**SHARON GOVERNANCE STUDY COMMITTEE MINUTES**

*July 20, 2022*

The Sharon Governance Study Committee meeting was called to order at 7:32 pm by Chair Paul Pietal.

**Member attendance**

|  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
| Arguimbau: Present | Carver: Present | Geller: Present | Goodman: Present |
| Keenan: Present | King: Present | Michalek: Present | Monahan: Present |
| Pietal: Present | Rangarajan: Present | Wluka: Present |  |

Also present at the meeting was Mark Fine from MAPC

**New Member Introduction**

Chair Pietal introduced Joanne Michalek as the newest member of the Committee. Other members introduced themselves to Ms. Michalek.

**Updates**

**MAPC**

Mr. Fine supplied an overview of the research that MAPC has done at the Committee’s request, having presented reports to each subcommittee. Details will be provided in a memo that MAPC will send to the committee. He highlighted key points, as follows:

* **Non-citizen voting** in local elections & town meeting: several municipalities have sent home rule petitions to the legislature, and there’s been some discussion in the legislature more broadly. There seems to be growing interest across the Commonwealth, but the legislature has moved slowly. There is some proposed legislation currently, and Mr. Fine will include it in his memo.
* **Recall and removal from office**: Recall is a political process involving elected officials, where removal is about appointed roles. Some communities have such provisions in by-laws restricted to particular boards and committees, typically for non-attendance. Some communities create codes of conduct for certain boards, with specific and clear guidelines. For recall, typically there is required number of voters signing a petition. In response to a question, Mr. Fine noted that a recall and removal processes can take months.
* **Personnel Boards and Finance Committees**: MAPC looked at practices in 5 peer towns. Sharon’s Finance Committee is larger that those in the comparable communities. Our process of selecting Fin Comm members is unusual, and our committee has a broader charge than other towns. Every community has nuanced aspects of the Fin Comm composition. One important question is whether the town views Fin Comm as a creature of the Legislature (TM) or the Executive (Select Board). Towns also vary in whether they have a Personnel Board or a Personnel ByLaw; Holliston, for example, replaced the Board with an HR professional. Some Personnel Boards are strictly advisory to the Town Manager or other professional in Town Hall.

In response to a question, he noted that some towns have either a Warrant or Finance Committee, but he knows of none with both.

In committee discussion, it was noted that early in our process we stepped back from a review of the Personnel By-Law, but should take up the broader concept of how we deal with Personnel, and whether this is a function that should be professionalized.

* **Information about Town Governance**: Mr. Fine observed that MAPC’s research revealed some good models of communication about how town governance works, and on-boarding new residents into the complexities of governance.
  + Mr. Pietal noted that the last item in our charge refers to the creation of a Charter, which might simplify and codify the basic principles and authority of local governance. Mr. Fine reminded the committee that a Charter can be a high-level codification, much less detailed than by-laws.
  + MAPC will look into which towns have recently adopted a charter.
  + In response to a question from Mr. Goodman, Mr. Fine explained that a charter, once approved by the state legislature, empowers a town to make governance changes without state approval.

**Town-wide survey update**

Mr. Rangarajan reports that we have 765 responses to date, because of our outreach efforts. 95 of those respondents attended the 2022 Town Meeting. Additionally, we have received an unknown number of paper surveys.

Mr. Keenan reports that a postcard will go out town wide to promote the survey. We set a deadline of August 10. Mr. Pietal complimented Mr. Keenan on his efforts.

Mr. King inquired whether we have a way to track the number of responses in connection with promotional postings and mailings. In later discussion we concluded that we are able to do so in a limited way.

Ms. Monahan recommended that each of us circle back to our liaison assignments to remind them of the survey, and also make one more social media push. There was further discussion about use of social media thus far.

Mr. Goodman noted that he had reached out to the various organizations in our contact list, but saw little impact. The emails from Town Hall seem to have been far more effective.

Ms. Michalek asked if we have reached out to various civic groups, and volunteered to send the survey link with such groups.

**Deliberation Process Planning**

Mr. Pietal asked Mr. Keenan to summarize what the Town Meeting subcommittee is doing to start deliberations. In one recent meeting, members shared their current thinking about the major decisions regarding selection of a legislative structure. After that, subcommittee members drafted motions related to scheduling, communications, and procedures. The subcommittee debated and voted on several of those motions and expects to complete the process in the next meeting. One specific vote is to retain OTM as the legislative form, with a number of changes.

Ms. Monahan asked if the subcommittee would be recommending improvements to OTM, and Mr. Keenan said yes.

Mr. King inquired which subcommittee Ms. Michalek will join, and the current intention is to join the Town Meeting subcommittee.

Mr. Pietal recommends that subcommittee votes be discussed and reviews by the full committee, and there was unanimous consent.

**Planning Schedule Review**

The committee needs to complete work in December, with a report to the Select Board. We are slightly behind the draft schedule, and members discussed ways to adjust the schedule to both permit the subcommittees to do their deliberations and move towards closure. Discussion included the current agendas of the subcommittees.

Mr. Pietal asked Mr. King to take the lead on checking schedules, vacation plans, etc. for Boards and Committees.

There was further discussion about when the second Public Forum will happen. This is yet to be determined.

**Other Subcommittee Updates**

Mr. King reported that the subcommittee discussed and voted that Town Clerk should remain an elected position.

**Minutes**

**MOTION:** To approve the minutes of the June 8, 2022 meeting, with minor corrections.

(King - Geller)

|  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
| Arguimbau: Aye | Carver: Aye | Geller: Aye | Goodman: Abstain |
| Keenan: Aye | King: Aye | Michalek: Abstain | Monahan: Aye |
| Pietal: Abstain | Rangarajan: Aye | Wluka: Aye |  |

8-0-3 **PASSES**

**MOTION:** To approve the minutes of the June 14, 2022 Public Forum, with minor correction

(King - Michalek)

|  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
| Arguimbau: Aye | Carver: Aye | Geller: Aye | Goodman: Aye |
| Keenan: Aye | King: Aye | Michalek: Abstain | Monahan: Aye |
| Pietal: Aye | Rangarajan: Aye | Wluka: Aye |  |

10-0-1 **PASSES**

**MOTION:** To approve the minutes of the June 22, 2022 meeting, with minor corrections.

(King - Goodman)

|  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
| Arguimbau: Aye | Carver: Aye | Geller: Aye | Goodman: Aye |
| Keenan: Aye | King: Aye | Michalek: Abstain | Monahan: Aye |
| Pietal: Aye | Rangarajan: Aye | Wluka: Abstain |  |

9-0-2 **PASSES**

**Topics not anticipated within 48 hours of posting**

**Adjourn**

Seeing no other business to come before the committee, Mr. Pietal adjourned the meeting at 9:21 pm.