

TOWN OF WELLESLEY



ADVISORY COMMITTEE LETTER SPECIAL TOWN MEETING November 2, 2015, at 7:00 p.m. Middle School Auditorium, Wellesley Middle School

TERM ENDS 2016

Mary Crown
Tom Frisardi, Chair
John Hartnett
Mason Smith, Vice Chair
Scott Tarbox

TERM ENDS 2017

Chad Harris
Michael Mastrianni
Frank Pinto, Vice Chair
Sara Raveret, Secretary
Kathleen Woodward

TERM ENDS 2018

Tom Fitzgibbons
Mike Hluchyj
Mark Kaplan
Alena Poirier
Ria Stolle

To the Citizens of the Town of Wellesley:

October 7, 2015

A Special Town Meeting (STM) will convene on November 2, 2015, at 7:00 p.m. The primary business of this STM is to consider a change in the form of our Town government, from one in which elected and appointed boards control the majority of decisions to one in which a single employee, designated the Town Manager, would act as the chief administrative officer for all business apart from schools and the Municipal Light Plant (MLP). This would be a major change, which would alter the process of setting the Town's budget and management of approximately 500 non-school, non-MLP Town employees. The proposal is complex, because it includes seeking a special act of the Legislature and adopting numerous revisions to the Town Bylaw. The new form of government, if adopted, would likely lead to change in the culture of our Town government; at the same time, it is meant to lead to improvements in the efficiency and effectiveness of our government.

Also coming before the STM are proposals for improving security in several schools where security has not already been upgraded and funding for design services to repair the Police Station roof and building envelope. These latter two matters, which would normally be handled in the regular budget cycle at Annual Town Meeting (ATM) in the spring, are coming forward now; in the first instance, because of the sensitivity of school security and a preference to complete the work during the summer recess, and in the second, because the roof experienced massive problems during our extraordinary winter of 2014-15.

The Proposal for Change in Town Government ***The Town Government Study Committee***

The measures coming before this STM are the recommendations of the Town Government Study Committee (TGSC). The TGSC was organized under a resolution adopted at the 2014 ATM with a multifaceted mission, focused on the "suitability of the existing structure of Town government for now and in the future." The Town Moderator appointed nine citizens of the Town, all of whom had extensive prior experience in Town government, and none of whom currently serve in Town office. The TGSC engaged as a consultant the former Town Manager of Reading, who has also served as Chair of the Form of Government Committee of the Massachusetts Municipal Association. The TGSC conducted dozens of interviews of state and local officials and employees and held numerous meetings for Town Meeting Members and for Town residents. The TGSC also evaluated and visited local governments in 15 nearby towns.

At the 2015 ATM, the TGSC gave a preliminary report on its progress and received approval to develop concrete recommendations for change. The recommendations were rolled out in meetings during the spring. Discussion with Town boards ensued over the summer. On September 8, 2015, the TGSC published its recommendations for special legislation and revisions of the Town Bylaw. Revised versions of the proposed special legislation and Town Bylaw changes were released on September 28, 2015, and October 7, 2015.

The TGSC has made available on the Town website a great amount of information about the process that it followed, the information that it gathered, and the recommendations that it is making now. This information is available at www.wellesleyma.gov.

The measures to reform Town government fall into several categories, explained separately below.

Establishment of a Town Manager Position

A Town Manager would be an individual Town employee selected by and reporting to the Board of Selectmen (BOS). The Town Manager position would replace the role that the Executive Director fills today, but with increased authority and responsibility. The Town Manager would have overall responsibility and accountability for day-to-day operations of the Town and for a town-wide approach to decision-making and collaboration among all Town boards and departments, except for Schools and the MLP. The Board of Selectmen would hire the Town Manager under a contract not to exceed five years in duration.

The Town Manager would create the annual Town budget and present it for approval at ATM. The School Committee would continue to have autonomy over the School Department, including selection and supervision of the Superintendent of Schools and creation of the School Department budget.

With respect to Town departments other than Schools and the MLP, the Town Manager would manage Town personnel, including hiring and evaluating department heads, and would ensure that the Town has qualified staff and consistent training and performance standards for employees. While this would alter the role that volunteer boards have had in direct personnel management, the Town Manager would be required to collaborate with the volunteer boards in our government. In particular, volunteer boards would have the authority to reject a department head that the Town Manager proposes to hire to serve that board.

Creation and Maintenance of a Town Strategic Plan

The Town has not had a system for setting its budget priorities. The establishment of a Town Strategic Plan would create a process for this. The BOS would have responsibility for establishing the plan, while the Town Manager would have responsibility for implementing, monitoring and assessing the plan and reporting on it annually at Town Meeting.

Creation of a Planning and Land Management Division

The Town Manager would appoint a Deputy Town Manager to lead a single division comprising all of the various boards and departments that oversee the Town's own land and the use and planning of privately owned land in Wellesley. This new division would encompass the Building Department, the Planning Department, the Natural Resources Department, the Wetlands Protection Department, and the administration of the Zoning Board of Appeals, the Historic Commission and the Historic District Commission. The boards would remain as at present, whether elected or appointed, and would continue to make their decisions independently.

If the Town Meeting votes against creating a Town Manager role, then the new division would be supervised by the Executive Director.

Change from Elected to Appointed Town Clerk

The Town Clerk is the only paid elected official in Wellesley. The proposal is to continue the Town Clerk position as at present, but the clerk would be hired and evaluated by the Town Manager, as is proposed for other department heads. This proposal would be advanced only if Town Meeting votes favorably on the Town Manager position. The proposal provides for the current Town Clerk to serve out her current term, which expires in 2018.

Committee to Study the Need for a Board of Public Works

If Town Meeting votes favorably concerning the proposal to move to a Town Manager form of government, then the TGSC would propose the creation of a committee to study the need to continue to have a Board of Public Works under the new system of government.

Other Articles

The STM also creates an opportunity to consider other matters that either cannot wait until the ATM, in the spring, or that the Town will benefit from by earlier review. Given the compressed time frame to prepare for this STM, the Advisory Committee has focused on ensuring that the Articles to be moved at the STM are ready for consideration – that they have been fully developed and thoroughly vetted. As of the date of this letter, the Advisory Committee has not determined whether both of the proposals for appropriations coming before STM are ready for action.

Upgrades in Security

This is a proposal by the School Committee to borrow money to pay for construction of security improvements in eight of the ten Wellesley Public School buildings. The subject buildings are: Bates, Hardy, Hunnewell, Sprague and Upham Elementary Schools and PAWS Preschool at Wellesley, Wellesley Middle School and Wellesley High School. The goal is to bring all of the Town's school buildings into compliance with the Town's own template for school security and with the guidelines issued by the Massachusetts School Safety and Security State Task Force. Improvements have already been completed at two schools, Fiske and Schofield Elementary Schools, providing a template for improvements at the remaining eight. Town Meeting previously appropriated funds in the FY2016 budget for design of security improvements. Over the past summer, architect specialists and the Permanent Building Committee have developed designs and plans in collaboration with the School Committee, the Facilities Maintenance Department and the Police Department. These plans are now ready for implementation. The scope of the project varies by school building, but generally encompasses door and hardware upgrades, along with improvements in security, cameras, radios, building access and public address systems. If the funding is approved at STM this fall, then construction will take place in summer 2016, while the schools are out of session.

The School Committee has posted a presentation on its website, laying out the proposed improvements and the process that led to the current design. The information can be found at http://www.wellesley.k12.ma.us/sites/wellesleyeps/files/file/file/security_sc_pbc_adv_9-16-15.pdf.

Repair Police Station Roof and Building Envelope

This is a proposal to use approximately \$100,000 from free cash to design a new roof and other building envelope repairs (windows, foundation and sealants) for the Police Station, which was built in 1995. The winter of 2014-15 was a tough one. The Police Station suffered heavy damage. The Facilities Maintenance Department (FMD) has determined that it would be best to limit the risk of water and ice damage to one more winter, and to complete the actual repair work by December 2016. In order to complete the repairs on this schedule, the design work must be done during FY2016, in other words, before July 2016. FMD believes that the critical role of the Police Station in Town safety and security justifies advancing this repair for budgeting outside the normal cycle. The BOS will seek funding for the repairs at the 2016 ATM. The repair costs are projected, tentatively, to be on the order of \$2,000,000.

Miscellaneous

There will be a vote on whether to appropriate money from funds borrowed under bonds (long-term debt) to retire bond anticipation notes (short-term borrowing to pay for capital improvements while issuance of the long-term bonds is in process). This is a housekeeping matter.

Town Meeting will also be asked to approve funding for a search consultant for either a Town Manager (if the Town Manager-related proposals pass) or an Executive Director of General Government Services to assist the BOS in finding a suitable candidate to fill the role when the current Executive Director retires in November 2016.

Results of the 2015 Spring Survey of Town Meeting Members

Fall Town Meeting as a Model?

There is a long-standing question whether it would be advisable to split Wellesley's ATM agenda so that budget issues can be the focus of a spring meeting and non-budgetary matters can be the focus of a regularly scheduled fall meeting. This would allow Town Meeting more time for thoughtful review. A recent survey of Town Meeting Members suggests that there is strong support for this idea, with 59% of members responding favorably to this survey question. For now, formal organization of a fall session of Town Meeting will have to wait, as the scope of the government reform measures being brought before this STM promises for a very full session ahead. It should be anticipated that a fall session of Town Meeting would be formalized for 2016.

Other Changes

Other small changes will be implemented in this STM. Our start time will be 7:00 p.m., instead of the previous customary start time of 7:30 p.m. The Moderator will endeavor to conclude nightly sessions by 10:30 p.m., recognizing that it is impossible to predict in advance the exact amount of discussion that matters before Town Meeting may generate. The Advisory Committee will try to focus on providing unique input and to reduce the amount of repetition of material by proponents of measures, both in its report and before Town Meeting. All of these changes follow favorable comment by Town Meeting Members in the survey referred to above.

Several other ideas for change will not be implemented, based on unfavorable opinions expressed in the survey of Town Meeting Members. Thus, the number of Town Meeting Members will be kept the same, at 240, we will stick with weekday evening sessions and not meet on Saturdays, and we will continue to send out printed copies of the Advisory Committee Report to all Town Meeting Members.

Conclusion

As always, Town Meeting is an opportunity to examine important issues, to enter into dialogue and to vote as a community in order to best serve our Town and its citizens. I am honored to serve as Advisory Chair and look forward to continuing this long-standing tradition. The STM starts on November 2, 2015, at 7:00 p.m., in the Wellesley Middle School auditorium.

Sincerely,

Thomas Frisardi, Chair
Advisory Committee



Advisory Committee
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Wellesley, MA 02482

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TOWN OF WELLESLEY



Special Town Meeting
November 2, 2015, at 7:00 p.m.
Middle School Auditorium, Wellesley Middle School

Key features of the major articles to be considered:

- Town Meeting will act on a proposal to create a Town Manager position to replace the current Executive Director of General Government Services position. The Town Manager would serve as the Town's chief administrative officer, overseeing budget and personnel for all departments, except for Schools and the Municipal Light Plant.
- The Board of Selectmen would hire the Town Manager, who would serve for not more than five years under a written contract.
- If it votes favorably on the Town Manager proposal, then Town Meeting will act on proposals for changes in the Town Bylaws to further the role of the Town Manager.
- There is a separate proposal to create a Planning and Land Management Division, which would integrate the staff and operations of the Building Department, Planning Board, Zoning Board of Appeals, Natural Resources Commission, Wetlands Protection Committee, Design Review Board, Historical Commission, Historic District Commission, and Neighborhood Conservation Districts.
- There are also two appropriation requests before Town Meeting: (1) for the construction of school security improvements to bring the schools into compliance with the Town's own template for school security and with the guidelines issued by the Massachusetts School Safety and Security Task Force and (2) for the design of repairs to the roof and building envelope at the Police Station.