



GOVERNMENT STUDY COMMITTEE MEETING
Minutes of the May 29, 2002 Meeting
Selectmen's Office 7:30 PM

Present: Members George Bailey, David Hearne, Leonard Segal, Patricia Zlotin, and Anne Carney

Absent: David Fixler, Dennis Friedman, Michael Schachter

Chairman Anne Carney called the meeting to order at 7:40 PM.

This was the third public hearing of the committee and the first since the May annual town meeting. Four citizens came to give their views on the open town meeting form of government. Two of those present felt that the time had come to change the form of government or drastically alter the way the annual town meeting is conducted. They both felt that they came to town meeting to vote and not to listen to a long discussion of the warrant articles. They felt that the information was available ahead of time and that the amount of time spent on discussion should be much shorter. Pat Zlotin pointed out that the whole concept of open town meeting was to listen to the discussion and have an opportunity to amend the warrants. She asked how that could be done if there wasn't sufficient discussion of the articles. The issue of how many people actually vote at town meeting came up. George cited statistics that basically showed that the only time there was decent attendance was when an issue such as Cannon Forge, Rattlesnake Hill, or appropriation of override money was on the warrant. When asked if they might prefer going to another form of government such as representative both women said that might be a good idea. They had difficulty attending annual town meeting, particularly when it went into a second and third night and felt that an elected representative could represent them well. If the representative didn't represent his constituency well then he/she could be voted out.

Another citizen felt that the annual town meeting could be made more efficient by simply shortening the amount of time spent on the articles. The length of time spent discussing warrant articles seemed to be the real bone of contention. David Hearne explained that the moderator actually had a lot of discretion in terms of how the town meeting was conducted and he could put rules in place to make the meeting run more efficiently. Anne Carney stated that the committee had been trying to arrange an interview with the new moderator Paul Bouton and hoped to get him to the next meeting. It was pointed out that some of this committee's suggestions about time limits were put in place. How to

get more people to attend hearings prior to town meeting was something that was also discussed.

The committee thanked the citizens for their input and then discussed how to get more feedback from the community. Use of the website came up once again!

George also asked that when experiences of communities having different forms of governance are discussed that the information be as factual as possible rather than hearsay or anecdotal.

The committee also discussed the role of the finance committee when members serve as voting members of other committees such as capital outlay. The issue came up as a result of a difference of opinion on capital outlay committee. Anne was asked to bring the issue before the committee to see if the members felt the finance committee should be a non-voting member on other committees since the finance committee votes on every money article anyway and shouldn't get two bites at the apple. The committee felt that the finance committee should have a committee vote even though it votes on its own later.

With no further business to discuss, Anne called for adjournment. The motion was seconded by Len Segal and voted unanimously.

The meeting adjourned at 9:30 PM

amc