**SHARON GOVERNANCE STUDY COMMITTEE MINUTES OPEN FORUM**

*September 19, 2022*

The Second Open Public Forum conducted by the Sharon Governance Study Committee was called to order at 7:04 pm by Chair Paul Pietal. This was a hybrid session, with people attending in person at the Sharon Community Center and on Zoom.

**Member attendance**

| Arguimbau: Present (Zoom) | Carver: Present (SCC) | Geller: Absent | Goodman: Absent |
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| Keenan: Present (SCC) | King: Present (SCC) | Monahan: Present (Zoom) | Pietal: Present (SCC) |
| Rangarajan: Present (SCC) | Wluka: Present (SCC) | Michalek: Present (SCC) |  |

**Opening Remarks**

Mr. Pietal opened the meeting explaining that the purpose of the session is to invite public comment and input. He identified the members of the committee and reviewed the timeline of committee efforts to date.

Mr. Keenan summarized work of Town Meeting Subcommittee, noting the following:

* Explained reasons for and against retaining OTM, and reported 8-2 vote to retain Open Town Meeting
* Noncitizen voting: unanimous vote to recommend permitting noncitizen participation in Town Meeting and Town Elections, provided background and the necessary steps to implement
* Electronic voting: recommending adoption as part of a 3-year experiment
* Remote participation: cited state law and Wayland’s efforts in that regard.

Mr. King similarly reported on the Boards and committee subcommittee:

* Select Board – interviewed prior Select Board members, did other research, reviewed survey responses. Voted 7-3 to expand to 5 members
* Personnel Board – leaning towards professionalizing
* The subcommittee has been reviewing committees in general, and recommending standardization of web sites and clear statements of roles, duties and responsibilities of each committee.
* Resignation or loss of a committee member; committees should communicate with the appointing authority as to the needs of the committee when appointing someone to fill the vacancy.

**Public Reaction and Input**

During the open discussion, the following topics, concerns, questions and ideas were raised by Sharon residents in attendance in person and on Zoom.

* Questions from/about the Planning Board:
  + Currently has 5-year term, which is helpful for long-range planning and learning curve for new members, but discouraging for potential candidates. It is difficult to encourage people to run. The 5-year term reflects the time horizon for projects and is appropriate to the mission of the Board.
  + Should Planning Board be appointed or elected?
  + An unintended consequence of shorter planning board terms is that it could become difficult/costly/discouraging for developers to see a project through to completion due to turnover on the board.
  + Even with a shorter term, incumbents can always opt to run again.
* Comments about Communications
  + Have we considered publishing committee members/ town employee email addresses on the site. Resident notes that BOTS can scrape email addresses and this can create issues with spamming.
  + Upgrade our use of email and other direct communication with residents
  + Consider using Social Media such as Facebook groups to augment legally-required notifications.
* Comments related to Open Town Meeting
  + ATM has become more efficient in recent years, but many residents are not aware of those changes (see Survey results). Hence, we should do more to publicize the improvements already in place
  + Electronic voting at town meeting is a fantastic idea, and works well in other towns. Point of resistance in the past has been is the cost, but there may be grant money or less expensive technologies today.
  + Some of our recommendations about OTM are to institutional practices that we already follow, but want to codify
* Comments related to size of Select Board and Town Administrator
  + Should five members be elected at large or by precinct?
  + Many towns with larger Select Boards have a Town Manager rather than Town Administrator or Executive Secretary. We may want to consider the implications of shifting responsibilities with a larger board.
* Discussion of other issues not yet fully discussed by the Gov Study Committee
  + Potential creation of a recruitment/nominating committee to populate Boards and Committees. One resident noted that recruitment plans are the norm in the Human Resources function of private organizations.
  + Sought citizen input on the practice of a Warrant Meeting prior to Annual Town Meeting. There was some comment that the meeting is useful, if poorly attended.

**Adjourn**

Seeing no other business to come before the committee, Mr. Pietal adjourned the meeting at 7:59 pm.

Mr. Carver and Mr. Rangarajan contributed notes to these minutes.