

SHARON GOVERNANCE STUDY COMMITTEE MINUTES

September 28, 2022

The Sharon Governance Study Committee meeting was called to order at 7:34 pm by Chair Paul Pietal.

Member attendance

Arguimbau: Absent	Carver: Present	Geller: Absent	Goodman: Present (arr 7:41)
Keenan: Present	King: Present	Michalek: Present	Monahan: Present
Pietal: Present	Rangarajan: Absent	Wluka: Present (arr 7:42)	

Also in attendance was Mark Fine of MAPC.

Correspondence

None received.

Addressing Remaining Open Items

a. Personnel Board restructuring or elimination

Mr. Pietal reviewed prior discussions and summarized discussions to date.

Reporting on a recent discussion within the Personnel Board, he explained that some current members of the Board cite the importance of citizen oversight in personnel matters. Workload and tasks have varied over the years. Members vary in background knowledge, and it has been challenging to recruit Board members who have relevant HR background. Training could compensate for gaps in knowledge.

Current members of the Board have expressed interest in having support from a Human Resources professional in Town Hall, analogous to the way the Conservation Commission works with the Town's Conservation Agent.

The Personnel Board reviews job descriptions and ratings, and reviews salaries for fairness for the management team in the town, but is not involved in negotiations for union contracts. The Board has been effective in enforcing rules and standards as part of that oversight role.

Mr. Turkington has engaged an attorney, Kevin Bresnahan of Murphy, Hesse, Toomey and Lehane of Quincy, to help review of Personnel By-Law. Mr. Turkington also asked Ms. Kelly and Mr. Pietal to confer with Mr. Bresnahan regarding potential changes to the Personnel By-Law.

Mr. Fine inquired about the function of the Secretary to the Personnel Board. This is a part-time support position. Discussion followed about periodic involvement of other town officials at Board meetings.

Further discussion focused on whether the functions of the Board are best carried out by an appointed volunteer board. Some towns have assigned the roles to professionals under a Town Manager with a citizen panel in an advisory or oversight capacity. Trend seems to be towards professionalizing, with oversight responsibilities assigned elsewhere.

MOVED: Sharon disband its Personnel Board and replace it with professional staff.

(Keenan – King)

Arguimbau: Absent	Carver: Aye	Geller: Absent	Goodman: Nay
Keenan: Aye	King: Aye	Michalek: Aye	Monahan: Abstain
Pietal: Nay	Rangarajan: Absent	Wluka: Aye	

PASSED (5-2-1)

b. Planning Board configuration

Mr. Pietal referenced the comments from Mr. Pannone, current Planning Board chair. Issues are length of term, appointed vs. elected board, and challenge of recruiting new members, as well as the time required to bring new members up to speed.

Discussion also touched on creation of a full-time Planner, possibly re-classifying a current DPW position.

Mr. Wluka spoke about flaws and lack of transparency in the current process that make permitting very time-consuming. These are not unique to Sharon, but occur across the state. The slow pace of the current process is one reason to retain a 5-year term rather than a 3-year term.

There was extended discussion about the functions of the Planning Board and Zoning Board of Appeals, as well as the kinds of issues that arise in the planning process.

MOVED: That the Planning Board remain an elected Board.

(Wluka – Carver)

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

PASSED (7-0-1)

The sense of the committee is that the questions of Board tenure and size warrant further study and discussion.

c. Simultaneous service on boards and committees

Mr. Keenan summarized the subcommittee discussion of this topic. The main idea was to limit individuals' ability to serve on multiple elected and appointed committees. The goal is to avoid possible conflicts of interest and overlapping responsibilities, to limit overreliance on a relatively small number of citizens, and to encourage wider recruitment of citizens.

Discussion focused on the extent to which such situations arise, and whether a new policy is called for. Voters can decide in the case of elected positions, and appointing authorities can use their discretion.

MOVED: That we limit simultaneous service on boards and committees: This proposal would limit residents from serving on more than two elected or appointed boards or committees at one time. The purpose of the proposal is to enable board members to avoid conflicts of interest (as could arise from serving on boards with overlapping or opposing mandates); to avoid the town's overreliance on a relative handful of citizen volunteers; and to encourage outreach to underrepresented communities and to promote diversity in town service.

(Keenan – Goodman)

Arguimbau: Absent	Carver: Nay	Geller: Absent	Goodman: Aye
Keenan: Aye	King: Abstain	Michalek: Nay	Monahan: Nay
Pietal: Nay	Rangarajan: Absent	Wluka: Nay	

FAILED: (2 -5-1)

- d. Address incumbent advantage on ballots
Discussion around whether the order of names on ballots should be done by lot rather than listing incumbents first, and whether candidates for re-election should be identified as such. Agreed that incumbents who were appointed to fill a vacancy are not candidates for re-election.

MOVED: In future ballots, the names of candidates shall be ordered by lot, and that candidates for re-election be identified.

(Wluka – Keenan)

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

PASSED (8 -0 -0)

- e. Board/Committee recruitment process
Recommendation from the Town Meeting subcommittee: “That the Town establish a Recruitment and Nominations Committee whose function is to recruit new volunteers for town boards, committees, and special projects. Members of this committee should be designees of the Select Board, School Committee, Finance Committee and Planning Board. All nominations forwarded by this panel would be subject to the approval of the Select Board. The committee shall be charged with engaging previously under-involved residents and developing future civic volunteers and leaders.”

Discussion revolved around possible risks and practicalities, and whether this should be a standing committee or a temporary experimental group. There were also questions about the challenge of getting people to serve on this committee.

Suggestions were made to reframe this in terms of developing a marketing plan for the time.

Sense of the committee is that this concept warrants more attention, and that it belongs in our report. Given the lateness of the hour, we will defer this for further consideration during the writing process.

- f. Revision of Town Administrator Role pending move to 5 member Select Board

Mr. Wluka recommended that this committee should consult with Mr. Turkington regarding the potential changes in the relationship between the Town Administrator and a larger Select Board. There is concern that with a larger board, the division of responsibilities and dynamics of that relationship are likely to change.

Mr. Fine briefly characterized some of the experiences of other towns with larger Select Boards. Mr. Fine agreed to further research the responsibilities of Town Administrators, Town Managers, and Executive Secretaries in peer communities.

- g. Charter creation

Brief discussion about how to proceed on developing recommendations with respect to a town charter.

Report Writing Process and Assignments

Mr. Pietal sketched out possible sections of a final report, suggesting that two people team up to write sections on committee background, major decisions, individuals writing up smaller portions on, for example, our consent agenda.

There was further discussion about other materials to include in the report, especially describing the committee process and documents prepared along the way.

Ms. Monahan agreed to lead the editorial effort to ensure that the document is concise and reflects a consistent tone. Mr. King, Mr. Keenan, and Mr. Pietal will collaborate on an outline and initial writing assignments.

We'll use the next two weeks to start writing and have our next full meeting on October 12.

Minutes

MOTION: To approve the minutes of the September 7, 2022 meeting with minor corrections.

(King – Keenan)

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

8-0-0 **PASSED**

MOTION: To approve the minutes of the September 14, 2022 meeting.

(King – Wluka)

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

7-0-1 **PASSED**

MOTION: To approve the minutes of the September 19, 2022 Public Forum.

(King – Carver)

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

7 - 0 - 1 **PASSED**

Topics not anticipated within 48 hours of posting

None

Adjourn

Seeing no other business to come before the committee, Mr. Pietal adjourned the meeting at 10:08 pm.