

Sharon Governance Study Committee Subcommittee on Town Meeting

Minutes of meeting held November 29, 2021, at 7:30 p.m.

Attendance

Present:

- Peg Arguimbau
- Robert Carver
- Keevin Geller
- Matthew Keenan
- Ganesh Rangarajan

Absent:

- Maureen Silverleib

Data comparison

Rob Carver presented a statistical analysis of Massachusetts towns that most closely resemble Sharon. Using data from the state Department of Revenue, the Massachusetts Taxpayers Association and media sources, Mr. Carver identified 16 communities that are similar to Sharon – as measured by demographics, income, voter participation and other factors. The subcommittee will use the results to examine the governing structures in those communities.

Discussion

Keevin Geller suggested that the subcommittee members disclose what direction they are leaning, though not what their final decision on the town governance structure should be, in order to facilitate discussions. The committee members discussed the idea without taking action.

The committee discussed which experts, town officials, legislators and citizens should be invited to appear at upcoming meetings. Michael Dutton, town manager of Bridgewater and chair of the form of governance committee of the Massachusetts Municipal Management Association, expressed his willingness to speak to the group in December.

Matthew Keenan reached out to Mr. Dutton, who can discuss:

- Current trends in municipal governance in Massachusetts.
- The strengths and weaknesses in each form (open and representative town meetings, as well as town council).
- The possible ways in which to improve and increase participation in open town meetings.
- The advantages and disadvantages in choosing another form of governance, either representative town meeting or council, in a town like Sharon.

Minutes

The subcommittee approved the minutes of the Nov. 3 meeting.