**SHARON GOVERNANCE STUDY COMMITTEE MINUTES**

*August 17, 2022*

The Sharon Governance Study Committee meeting was called to order at 7:33 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: Absent | Wluka: Present |  |

Also present at the meeting were Brian Luther and Mark Fine from MAPC

**Correspondence**

Committee received a handwritten note from Bertha Foster which has been saved to Committee’s shared Google drive. She suggested open-ended questions on future surveys.

**Updates**

**MAPC**

Luther and Fine referred to comparable towns with Charters. They are also looking into town manager/administrator position noting what is currently in by-laws and where Sharon could make changes. Wenham has made many changes over the last 5-10 years in this area. They will note how we can codify what the position does.

General discussion of ZBA terms and number of committee members. General discussion of recall provisions.

**Town-wide Survey Results and Discussion**

presentation by Rob Carver with assistance from Matt Keenan

See Town-wide Governance Study Draft Report August 17, 2022. 1231 respondents – 9.4% of registered voters. Survey responses skewed towards male (Sharon is generally 52/48 female to male with small number who classify as other. Select Board preference for 5 members 59% - 726 respondents. 43% (529 respondents) prefer Open Town Meeting. 57% (702 respondents) prefer noncitizen voting (this includes 99% of 64 noncitizens who took survey).

There are 13132 registered voters in Sharon as of May 2022.

Of respondents: 42% have attended Town Meeting within the last 4 years; 38% have never attended. 20% attended before 2019 but not since. Noted that more people said they attended Town Meeting than there were actual people who attended.

On the question of why people don’t attend Town Meeting:

44% - scheduling conflicts

39% - town meeting too long

30% - concerned about Covid

28% - caregiving (general discussion of caregiving – if childcare is provided, can’t keep children out after 9pm.

Preferred day of town meeting:

29% - Sunday afternoon

17% - Saturday night

Hybrid meetings:

60% - prefer hybrid meetings

Discussion of hybrid meetings - Covid meeting rules are currently in place until March 2023. Hybrid (participants can be in person and online simultaneously) meetings would go against state law; Sharon could have staffing and technology issues providing hybrid meetings. Possible solution/recommendation is to start with Select Board, Finance Committee, and School Committee with hybrid meeting.

People learn about town government in many ways including friends/family, town warrant, social media, town website/emails, etc.

Form of Government: These are considered weak statistical results and not statistically significant.

Town Council – preferred by: residents of town <27 years; ages 48-59; have not attended Town Meeting within the last 4 years; reporting barriers to attendance; nonmembers of boards/committees.

Open Town Meeting – preferred by: people over age 60; residents of town >27 years; current and former members of boards/committees.

Matt Keenan noted listserv emails sent were helpful, and there were 500 survey responses after postcard mailing.

For anonymity IP addresses were not tracked and survey did not limit responses to 1 per IP address.

Discussion of number of members for Select Board and whether Sharon has enough qualified candidates. In the past 17 elections there have been 10 contested elections including 4 open seat elections that attracted 2, 2, 3, and 4 candidates.

**Subcommittee Updates:** Summary of tentative decisions to date

Town Meeting Subcommittee – Matt Keenan discussed document – Summary of Town Meeting Subcommittee Proposals and Votes August 17, 2022.

Boards and Committees Subcommittee – has had many recent guests; voted to replace Personnel Board with a human resources professional; discussing/researching recall and removal related to nonattendance; has not voted on Select Board due to not having full subcommittee in attendance; is not interested in pursuing term limits; voted in favor of training for committee/board members; voted in favor of orientation for new committee/board members; voted in favor of no changes to the Finance Committee.

**Minutes**

**MOTION:** To approve the minutes of the July 27, 2022 meeting, with minor corrections.

(Arguimbau - Geller)

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

10-0-0 **PASSES**

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

Next meetings August 31, 2022 7:30pm and September 7, 2022 7:30pm

**Adjourn**

Seeing no other business to come before the committee, Mr. Pietal adjourned the meeting at 9:33 pm.

**List of documents used at this meeting**

* Town-wide Governance Study Draft Report August 17, 2022
* Summary of Town Meeting Subcommittee Proposals and Votes August 17, 2022