

Minutes of the Government Study Committee Meeting
February 24, 2004
Lower Level Hearing Room

PRESENT: George Bailey, Andrew Nebenzahl, Gloria Rose, Anne Carney

ABSENT: David Fixler, Dennis Friedman, Sam Zisblatt, Patricia Zlotin

The meeting was called to order at 7:40 PM by Chairman Anne Carney. The first item was a discussion of the public meeting held on January 22, 2004 at the library.

Gloria's comments:

- access to town meetings for the elderly
- special interest groups dominating town meetings
- what costs would be involved in moving to a different form of governance
- if the Town changed, how would it happen
- some form of bulletin board might help keep people informed

Andy's comments:

- surprised by response to retain open town meeting
- biggest concern is that different boards go in different directions with different groups making or proposing policy
- believes open town meeting has difficulty with forming cohesive policies and priorities
- cited the cell tower issue as an example of people moving in different directions with no clear policy in mind

George's comments:

- not surprised by reaction to keep open town meeting
- people look at town meeting as a way to keep informed but fail to recognize that there is no accountability
- the only people accountable are those that show up
- cited the ponderousness of the cell tower issue compared to how the issue was handled in Watertown by its council

Anne's comments:

- there were divergent and strongly held views
- question of intimidation brought up by several people

- concern that special interest groups can come in, pack the meeting, vote and then leave
- more information on a charter and charter commission is needed
- Town Clerk wants pre-Town meeting emphasized so that people come in more aware of issues on the warrant
- some attendees want our committee to see if there are any ways to make voting more efficient
- would like to see warrants posted on the web site

The committee discussed the direction it wanted to take in terms of its ability to make recommendations to town meeting beyond those submitted last year. It was decided that to progress further the committee would need some professional guidance. The committee needs someone with expertise in the different forms of governance who could point out the logical next steps. Anne will contact Ben Puritz about a warrant article to secure funding for this person. In the meantime, each committee member is to look at other towns that are examining their structure of government to see whom they have worked with. Some suggested towns are Hanover, Braintree and Randolph.

The next meeting is scheduled for April 8, 2004

Adjournment at 9:35 PM.

amc