

TOWN GOVERNMENT STUDY COMMITTEE (TGSC) ANNUAL REPORT 2016

The Town Government Study Committee continued to study and research improvements in 2016 to our form of government. The Committee held nineteen meetings in 2016, exclusive of working group meetings.

Two recommendations made by the Committee and approved by Town Meeting in 2015 were approved by the legislature and signed into law by the Governor in 2016. The first one was our recommendation to strengthen the powers and responsibilities of the Town Administrator. After the Governor signed the Home Rule Petition, this was implemented in the fall of 2016 with Town Administrator Annmarie Fagan followed by the new Town Administrator Michael Dennehy. The second recommendation approved by the Legislature and signed by the Governor to increase the size of the Board of Selectmen from three members to five members needs to be approved by the Town's residents at the annual town election in April 2017.

The 2016 Town Meeting voted to extend the life of the Town Government Study Committee from December 1, 2016 to December 1, 2019.

The Committee reviewed legal costs incurred by the Town in the context of whether there would be an advantage to employing "in-house" counsel in the future. The Committee researched the amount of legal expenses incurred in Milton vs towns in the surrounding area and how those costs were incurred -- in-house or external or some mix thereof. A major factor unique to each town is the number of lawsuits initiated and defended by a town. Milton has experienced a substantial number of land/zoning related legal expenses and is projected to incur additional expense related to airplane noise. The Committee concluded there would be no material savings in creating an in- house counsel and that specialization offered by law firms is needed in many cases.

The Committee is in agreement with the Town School consolidation committee that a Chief Procurement Officer position is needed to be added on at least a part time basis with its authority articulated in the bylaws. The Committee is in the process of drafting an article for the 2017 Town Meeting to create the position and amend the bylaws. The creation of a position is intended to help the Town to comply with state law, improve the Milton procurement process which is currently decentralized (departments can initiate similar purchases without the benefit of volume discounts or the knowledge that the aggregate purchase by all department exceeds the amount permitted by state law without the issuance of an RFP) and generate savings for program use. The exact savings to be achieved by hiring a chief procurement officer is hard to quantify given the lack of comparative information.

The Committee has also been reviewing the role of the Personnel Board which was created in 1956 in the bylaws. One reason for the review is to clarify the roles and responsibilities of the Personnel Board with the recently strengthened Town Administrator position and the Assistant Town Administrator responsible for Human Resources (HR). The Committee is preparing an article for the 2017 Town Meeting which will address the overlap of responsibilities and modernize the bylaw consistent with today's HR best practices (the current bylaw not having been modified since inception). The Committee has conducted reviews of peer communities to note the different roles of Personnel Boards and changes in Human Resource administration.

The Committee looked at possible consolidation of the DPW, Cemetery and Park departments as it did several years ago and again we find the Town is not ready for that change. In particular, we are concerned that gaps or delays in services may occur if the consolidation were to take place at this time. We believe that the elected Boards for the three departments need to meet to discuss the consolidation, identifying the benefits and risk factors. If consolidation were to go forward, there should be a statement of work (SOW) prepared by the Cemetery and Park boards for the DPW to adhere to.

The Committee has spent a considerable amount of time reviewing the Town's financial structure. Although our recommendation to revamp and expand the role of the Audit Committee has been implemented, the financial operations are still fragmented. We think there needs to be a Chief Financial Officer function (some peer communities use this title and other towns use Director of Finance) to provide for improved financial forecasting, budget preparation and financial reporting. We are working on a recommendation for a future town meeting.

We express appreciation to member Mary McNamara who resigned at the end of November upon her move from Milton. Mary was a hard working member. We also express appreciation to former member Robert Hiss who resigned at the end of April upon his successful election as Town Moderator. Bob was also a hard working contributor to the Committee.

The Committee also expresses appreciation to all boards, committees, and department staff for their cooperation and assistance and in particular would like to thank retiring Town Administrator Annmarie Fagan, Barbara Martin of the Selectmen's office and Town Counsel John Flynn for their assistance.

Respectfully submitted,

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