

SHARON GOVERNANCE STUDY COMMITTEE MINUTES

March 2, 2022

The meeting of the Sharon Governance Study Committee was called to order at 7:33 pm by Chair Paul Pietal.

Member attendance

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

Discussion with Town Administrator, Frederic Turkington, Jr.

The committee discussed and agreed at a previous meeting that it would help to hear from Town Administrator, Fred Turkington, about his experiences in municipal government. Mr. Turkington thanked the committee for inviting him and spoke about his background. He explained that he began his career in Norwalk, CT as an intern while in grad school. He accepted a position as an Assistant Town Administrator in the much smaller community of Vernon, CT, a community of 30,000 with a demographic similar to Natick. He served as Chief Administrative Officer in Canton, CT until 2005 when he transitioned to employment in Wayland, MA. He has worked in environments with both three and five-member Select Boards as well as a city council of twelve.

Mr. Turkington commented that Sharon is the first community where he has worked where there has been a three-member Select Board. He stated he is not sure there is a right or wrong answer with respect to size as his experience has been that the five-member board and 12 member city council worked effectively in their respective communities. His concern with the citizen's petition presented before the last annual Town Meeting was that there would be unintended consequences that should have been vetted and thought through. Additionally, the move from a three to five-member board also presents a math problem in that the State requires shorter staggered terms for newly elected members which would be 1-1-1 over three years or 2-2-1 over three years. If that move were to have happened as a result of Town Meeting for example, with Mr. Heitin retiring and three contested Select Board seats, the two incumbents would have a combined experience of fewer than five years. He understands there is no way around this if the community elects to increase the size of the Board but in the initial transition year, it would be helpful that two long-standing incumbents remain on the board so as to retain institutional knowledge.

He provided an overview answered the committee's questions about the benefits and challenges of both open and representative town meetings. He answered the committee's questions about the benefits of a charter and how a charter differs from bylaws and whether the home rule petition would remain if the Town adopted a charter.

The committee thanked Mr. Turkington for taking the time to meet with them.

Discussion with Select Board candidates

The three candidates for Select Board were also invited to speak with the committee this evening about their opinions on a three versus a five-member Select Board. Mr. Xander Shapiro, Mr. Dan Lewenberg, and Ms. Kiana Pierre-Louis explained their thoughts on the subject. All support a change to a five-member board. Mr. Shapiro mentioned that based on the discussion with Mr. Turkington, he expects to give the matter more thought. Mr. Lewenberg stated that the Finance Committee unanimously supported the citizen's petition and he stands with that position. Ms. Pierre-Louis mentioned that there may be an increase in accessibility with a five-member board in addition to there being a diversity of views.

The committee thanked the candidates for running, and for sharing their time to discuss this matter.

Winchester RTM video

Mr. Carver found, during his research, a video prepared by the Town of Winchester explaining how their representative town meetings function. The link was shared with the committee. Those who have viewed it found that it was very well done and might be a useful tool for Sharon. Sharon TV was consulted about taking on a project similar to the Winchester RTM video. They are happy to do anything that will help with outreach.

The committee agreed that this is a worthwhile project and that the next step may be to create a framework for a similar project in Sharon. There was a brief discussion about setting this item aside while the committee engages in other tasks.

Adjourn

Due to the time, Mr. Pietal tabled the remainder of the evening's business adjourned the meeting at 9:30 pm.