

SHARON GOVERNANCE STUDY COMMITTEE MINUTES

November 10, 2021

The meeting of the Sharon Governance Study Committee was called to order at 7:02 pm by Chair Paul Pietal.

Member attendance

Arguimbau: at 8:07	Carver: Present	Geller: Present	Goodman: at 7:22
Keenan: Present	King: Present	Monahan: Present	Pietal: Present
Rangarajan: Absent	Silverleib: Absent	Wluka: Absent	

Minutes

MOTION: To approve the minutes of the October 27, 2021 meeting.
(Geller - Carver)

Monahan: Abstain	Carver: AYE	Geller: AYE
Keenan: AYE	King: AYE	Pietal: AYE

5-0-1 **PASSES**

Subcommittee updates

Mr. Keenan provided an update on the Town Meeting subcommittee's activities. At their first working meeting, guest Town Clerk Mark Hogan answered questions about his role in the management of Town Meetings and questions from the subcommittee members. Mr. Hogan explained that several town officials have a responsibility for organizing different parts of the meeting, particularly the Moderator who controls most of the meeting. After the meeting, the Clerk's office is responsible for reporting the results to the Attorney General's office and other Departments. Before the meeting, the Clerk's office helps to prepare and send the warrant, organizes the audio/visual components, checks in voters, and conducts hand counts. They also discussed the costs of Town Meeting which have changed from typical years because of COVID. Combined with the fact that the High School is under construction and not able to be used, the past couple of years look different from a cost perspective. The 2021 overall cost was \$18,676 which included staff overtime wages. There was also a discussion about capacity. There are typically 330 parking spots at the high school and across the street at the Ames Street playground. The high school auditorium, cafetorium, and gymnasium can accommodate anywhere from 2900 to 3100 and there are generally a handful of officials who sit on the stage. They discussed that hand counts take an average of 7 minutes to conduct, a frequent criticism of Town Meeting. They also discussed what improvements could be made. Mr. Hogan is investigating the possibility of electronic voting systems but COVID has delayed being able to see them used live at meetings in other communities that use them. At one of their upcoming meetings, the Town Meeting subcommittee expects to have MA Municipal Association in to discuss forms of government.

Mr. King provided an update on the Board and Committee subcommittee's activities. Their discussions centered around a survey, how to collect data from residents, how to develop the content of a survey, and what questions to ask. Social media doesn't capture the entirety of the population. They discussed anonymity and public records and the potential of having a third party conduct a survey. They discussed possible resources and how to conduct a survey without a budget.

The IT Department provided information on how many email addresses are on file between those who have signed up for notification of updates on the webpage and those on file with DPW, a total of about 2600. It is not clear whether they are all active email addresses.

Mr. King advised that the next subcommittee meeting is next week.

Citizen outreach

This topic was put on the agenda to develop questions and determine survey methods but this was just discussed as part of the subcommittee updates. Mr. Pietal suggested it would be a good idea to start thinking about questions.

It was mentioned that perhaps the annual census that goes out in January could include a survey. It was mentioned that there may be more than one registered voter per household.

Liaison reports

Mr. Carver had a productive meeting with the Finance Committee on Monday evening. He advised that they covered a long list of topics. He stated he would not give a lengthy summary unless there were questions. They stated that their role is essentially to comment on the warrant, make financial estimates of articles, and so on on the part of the public. Their responsibilities have grown over the years. They keep an eye on getting our bond ratings up. They mentioned that Town Hall staff produces high-quality reports which makes their work much easier. They feel that they are a committee that works well together. They discussed open town meetings versus representative town meetings and the majority favored open town meetings. They were unanimously in favor of expanding the Select Board membership. They feel that the moderator appointed nominating committee works well.

Topics not anticipated within 48 hours of posting

None

Adjourn

Mr. Pietal adjourned at 8:00 pm.