

Minutes of the Government Study Committee Meeting
June 17, 2004
Selectmen's Office

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 Carney. The first order of business was a motion to accept the minutes of the previous meeting held on April 8, 2004. The motion was made by Andrew Nebenzahl and seconded by George Bailey. The vote was unanimous.

There was detailed discuss of the annual town meeting. Members stated that the meeting had the lowest attendance in years and this was attributed to several factors. Some of the reasons stated are as follows:

- a. No really controversial articles that affected the entire Town
- b. Town meetings are simply too long
- c. Many of the comments made by attendees are simply a rehash of something said earlier
- d. There is a general lack of interest

George Bailey presented a summary of a comprehensive study/critique he had done concerning the warrant articles presented at the annual town meeting. George had e-mailed this information to committee members prior to the meeting. George's paper basically reviewed the turnout and the types of articles that were on the warrant. He then took a look at town meetings in the 50's and 60's and the attendance during those years and asked if the real disinterest in town meeting now was a result of citizens having much less say in the budget-making process since the passage of Prop 2 ½.

General discussion followed on what else could be done to improve town meeting. Most of the committee felt that since the Moderator really controls town meeting he would have to want to make additional changes such as limiting debate to a greater degree. The Government Study Committee could recommend that much more emphasis be placed on informational meetings prior to town meeting but the actual meeting was in the hands of the Moderator.

There was discussion on inviting someone with expertise in the different forms of governance in Massachusetts. The committee felt it needed someone who had worked on

or had a lot of information about changing the form of governance. The discussion then proceeded to the committee wondering if pursuing another form of governance was even feasible. Andrew Nebenzahl motioned that the committee ask the Selectmen to place an advisory question on the November ballot. The motion was seconded by Gloria Rose and the vote was 3 to 1 in favor of the motion. Gloria Rose agreed to ask the Town Clerk if it would be possible to have an advisory question on the ballot in November that basically asked the question of whether or not Government Study Committee should pursue looking at a different form of governance. The committee will decide how to proceed depending on the answer Gloria receives.

A vote to adjourn was made by Andrew Nebenzahl and seconded by George Bailey. The vote was unanimous.

Adjournment at 9:35 PM

To be approved