

TOWN GOVERNMENT STUDY COMMITTEE (TGSC) ANNUAL REPORT 2015

The Town Government Study Committee had a very productive year with seven articles submitted and approved by Town Meeting for improvements to our form of government. The Committee held nineteen meetings in 2015, exclusive of subcommittee meetings.

The genesis of the seven articles was the Commonwealth of Massachusetts Department of Revenue review issued in the fall of 2013 as well as ideas from residents, town meeting members, and town officials received over the past three years. The Committee also conducted research of the best practices in place in comparable towns in Massachusetts and interviewed officials in other towns in regard to several of the changes proposed.

The two major changes recommended by the Committee and adopted by Town Meeting have to do with increasing the size of the Board of Selectmen and increasing the power and responsibilities of the Town Administrator. Both changes require approval by the Massachusetts Legislature and the increase in the size of the Board of Selectmen would also require approval by the voters of Milton. Boards of selectmen have been increasing in size in Massachusetts based upon workload increases caused by the increased complexity of local government, by material increases in population, budget, and by added laws and regulations at the federal and state levels of government. Our research showed that 89% of towns with a population greater than 20,000 have five member boards of selectmen. The goal is to have our Board of Selectmen function more like a board of directors focusing on policy and long range strategic issues with the Town Administrator assuming a greater role in running town government. This goal becomes the basis behind our second major recommendation to strengthen the Town Administrator position. Our recommendation calls for the Town Administrator to assume broader financial and operational management responsibilities, including coordination and preparation of the Town's budget for submission to the Warrant Committee as well as long range financial planning and modeling. Another major change in responsibility would be that the Town Administrator will be responsible for the appointment of more than 100 positions, including department heads such as the Police Chief and Fire chief now appointed by the board of selectmen.

The Committee had five other recommendations approved by Town Meeting including:

- a. Converting the existing "standing" audit committee to a bylaw authorized permanent committee. The audit committee is strengthened by clearly articulating the scope of its responsibilities and independence with an annual requirement to report to Town Meeting on compliance by Town Departments with the annual management letter and internal control recommendations.
- b. Establishing a permanent Information Technology committee under the bylaws, responsible for the full evaluation of all town computer technology and contracts. The proposed committee will need to address where Town departments are with information technology, a detailed plan on how to bring the departments up to date, and a detailed plan on how to adopt new technology into town departments.

- c. Establishment of a post employment benefits liability trust fund and continued funding of the trust fund. This trust fund would primarily address the retirement health insurance costs which the town has historically funded on an as you go basis and instead should be funded during an employee's working career to cover the costs to be incurred during retirement. Adoption of this recommendation will help the town to comply with governmental accounting and state requirements and is a sound financial practice.
- d. Defining a quorum of an appointed town committee to be a simple majority of its appointed members rather than the number of members authorized. This recommendation is intended to address periods when appointed committees have less than the full complement due to vacancies. This would enable these committees to continue to conduct business and operate smoothly on behalf of the citizens and the town so long as there is a quorum of the appointed members present. The Town Meeting approved this article and it has been submitted to the legislature for approval.
- e. Appointment of a bylaw review committee by the Moderator for the purpose of reviewing existing bylaws and to propose changes including additions and deletions. It has been noted that the existing bylaws first adopted in 1934 provide limited information, lack an index or list of locally adopted statutes and special acts and include a tremendous amount of unnecessary jargon. The Committee will have a three year term, unless extended by Town Meeting.

The Committee continues to evaluate changes needed in the town's financial management which is currently fragmented. Improved reporting, annual and multiyear budgeting, cash forecasting all need to be made a part of a regular process. The Committee is considering the value of creating a Chief Financial Officer for the town to provide the improvements needed.

The Committee is also reviewing again the issue of consolidation involving the DPW, Park and Cemetery work groups to provide better efficiency and allocation of resources. This review includes consideration of an expansion of the duties and responsibilities of the Consolidated Facilities Department. A key objective of this analysis will be to insure that critical functions performed by each separate department will continue to be performed at a high level.

The Committee is also reviewing the role and need for the Personnel Board due to changes over the last fifty years such as the advent of collective bargaining in the public sector as well as more recent changes forthcoming with the implementation strong Town Administrator that has personnel management duties incorporated into its responsibilities.

The Committee expresses appreciation to all Boards, Committees, and Department staff for their cooperation and assistance and in particular would like to thank Paula Rizzi and Barbara Martin of the Selectmen's office for their administrative assistance.

Richard Neely, Chair

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