**Governance Study Committee**

Meeting Minutes - August 22, 2023

Meeting was held both in-person and in hybrid form from a room at the Community Center. Called to order at 7:30 pm. Members present in person were: Ganesh Rangarajan-Chair, Michael Illuzzi, David Wluka, Philip King, Joanne Michalik, Peg Arguimbau (via zoom). Members not in attendance: Keevin Geller, Daniela Field, and Matt Keenan.

**Elections of Vice Chair and Secretary positions-** Moved (King) and seconded (Rangarajan) to elect Dave Wluka as Vice Chair – vote 5-0-1. Moved (King) and seconded (Wluka ) to elect Peg Arguimbau as Secretary – vote 6-0-0 unanimous

**Consider hybrid/in-person or virtual meetings.** After discussion it was decided to continue tonight’s set-up of a combination in-person/hybrid meeting where people can attend in person if they choose, or join by the zoom link provided in the posted agenda of each meeting. This is contingent upon a working AV connection.

**Review Committee charge** – The Chair spoke with Fred Turkington and emails between them will be put on the google drive folder for us to examine. It was Fred’s belief the recall and appointee removal proposals from the work of the last GSC were not sufficiently vetted and need to be brought back. More discussion needs to take place with towns that have been through this or have in place procedures for this. The Town of Ashland was suggested. Members were encouraged to review existing sections pertaining to recall/removal in the GSC’s Final Report. The Chair suggested looking at other towns that may have real-life examples and whether or not their process worked. The Chair also noted that Fred has an intern working in his office which he can make available to aid us in our research efforts.

Dave Wluka mentioned that the Town has a Town Planner, Sonal Pei, with whom he has been working on some projects and she could be very helpful. The Chair stressed that the end result of our work needs to be definitive.

There was a discussion of elected/appointed folks being held “to a higher standard”. The prevailing opinion was that no matter the appointment or elected position, the expectation is the person does the job to the best of their ability.

The Chair asked Fred why he and the SB made the push for researching the powers and duties of the Town Moderator. Fred believed it was a case of the absence of clarifying language that would avoid a possible conflict between one person serving in two elected positions (i.e. Moderator and School Committee member, or Moderator and Planning board member). The Chair will reach out to Andy Nebenzahl for input. Member Matt Keenan, who could not attend this evening, had many questions regarding this that he submitted to the Chair to be considered when researching this.

**Discuss open issues – Electronic voting** - seems to be the purview of the Moderator and the Town Clerk. The Select Board should not be involved. Dave Wluka suggested communicating with both Andy Nebenzahl and Mark Hogan now to see if they would want to experiment for the Town Meeting in May of 2024. Phil King pointed out the need for security relating to the devices used (phones or remotes) and suggested a letter be drafted to the Town Clerk requesting that he commit to a test pilot of the devices.

**Non-citizen voting** – The Select Board has submitted the language from Town Meeting .to the legislature. It was pointed out that as each legislative session ends, the proposal needs to be reintroduced for the next session. Dave Wluka indicated that it is up to our Rep and Senators to refile it, not the committee or the town. Phil King stated that the town meeting vote was symbolic and needs to have more push behind it. The concept needs to be important to more people, especially from larger towns.

**Increase number of Select Board members** – Questions as to what happened with that? The Chair explained the home-rule proposal was filed and if enacted by the legislature, then a ballot question would be placed on the ballot in May of 2025. It would set out the number of members and length of terms needed to establish the Board with the higher number.

**Use of outside resources** – Fred told the Chair that when the committee is ready to submit bylaw language – which may be language used by other towns -Town Counsel would be available to assist us in review of that language. Intern also available. Dave Wluka suggested that we use MAPC as we have in the past, as there is no charge for their services.

**Other Topics –** Dave Wluka suggested having our Representative Ted Philips and either Senator Timilty or Feeney, or both, join one of our meetings to discuss non-citizen voting status and the dynamics of what is happening with that in the legislative process. Dave will contact them to see about their availability to attend.

Joann remarked about an interest in the inter-relationships between offices and the job descriptions for positions. She asked Melissa Imbaro about this. Melissa sent Joann a draft organizational chart of positions in Sharon with the understanding that it is not official. The Chair will put it in the folder and mentioned that on the Town’s website, one can also view the roles of positions and committees.

The Chair reviewed “homework” for the next meeting – to review the minutes of the last committee’s work on removal and recall to see who we spoke to about it. New members could go over it, as well as our proposal in the Final Report, with a new set of eyes and see what they think.

Michael asked about the reference to a code of conduct in the GSC’s Final Report and what happened with that. Peg thought it may have been addressed by the ethics course mandated by the State for all employees and members of town boards and committees.

**Minutes and next meeting date –** August 8 minutes will be reviewed for acceptance at our next meeting. At this point, date is flexible – either August 29 if folks have data from other towns to present, or most likely September 5 at 7:30 pm. The Chair will decide as the date gets closer.

Meeting adjourned at 8:45 pm.