

Town Government Study Committee

Town Hall, Great Hall

January 21, 2015

Attendance: Babson, Donahue, Ulfelder, Brooks, Page, Perlmutter, Sereiko, Goldberg, Gross

Also: Nagle

Chairman Katherine Babson called the meeting to order at 7:30 pm.

There were no citizens present to speak.

Reports of Working Groups:

Land Use

The group has engaged in additional meetings with Land Use/Permitting departments.

Common themes have emerged:

- Need for enhanced customer service in permitting function
- Opportunity for use of technology for communication and permitting
- Need for better interdepartmental communication (a Land Use Committee has been established)
- Inconsistencies in the Zoning Bylaw need to be addressed

February 7 group meeting of all departments planned. The agenda is to review findings to date and share some recommendations for structural change and solicit feedback.

Executive Function

Meeting twice per month to develop recommendations

Continuing to review peer town reports to find ideas applicable to Wellesley.

Strategic Planning

Review of Comprehensive Plan to see if elements are applicable to strategic plan concept

Review of peer town exercise in planning – process and product, how it is used by those towns

Bylaws

Meeting on January 30 with Town Counsel (Ray Miyares) to review process to change bylaws or Charter for the town

Goldberg has done a preliminary review of Bylaws which should be amended to reflect current practice. (Cable and Audit need to be updated)

Liaison meetings:

Department Heads staff meeting- Babson attended and reported on work completed to date

Advisory Committee- Gross and Page met with Advisory Committee leadership to update on work to date and request an advisory committee liaison for TGSC. Scheduled to appear Feb 11 to discuss TGSC article for ATM 2015.

Moderator – Rich met with Moderator to update her on the progress of the committee.

League of Women Voters- Babson and Gross met with a focus group from LWVW.

Suggestion to keep a comprehensive list of questions heard in all forums to help frame reports and education as recommendations are developed. This may also help track how the public is reacting to the process.

Babson offered to maintain a master list of questions. All committee members should send questions heard at any forums to this list.

Peer Town Interviews:

Babson provided an overview of findings after several town interviews have been conducted:

No single model for organization of the executive function. Each town modifies the function to meet the particular needs for that community. Implementation of the model seems to evolve over time to meet needs and the personality of the incumbent executive. Most other communities have already moved to more authority in the chief executive. Wellesley appears to be an outlier in this respect.

Reading: Babson. Town manager, 25,000 population/17000 voters)

- Strong town Manager authority.
- Current manager was the assistant under Hechenbleikner.
- Town Manager appoints all department heads and some committees.
- Has reorganized land use functions into a Department of Community Services
- Zoning Recodification is underway.
- Recent new position – Ombudsman, who fields questions and complaints. This frees up the time of Manager.

- Last override 12 years ago

Acton: Gross. Town Manager, 22,599 population/14398 voters (regional school district)

- Strong Town manager
- Hires all department heads
- Town Counsel and Town Clerk appointed by BOS
- Acton has a strategic plan document
- Manager and BOS set goals for the year; manager submits budget 100 days before Town Meeting
- Completed a land use department reorganization
- No operating overrides for the last 7 years

Andover: Ulfelder. Town Manager, 32,300 population, 23000 voters

- Strong town manager with long tenure
 - Emphasis on “professional municipal management”
- Strong centralized power in the manager, appoints most committees
- Manager prepares the budget and submits to BOS for review
- Open Town Meeting
- Override history- few attempted and unsuccessful – town operates within constrained financial climate which may force more budget collaboration and compromise

Belmont: Goldberg. Town Administrator, 24,700 population, 18000 voters

- Town Administrator (David Kale) has more limited authority to appoint – subject to consent of the elected boards
- Executive secretary evolved to Town Administrator position informally, and recently had special act to formalize the position.
- Find it harder to get things done with town administrator authority
- No overrides, so work within financial constraints

Dover: Perlmutter. Town Administrator 5,700 population

- Limited Town Administrator authority
- Much smaller town situation, BOS retains active role and significant authority

Lexington: Perlmutter. Town Manager, 32174 population, 22,000 voters

- Strong Town Manager (Carl Valente incumbent)
- TM appoints department heads and many boards
- Philosophy is department heads run their area of operations as part of collaborative team; collaboration is the expectation for all department heads.

Sudbury: Town Manager 18,000 population, 12,000 voters OPEN Town meeting (regional School)

- Town Manager
- TM presents budget to ATM
- Collaborative budget process
- Town Manager is the implementer of Board of Selectmen policies
- Board of Selectmen set goals for town for 2-3 years with senior staff
- Election is prior to Town Meeting and officials take office after ATM
- General power to reorganize built into TM authority

Administrative matters;

Approve minutes of December 3 for posting.

Schedule April 11 for extended meeting of committee

Advisory Committee report due February 25, Babson to draft report on work to date and expected activity for next year.

Next meeting Feb 4.

Submitted by Kathleen Nagle.