

Minutes of the Government Study Committee Meeting
April 8, 2004
Lower Level Hearing Room

PRESENT: George Bailey, David Fixler, Andrew Nebenzahl, Gloria Rose, Sam Zisblatt, Patricia Zlotin , Anne Carney

ABSENT: Dennis Friedman

The meeting was called to order at 7:30 PM by Chairman Anne Carney. The first item for discussion was the need of a consultant to the committee if there was going to be a serious look at changing the form of government. Anne reported that she had spoken with Town Administrator Ben Puritz and he was agreeable to placing a warrant article for special town meeting in the fall. He just wanted to be sure that we be specific as to our intent.

There was a short discussion of the Selectmen's meeting held on March 23, 2004 to discuss the annual town meeting. The committee felt it was a re-airing of many of the issues that were brought up at the committee's public hearing on January 22nd.

The committee proceeded to discuss the qualities that would be needed in a consultant. Basically, the committee has to learn the specific options that are available if we decide to explore a change. Some of the issues that the committee needs to know about:

- Would a charter along with the current format of open town meeting help?
- Would a charter be needed if the town wanted to significantly change its governance?
- Does representative town meeting offer enough of an improvement to pursue that route?
- How do we find out more about the council options?

The committee discussed whom we could invite to put us on the right track to answering these questions. Anne & George both said that Michael Curran from Canton was supposed to be the "expert" on forms of governance. Anne will try to get in touch with him.

An informal poll taken after this discussion indicated that the committee is moving away from the idea of representative town meeting since it appears that the same issues facing open town meeting would be mirrored in a change to representative town meeting. If the important issues are accountability, clear lines of authority and responsibility, and an ability to respond to and decide issues in a timely fashion, it seems that representative town meeting would be limited in the same way as open town meeting.

The committee discussed the upcoming annual town meeting and how much information would be available in the warrant, newspapers or on the web site. The committee will recap town meeting at its next meeting. In the meantime, all members will be trying to find persons with experience in charter commissions or changing forms of governance whom the committee could interview. The committee needs to decide the direction it wants to pursue.

Adjournment at 9:45 PM.

amc

To be approved