

SHARON GOVERNANCE STUDY COMMITTEE MINUTES

August 24, 2021

The meeting of the Sharon Select Board was called to order at 7:00 pm by Select Board Chair William A. Heitin remotely via Zoom. Select Board members Hanna R. Switekowski and Emily Smith-Lee were in attendance as was Town Administrator Frederic E. Turkington, Jr. and Assistant to the Town Administrator, Lauren Barnes. The meeting of the Sharon Governance Study Committee was called to order at 7:00 pm by temporary Chair Paul Pietal. The meeting commenced with the recitation of the Pledge of Allegiance.

Joint meeting with Governance Study Committee

Mr. Heitin thanked the members for joining the meeting tonight. He explained that the Select Board would appoint a chair this evening and then discuss the logistics for the committee to begin the work they've been charged with undertaking. He would like to nominate Mr. Pietal to the position of Chair of the committee due to his experience leading other committees. Ms. Switekowski asked if any other members were interested. There being no indication of interest by other members, Mr. Pietal stated he was happy to accept.

MOTION: To appoint Paul Pietal as Chair of the Governance Study Committee.
(Heitin - Smith-Lee)

Switekowski: AYE

Smith-Lee: AYE

Heitin: AYE

3-0 **PASSES**

The Board went on to discuss the following logistics in getting the Governance Study Committee started. Mr. Heitin stated that Melissa will serve as administrative assistant to the committee and will be responsible for posting agendas, drafting minutes, and posting material to committee web page. The Committee will be obligated to hold at least one public hearing on topics citizens wish the committee to study. Timing should be after a few committee meetings where they organize the prioritized list of topics, approach to items of study, etc.

The Board stressed availability of staff to coordinate and assist with research questions for comparable towns experience and insisted on any requests for Town Counsel support go through Town Administrator. The committee should review potential meeting dates through October 31 to assure full participation of 11 members to the extent possible and they should discuss whether to use sub-committees for information gathering and to try to have full participation in discussion and votes on recommendations as frequent meetings of the 11 members will be difficult if full attendance is important.

Committee approach

Overall importance of comprehensive review to assure no unintended consequences of any proposed changes. Can't be piecemeal approach. Realize the committee will recommend language for bylaw changes to Select Board that it will consider and determine whether to forward to Town Meeting for consideration

Bylaws were codified and organized in 2017. Zoning regulations to be updated within next 8 months. Personnel bylaw was never updated since original in mid-80's. Approach to be bylaw proposal to fix issues or offer new processes/procedures. If charter should be pursued, it should be based on updated work of this committee as approved by Select Board and Town Meeting.

The following seven specific topics were prioritized:

1. Consider whether the Town should change the form of legislative body from open town meeting to representative town meeting or some other form.
 - Direct vs. representative democracy
 - Size of town/number of voters/modern realities impact on utility/equity of open town meeting

2. Consider and recommend whether Section 494 of the Town By-Laws, which sets the dates of the Annual Town Meeting and the Annual Town Election, should be changed.
 - Set date (as in first Monday of May) in bylaw or allow Select Board to set date every January when Warrant is opened (to better address logistical issues below)
 - Childcare
 - Elderly/disabled voter participation limited depending on afternoon vs evening or weekend vs weekday meeting date (driving at night, etc.)
 - Secular and religious holidays
 - Fiscal year realities impacting ability to schedule in narrow March 15 and June 15 window
 - Adequacy of indoor space to hold open town meeting given emerging new normal post-COVID-19
 - Educating voters in order to have meaningful participation
 - Limitations in state law to allow remote participation in open town meeting
3. Consider whether to increase the number of members of the Select Board and recommend a process for evaluating, debating, and deciding the issue.
 - Impact on leadership role among members, participation opportunities on priorities and capital outlay committees
 - Timing of implementation as to staggering of terms if adopted
 - Impact of numbers changing ratios when filling vacancies on elected boards
 - Other unintended consequences/companion bylaw changes on areas impacted by number of members
4. Consider whether to appoint rather than elect the Library Trustees or Planning Board, Other Boards and Committees and consider the length of term
 - Accountability of elected vs appointed officials serving on volunteer boards
 - Recruitment of candidate's vs applicants
 - The ability to attract qualified candidates
5. Evaluate the specific duties of the Finance Committee in relation to warrant articles and fiscal oversight and make recommendations as to the adequacy and appropriateness of current practice.
 - Should Fin Com continue to make recommendations on all articles or merely financial ones (Select Board and Planning Board to comment on articles in area of cognizance)?
 - Should fiscal oversight responsibilities of Fin Com be more clearly specified?
6. Review and consider recommendations to update the personnel by-law to reflect Federal and state legislative changes and court decisions, reflect best practices, and role, if any, of personnel board as it relates to school department employees.
 - Do we need personnel board to approve and rate job descriptions?
 - What is the relationship between personnel bylaw rating process and collective bargaining laws?
 - Should anyone other than the School Committee approve and rate job descriptions for school department employees? Can another body perform this function, even in an advisory role, under state law setting independence of school committees? Are there similar conflicts with library personnel?
7. Consider whether to recommend a process for evaluating and consolidating town by-laws into a charter document.

Ms. Switekowski commented that a level of decorum should be maintained as appointed officials, particularly on social media.

Ms. Smith-Lee remarked and the Board stressed that the work of this committee is very important.

MOTION: To adjourn the Governance Study Committee meeting at 7:27 pm.
(Carver - Arguimbau)

Carver: AYE	Arguimbau: AYE	Monahan: AYE	Silverleib: AYE
Rangarajan: AYE	King: AYE	Geller: AYE	Pietal: AYE
Goodman: AYE			
9-0	PASSES		