**Town Meeting Subcommittee**

**Minutes of Meeting of July 13, 2022**

Members present:

Peg Arguimbau

Rob Carver

Keevin Geller

Matthew Keenan

Ganesh Rangarajan

Also present:

Brian Luther, Metropolitan Area Planning Council

**Report from MAPC**

Mr. Luther presented research findings regarding Town Meeting attendance in a handful of comparable communities in eastern Massachusetts, as well as efforts in some of those towns to attract more voters to the events.

In this comparison, Mr. Luther said, Sharon’s Town Meeting attendance in the last 5 years was somewhat above the group average. He noted that the Wayland, another community in the group, has extensive experience with on-site electronic voting. The town of Wenham, which had the highest average attendance in the group, placed particular emphasis on communicating with and educating residents about the issues considered at its Town Meeting.

**Debates and votes on resolutions**

The subcommittee considered and voted on the following items. They will be forwarded to the full Governance Study Committee, which will decide whether to pass them on to the Select Board. The resolutions were:

* **Form of government**: Moved that the town retain the open town meeting form of government. We call on the Select Board to work to improve the existing form of our town government by implementing changes/recommendations from the Governance Study Committee to encourage greater participation and provide opportunities for voters to better understand issues prior to any Town Meeting. (Ms. Arguimbau) **Approved, 4-1. (Ms. Arguimbau, Mr. Carver, Mr. Geller and Mr. Rangarajan in favor; Mr. Keenan opposed.)**
* Proposal that the Select Board and town clerk work with the Recreation Department, School Department and other relevant bodies to minimize schedule conflicts on the dates of Town Meeting. (Mr. Carver) **Approved, 5-0**.
* ~~Proposal that no other town activities will be scheduled for the day/days of Town Meeting, including committee meetings, sports events or town or religious events. (Ms. Arguimbau)~~ **Withdrawn**
* **Proposal that the town clerk and Select Board identify an appropriate Annual Town Meeting date.** The default or target day for the annual Town Meeting should be the first [Monday] in May. We recognize that, at times, efforts will need to be made to accommodate members of certain religious communities and others. The purpose of this resolution is to avoid scheduling conflicts that may effectively exclude segments of the voting population. The proposal does not seek to set a particular day for the annual meeting; instead, it sets a target and encourages flexibility by the town’s decision-makers to enable maximum voter participation. We call on the clerk and Select Board to similarly collaborate on dates for special meetings. {The subcommittee reserves the right to revisit this issue pending the results of the town-wide survey.} (Mr. Keenan) **Approved, 5-0.**
* Proposal to set aside two consecutive days of the week to address the business of the town. If more are needed, the third day would be in the following week. (Ms. Arguimbau) **Approved, 5-0.**
* Proposal to retain the twice-yearly meeting schedule, with the May (annual) meeting to address budget, capital expenditures and non-zoning-related articles, and the fall meeting reserved for zoning and bylaw changes. Allowances should be made to allow for any time-sensitive articles that may arise.(Ms. Arguimbau) **Approved, 5-0.**

**Minutes**

The subcommittee unanimously approved the minutes of the June 29, 2022, meeting.