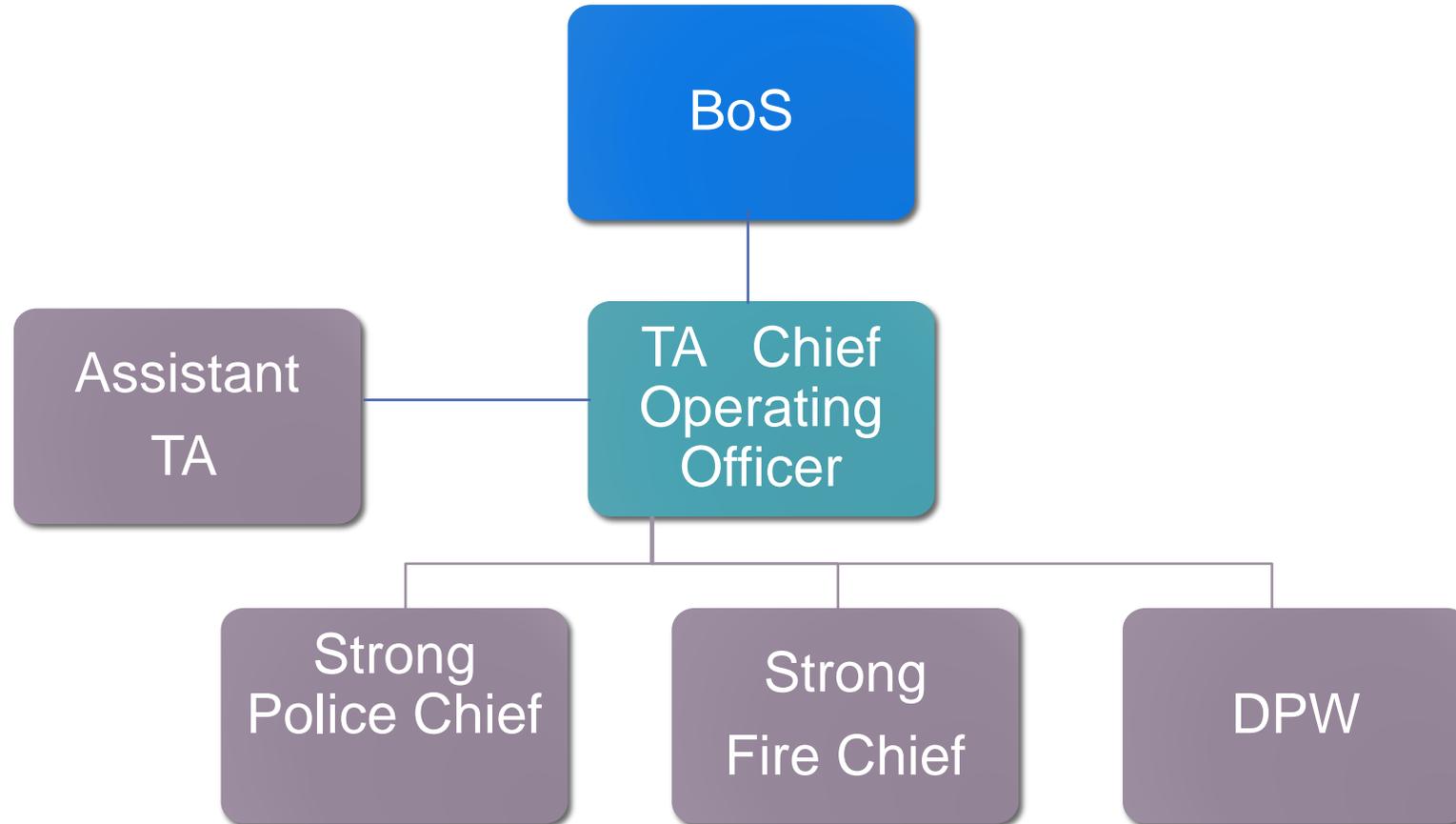
Boxborough hired TA as COO & hired ATA

2006

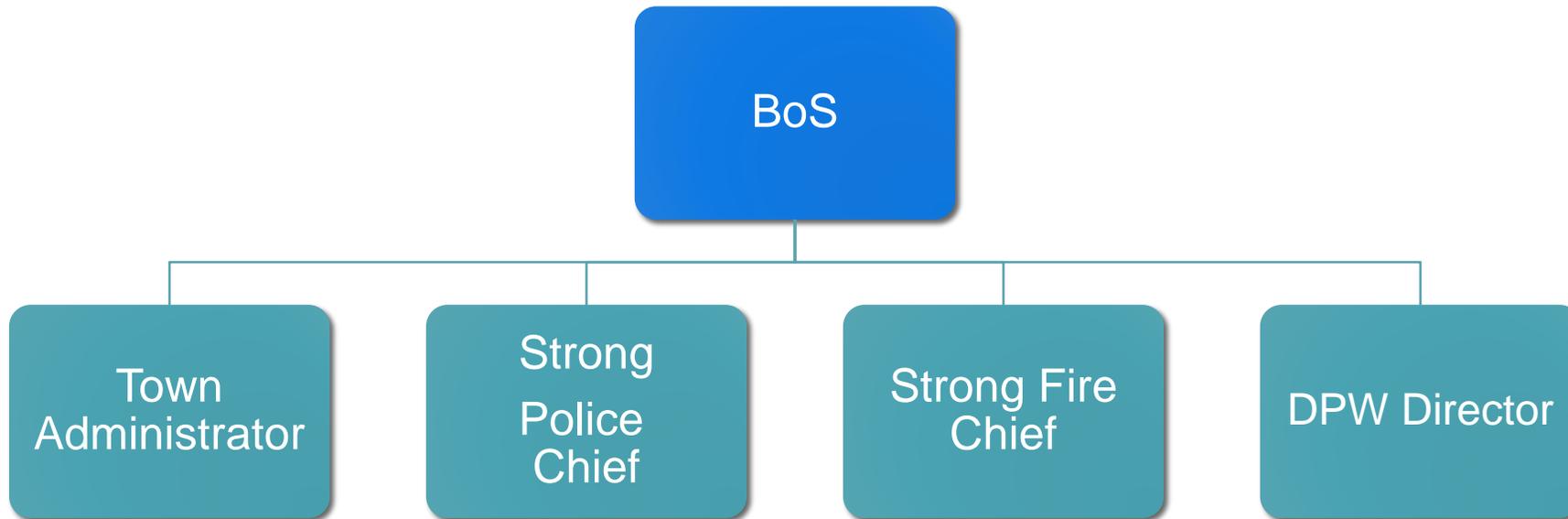
Boxborough changed TA to CAO & eliminated ATA

- Town Administrator: TA
- Assistant Town Administrator: ATA
- Chief Operating Officer: COO
- Chief Administrative Officer: CAO

Town Government Structure 1999 - 2006



Town Government Structure 2006 - 2017



Process

Internal interviews

- Current & past BoS
- Department Heads
- FinCom
- Town Clerk

External Interviews

- TAs: Harvard, Bolton, Stow

Internal Interviews

What works

- Department Head & BoS
 - Liaisons
 - Working relationships
 - Department Head independence
- Budget process
- Dedicated volunteers on BoS and FinCom
- Boxborough Leadership Forum (BLF)

What's not working (1 of 2)

- BoS involved in day-to-day operations
 - Excessive time commitment
 - Little room for error
 - Not enough time to resolve issues
- HR, IT & procurement needs not being met
- No coordinated forum for Department Head support

What's not working (2 of 2)

- Performance-related matters
 - Delay in addressing problems
 - Performance reviews & open meeting laws
- BoS fill-in during vacancies
- BoS cannot be experts in all areas

Other feedback

- Complexity of town government
- HR and IT support needed
- Centralized professional management
- Forward-thinking model
- Need an Assistant TA

External Interviews

TOWN ADMINISTRATORS: BOLTON, HARVARD & STOW

External TA Interviews

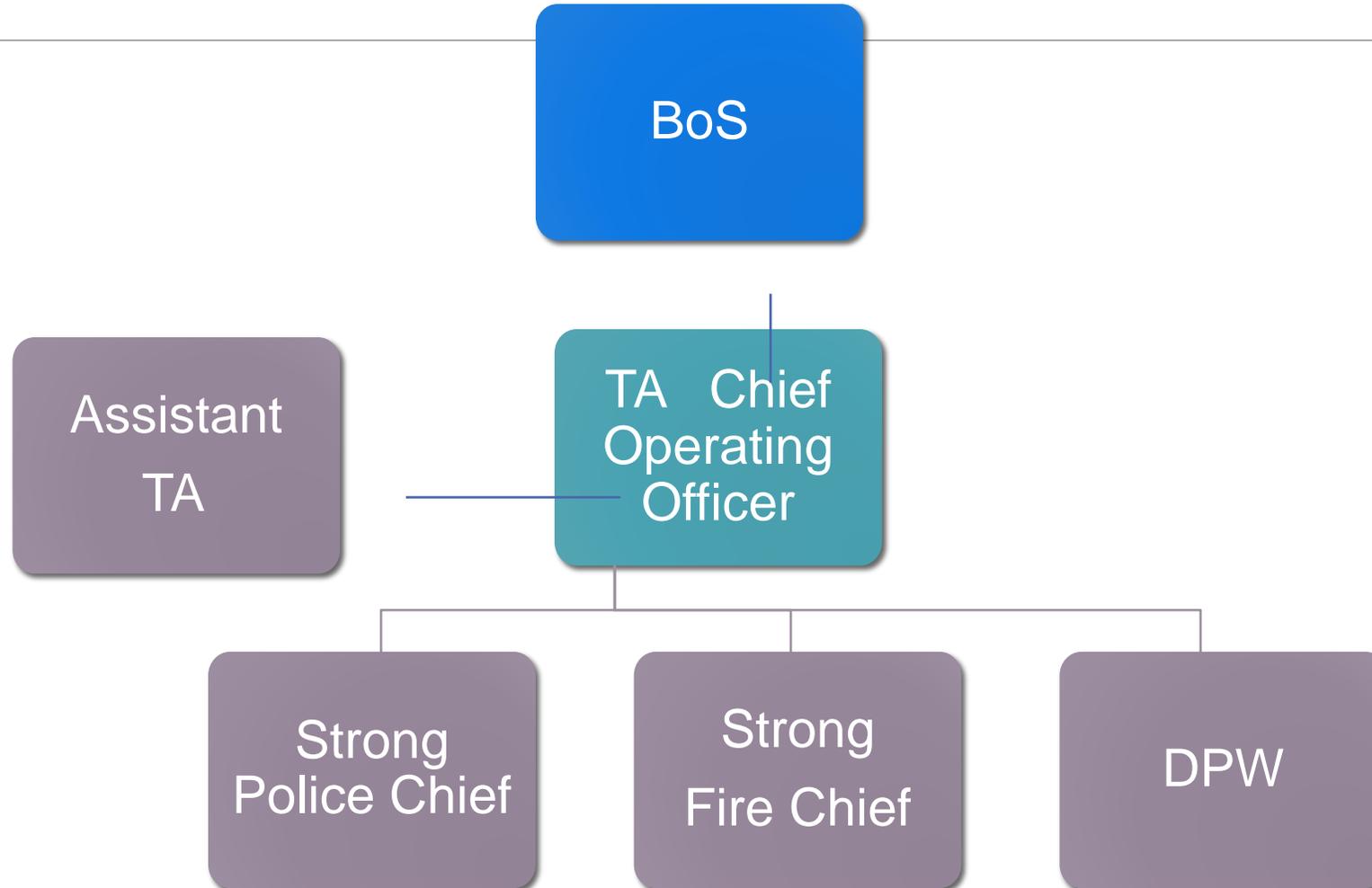
- TA is Chief Operating Officer
- Major Department Heads report to TA
- TA responsible for:
 - Performance reviews
 - Contracts
 - Department budgets

Recommendations

Recommendations – general

- TA becomes Chief Operating Officer
 - Major Department Heads report to BoS through TA
- BoS liaisons provide:
 - Communication & guidance
 - NOT management or direct oversight
- Reinstate Assistant Town Administrator
 - TA or ATA with **strong HR** experience
- BoS remains policy-making board

Town Government Structure Recommended: 2018



Recommendations – BoS

- Policy makers
- Liaison role to Department Heads
- Provides parameters & input for:
 - Union & contract negotiations
 - Performance reviews
- Final hiring or termination for Department Heads
- Sets budget priorities & reviews bottom line budgets

Recommendations - TA

- Chief Operating Officer
- Major Department Heads report to BoS through TA
- Negotiate contracts
- Department budgets
- Prepare and deliver performance reviews
- Hire/terminate Department Heads with BoS approval

Recommendations – Budget *(1 of 2)*

Action	Responsible party
Set priorities	BoS
Budget message	TA, FinCom
Budget preparation	Department Heads
Finalize proposed budget	TA, Department Heads
Discuss budget	TA, Department Heads, FinCom
Budget to Town Accountant	TA

Recommendations – Budget *(2 of 2)*

Action	Responsible party
Discuss submitted budget	BoS, TA, Department Heads
Discuss submitted budget	FinCom, TA, Department Heads
Vote budget recommendations	BoS
Present at ATM	FinCom

Benefits

- Model works for sustained growth
- Consistency
- More time on policy
- Manageable workload
- Real time action
- Timely management of performance

Critical Success Factors

- Thoughtful change management process
- Communicate with impacted staff
- Clearly defined roles, responsibilities & reporting relationships:
 - BoS, TA, major Department Heads
- Frequent communications during implementation
- Periodic check-ins
- Secure funding for Assistant Town Administrator

Change is Hard

“Screw your courage to the sticking place and we’ll not fail.” Lady Macbeth

Scenarios

Scenario 1: Policy

After a bad winter storm, trees have fallen on many residents' properties; not on the road.

- BoS makes policy for removal of trees
- TA directs the DPW Director to implement
- DPW Director manages removal according to policy

Scenario 2: Budget development

DPW Director indicates a need for an additional head count in the upcoming budget year.

- DPW Director submits budget to TA with an additional head count
- TA and DPW Director discuss the budget
- TA indicates the BoS priority is to focus on a land purchase for the Fire Department and not an additional head count for next year

Scenario 3: Unexpected budget expense

The Fire Chief discovers the HVAC system stopped working and needs to be replaced.

- Fire Chief contacts the TA and explains the need to replace the HVAC, but will require a RFT
- TA approves the use of a RFT and informs BoS
- TA or Fire Chief notifies the FinCom liaison about the unbudgeted emergency expense

Scenario 4: Communication

The Police Chief and DPW Director both indicate they intend to take the same two weeks of vacation in the summer.

- Both Department Heads notify the TA
- The Police Chief indicates that, in his/her absence, the Lieutenant will be in charge of the Police Department
- The DPW Director indicates that, in his/her absence, the DPW Foreman will be in charge of the DPW

Scenario 5: Performance appraisal process

A Department Head is unhappy with the rating and feedback received on his/her performance appraisal.

- TA explains that the performance appraisal was developed with input from the BoS, other department heads and staff members
- Department Head may appeal the performance appraisal to the BoS

Questions?

Addendum

Comparable Towns

Bolton

- TA oversight of Police and DPW
- No oversight of Fire. Separate Board provides oversight for Fire
- Three member BoS
- No formal liaison role for BoS
- TA negotiates Union contracts w/ direction from BoS
- TA collaborates w/ BoS to develop performance reviews
- TA delivers performance reviews to Police and DPW
- Budget developed by Advisory Board (FinCom)

Harvard

- Town by-laws define TA position and reporting relationships
- TA oversight of Police, Fire, DPW, COA and Town Hall functions
- Assistant TA works 35 hours/week. (To be increased to 40 hours)
- Five member BoS
- BoS act as **liaisons** to departments **for communication**, not oversight or direction. Liaisons assigned by Chair & TA
- TA negotiates all union and department head contracts
- TA responsible for budget. Works w/ department heads, FinCom and BoS to prepare budget.
- FinCom owns and presents budget at ATM

Stow

- Town Charter stipulates roles & responsibilities. TA oversees operations of Town
- TA oversight of Police, Fire, DPW and Town Hall functions
- TA develops and delivers performance reviews for department heads
- TA negotiates union contracts. Deals with discipline issues
- TA hires and terminates Department Heads **w/ approval** of BoS
- TA appoints board and committee members
- Budget authority. Prepares & presents budget to FinCom, BoS and ATM
- BoS are policy makers
- BoS act as **liaisons** to departments **for communication**, not oversight or direction

Budget Process

Recommendations – Budget

- ✓ BoS set priorities which may have a financial impact on the Town
- ✓ FinCom and TA develop a budget message
- ✓ Department Heads develop their respective budgets
- ✓ TA and Department Head meet and finalize **proposed** budget
- ✓ TA, Department Head, **FinCom liaison** meet to discuss budget
- ✓ Department budgets submitted to Town Accountant

Recommendations – Budget (continued)

- ✓ BoS meets with TA and Department Heads to discuss budget
- ✓ FinCom meets with TA and Department Heads to discuss budget
- ✓ FinCom develops and finalizes budget for ATMBoS votes bottom line budget. Decides whether to file amendments to budget
- ✓ FinCom presents budget at ATM

Roles in the budget process

BOS, TA AND DEPARTMENT HEAD ROLES IN THE BUDGET PROCESS

BoS role in budget process

- Sets priorities for the Town which may impact the budget
- Reviews budget with TA and major Department Heads
- May suggest changes to the budget
- Reviews **final budget** from FinCom
- Votes the bottom line number
- May seek to make amendments to the budget at Town Meeting

TA role in budget process

- Communicates BoS priorities for the Town
- Partners with FinCom to develop budget message
- Meets with Department Heads to finalize proposed budget
- Joint meeting w/ Department Heads and **FinCom liaisons**
- Submits budget to Town Accountant
- Meets with BoS and Department Heads to present budget
- Meets with Department Heads and FinCom on budget

Department Head role in budget process

- Develop department budget
- Review budget with TA
- Review budget with TA and FinCom liaison
- Present budget to BoS
- Review budget with TA and FinCom

Make adjustments throughout the budget process as appropriate

FinCom's role in budget process

No Change