

SHARON GOVERNANCE STUDY COMMITTEE

Boards Subcommittee MINUTES

July 27, 2022

The Boards Sub-Committee meeting was called to order at 7:31 pm by Chair Phillip King.

Member attendance

King: Present

Monahan: Present

Goodman: Present

Wluka: Arrived 7:48

Pietal: Present

Approval of Minutes

Minutes of July 13 were approved 3-0-1.

Discussion with Former Selectboard Member and Community Member

Judy Crosby and Henry Katz joined the meeting to discuss their experience as former members of committees. Ms. Crosby served on the School Committee and Mr. Katz served 9 years as a Selectman.

Ms. Crosby stated that she strongly favors expanding the Select Board from 3 to 5 members. She noted an example where a 3 member board signed a contract without knowing the contents, and she indicated the reason was that all three members were too busy. She also felt that tax relief opportunities have also been missed due to lack of Select Board member's availability. She feels that forming subcommittees with only 3 members is difficult. She also noted that having 5 members would make it easier to have discussions with other members outside of formal meetings. She indicated that the Select Board votes with one voice to fill vacancies, implying that discussions might have occurred outside of formal meetings. She also noted that the Select Board discouraged some candidates from running for the School Committee.

In response to a question from Mr. King about the size of the School Committee, Ms. Crosby indicated it expanded in order to relieve the issue of an even number of members and the potential for tie votes. Expanding was much easier than contracting in size.

In response to a question from Mr. Goodman on why more than 5 might not be better, Ms. Crosby felt that would be too quick of a change. She also said that it feels like the town is run in the style of a Town Manager, instead of a Town Administrator. Mr. Wluka mentioned that perhaps the Town might consider moving to a Town Manager style of administration. Mr. Katz noted that the Select Board needs to understand their roles as do all boards and committees. Ms. Crosby concurred and indicated training for members of all boards should be provided. In the past, the Town Administrator had organized training seminars where 80-90 people attended.

Mr. Katz noted that moving to 5 members would add politics to the mix and endanger the fiscal control currently in place. In his experience, the 3 member board would collaborate on hard fiscal issues.

Mr. Goodman asked if adding 2 members would assist in collective bargaining negotiation. Mr. Katz did not think so. Ms. Crosby felt it would by potentially providing a broader expertise from the additional members.

Ms. Crosby would be in favor of term limits for all board and committee members. She thinks that there should be 2 to 3 terms max. This would allow for more perspectives on committees. She feels that a 3 member board is more prone to "groupthink".

Ms. Crosby noted that the Finance Committee looks at the big picture and provides a non-biased view. They also maintain a good liaison structure to other boards and committees. They also provide a good role on the Priorities Committee.

Mr. Katz doesn't feel that the size of the Select Board is an issue. He feels moving to 5 members would increase the political nature of the Board and make it less collegial. He noted that the Select Board are hands-on managers, setting it apart from the School Committee, which is an oversight committee with the school administration acting as the hands-on managers.

Mr. King provided input from Richard Kramer on the size of the Select Board. Mr. Kramer would support moving to 5 members but with a process to return to a 3 member board if not successful. He also would support keeping the terms at 3 years.

MAPC updates

None

Town Wide Survey Update

Mr. Goodman noted the School Committee will announce the availability of the survey to its constituents.

Deliberation Planning

Discussion ensued on the potential dates for the Boards Subcommittee meetings. It was felt that the subcommittee needs to meet more frequently, perhaps in place of full committee meetings for the short term.

Topics not anticipated within 48 hours of posting

None.

Adjourn

Seeing no other business to come before the committee, Mr. King adjourned the meeting at 9:41 pm.