

Town Government Study Committee

June 3, 2014

Great Hall

Committee: Babson, Donahue, Gross, Ulfelder, Page, Brooks, Goldberg

Staff: Nagle

At 7:05 Katherine Babson called the meeting to order. She inquired if there were any citizens to address the committee. There were none. Ms. Babson acknowledged members in audience of BOS Ellen Gibbs and Marjorie Freiman, and several high school students attending a public meeting to fulfill a civics requirement. She gave a brief recap of the purpose and activities of the committee to this point.

Rosemary Donahue and Lee Brooks distributed a memorandum with further detail on the concept of the Land Use Division (LUD) and Land Use Division Director (LUDD). The memo revises two recommendations (1) The Land Use Division Director is proposed to be a partial responsibility of an assistant to the Town Manager. It is anticipated that this responsibility would be more time consuming at the outset, decreasing to about .25 of the position once the reorganization is operational. Positioning the LUDD as part of the Town Manager team would be a benefit to keep this function connected to the BOS office and general management of the town. (2) Recommend deferring any recommendation on Local Enforcement Officer until the BOS completes its study of the operations and work flow of the building department. Enforcement of local Zoning is an issue of resources and this study should determine if additional resources are needed.

Committee discussed the alternatives for the title/position of LUDD. It was decided by consensus that the position should be named as a part of the assistant manager position. ie Assistant or Deputy Town Manager/Land Use Division Director. It was decided that it was important to name this responsibility as part of a title to give it the prominence envisioned by the recommendation.

Suggestion made to add a statement to the memo as to what TGSC heard from departments and how these adjustments are in response to feedback.

Committee discussed if the LUD/LUDD proposal is severable from the Town Manager proposal. The thinking is that this could go forward as an independent proposal but prefer to link it for the time being. If it is divorced from Town Manager proposal then certain other functions would have to be altered to accomplish the goals of the LUD proposal.

Goldberg questioned the statement of increased compensation for the LUDD position. Babson explained that a survey of comparable positions in other communities shows that an Assistant Town Manager with LUD responsibilities would be compensated as a higher rate than our current Deputy Director positions. The statement is a best estimate for anticipated increased cost associated with the proposal.

Babson asked for consensus that the LUD memo would be distributed after the suggestions of the committee were incorporated. AGREED.

Kathy Nagle, Town Clerk, addressed the committee about elected vs appointed Town Clerk. Nagel stated her preference to retain the Town Clerk position as elected. Principal reasons are the independence and ability to shape the job to suit the incumbents strengths and probably commitment of an elected Town Clerk to community engagement. Also stated was the ability to have equal status with other elected boards when implementing election laws and other requirements. Finally elected Town Clerk has the ability to “straddle” between paid professional staff and residents and can be a conduit of information between the groups.

Katherine Babson distributed a chart showing typical responsibilities of a town manager, a column on how the task is now performed in Wellesley and a column as to how it would be performed under the TGSC proposal. Babson suggested another column showing what is the authority under the bylaw vs current practice that in some cases is not authorized specifically under the bylaw. Current practice in the budget area exceeds the written TBL authority in some respects.

Babson will have Hans Larson review this chart to comment on current practice and authority. Babson will try to fill in aspects of certain responsibilities that as not in the TBL and happen only in practical terms.

Babson stated that the current TGSC Town Manager proposal falls to the weak Town Manager end of the authority spectrum.

Babson reviewed certain of the responsibility areas on the chart.

1. Signing of Warrants – now done by BOS. Committee agreed that is would be appropriate to assign this responsibility to Town Manager as long as there as appropriate internal controls evaluated by the auditors before turning this responsibility over to Town Manager.
2. Supervision of Construction Projects – needs more understanding of who signs the contracts now. Committee has some interest in having Town Manager have some role in this process to bring more planning and clarity to the timing and execution of construction projects.
3. Rental and Use of Town Buildings – consensus to leave that authority with the departments who are the principal occupants of buildings (Library and Recreation specifically)
4. Implementation of action of Town Meeting - now BOS TBL 19.12. Propose to shift that responsibility to Town Manager.
5. Citizen Inquiry – now BOS – opportunity to enhance this function by assigning to Town Manager.

Town Bylaws – Babson, Goldberg, Brooks are looking at TBL to see where changes are necessary to implement the recommendations. Looking at the TBL role of BOS and how the recommendations change those duties. Whether certain responsibility of BOS ought to be reassigned to Town Manager. (ie Appointments)

ADMINISTRATIVE

Approval of minutes. The Committee approved the minutes of February 4, 18, March 1, April 11 and 15 for posting to the website page.

NEXT full Committee meeting JUNE 17 DPW Building, 6:30 pm.

Babson polled committee for ability to attend a series of meetings with boards to discuss feedback on draft recommendations.

Babson distributed written question from BOS and Advisory Committee. She asked the working group to review and determine how best to answer the questions. Committee asked for clarification on the purpose of certain questions to facilitate answers that address the real objectives of the questions.

Advisory Committee meeting for June 10. Gross and Page to attend. Expect to have conversations about the deficiencies in the budget process to engage with Advisory members with seniority who may have insights. Will ask advisory to assign liaisons to working groups so that each working group can inform the liaison about the specifics of the recommendations.

SUMMER MEETING DATES

Babson asked committee to respond to availability for summer meetings on Jul 8, July 22, Aug 6, Aug 19.

ADJOURN; 9:55 pm.