

**Government and Charter Study Task Force  
Meeting Summary 01/20/2010  
Selectmen's Meeting Room**

**Attendance:** Peter Cahill, Thomas Daly, Margery Eramo, Paul Fitzgerald (arrived at 8:25 p.m.), Charles Flahive, Ken Foscaldo, Frank Jacobs, Karen Manor Metzold, Alice Moore, Michael Jaillet, Anne Marie McIntyre

**Meeting Summary**

Approval of Meeting Summary 01/06/2010

Board of Selectmen Philip Shapiro and Nancy Hyde are the guest speakers. Selectman Patrick Ahearn will address members at a later date due to his recuperation.

**Public Forum**

Update from Karen on media campaign for Public Forum on February 3, 2010

Press Releases were sent to: *Westwood Press*, *Hometown Weekly*, *Globe South*, *Westwood Town Website*, and *Westwood Blog*.

Three separate letters were sent to the three gentlemen who presented petitioners articles from last year's Town Meeting.

Flyers were posted by Karen at Senior Center, Town Hall, and libraries. She will also post at Carby Street, Islington Community Center, Fox Hill residences, and Post Offices.

Phone Blast—Public Forum reminder. Charlie agreed to record a message that will be sent out to residents on Monday, Feb 1, 2010.

Karen will send emails to various boards and committee chairpersons. Alice also suggested contacting former elected officials and board members.

Peter will be interviewed on Friday by the *Hometown Weekly* for Thursday January 28, 2010 publication. He will also interview with *The Boston Globe*, and the article will appear in the *Globe South* section on Sunday, January 30, 2010.

Alice will complete a letter to the editor for the *Westwood Press*.

Sandwich boards were suggested. Mike stated that Ellen Hurley would be the contact person for the information.

## **Open Discussion**

Peter suggested a general open discussion on any issues that the members would like to review.

### Topics Addressed on Town Charter and Government Structure

Open Town Meeting vs. Representative Town Meeting

Consideration of elected positions vs. appointed positions

Additional Town Meeting

Town Meeting pushed to later in May-June

Saturday Town Meeting and Saturday Election

Size of Board of Selectmen and size of all boards

Term Limits

Town Manager vs. Town Administrator

Clearly define roles in Charter (for example Town Administrator position)

Create language for Finance Director's job description in Charter

General housekeeping of Charter

Significance of certain committees, for example, the Long Range Planning Board

The relationship of the School Committee and Finance Committee

Are there committees needed that are not present? Can this be addressed by creating Ad Hoc committees?

Are there opportunities for consolidation? School fields now maintained by the DPW is a good example.

The creation of a Facilities Manger for Westwood

## **Board of Selectman**

Ms. Hyde stated that a three-member Board of Selectmen works well; there is less opportunity to violate open meeting law and there are no issues in meeting attendance and scheduling conflicts. The board has full-time staff to handle the responsibilities, and Mike Jaillet fills in for them, on occasion, if needed. In addition, Ms. Hyde doesn't

believe that the size of the board is driven by population; the Town's needs are pretty much the same.

Ms. Hyde suggested that most people don't understand the selectmen's level of responsibility. Especially for the chairman, the responsibility and commitment is always present. She suggested that people should get involved by participating on any of the numerous committees in Westwood first before considering running for a Selectman position.

Mr. Shaprio felt that there are pros and cons to any structure; the "right" people in the "wrong" structure can work. In his experience, rarely do things get personal in town so it doesn't get divisive. An argument against a 5-member board is that you'll often have 2 selectmen running against one another most years and forced to campaign against one another. This can get in the way of getting business done. On the other hand, a 5-member board would help to distribute the burden of other commitments. Mr. Shapiro commented that they currently receive a lot of help through the 150+ people who serve on various committees and boards. Currently the board has a positive, collegial environment which would be harder to achieve with 5 members.

Alice Moore asked what prompted the Selectmen to create the Task Force. They responded that (1) change not done in context is dangerous; (2) it would be a good exercise as it had not been looked at in some time; (3) 2009 Town Meeting articles were a catalyst; and (4) our Charter is "light" in substance; need a better Charter if we go astray.

Ms. Hyde and Mr. Shapiro commented that the language in the Charter needs to be reviewed. For example, language needs to be provided for certain positions that exist and run well but are not defined in the Charter, such as Finance Director, Pam Dukeman and Town Administrator, Mike Jaillet. Mr. Shapiro stated that currently all positions work very well together, but clearly defined roles in the Charter would assure fluidity within the government structure. The Task Force should try to codify a "team" of finance people, possibly considering appointed Treasurer and Director positions.

Ms. Hyde questioned why Sewer Commission members are paid but not Planning Board or School Committee members. The Sewer commission stipend was relevant in the 1960s but not today. Furthermore, is there a current need for a Sewer Commission to exist?

Ms Hyde recommended a 3-year term for the Moderator's position. Regarding Town Meeting, she stated that two would be helpful because town officials would know that there would be an opportunity to do business in the fall. Ms. Hyde advised against holding the first Town Meeting in June because it would be difficult to schedule another Town Meeting if an override failed. Mr. Shapiro commented that the flexibility to accommodate a second town meeting would relieve pressure to get all business done in the spring.

Ms Hyde commented that she likes the Town Warrant articles presented in order rather than randomly. Mr. Shapiro likes the idea of articles presented randomly.

Ms. Hyde and Mr. Shapiro stated they did not endorse a Saturday election day – conflicts such as travel, family commitments and religious obligations exist. Regarding the day for elections, they noted that the recent special election held on a Tuesday in January resulted in record voter turnout.

Open Town Meeting vs. Representative Town Meeting: Ms. Hyde felt that the town loves Open Town Meeting. A Representative Town Meeting would take a lot of people out of the discussion, particularly on certain issues such as the schools or library. A population threshold should be in place for the town to reconsider changing to a Representative Town Meeting. For example, there will be physical constraints to consider if Westwood's population increases. Mr. Shapiro commented that Open Town Meeting is ideal unless the town is forced to leave it.

Both selectmen like the current size and function of the Finance Commission. Its members become well-versed in town government structure and processes by serving on the Commission, and this involvement raises the members' credibility. Mr. Shapiro stated that the Finance Commission is misnamed, and their role should be more clearly defined in the Charter.

Mr. Shapiro commented that the Long Range Financial Planning Committee was started five to six years ago. Prior to this, the town did not have a 5-year capital expenditure from each department. This process has developed good planning discipline. However, we are not as disciplined to keep a long-term focus; everyone has a day-to-day need. About half of the Committee's time is spent on the existing fiscal year. Mr. Shapiro noted Arlington's financial model that looks at growth assumptions and then re-planning if these assumptions are not achieved; Westwood should consider something similar. Other questions should be addressed by the Committee such as taking some of the key people who deal with everyday decisions off of the Committee to help achieve a better long-range focus.

The selectmen noted that it may be time for another Master Plan as it has been ten years, and a current one is helpful for state grants and for guiding Planning Board articles. They recommended specifying the frequency of Master Plan and Charter reviews in the Charter – every ten years was suggested.

Permanent Building Committee has expertise but no authority. Their lack of authority and staff was problematic during the high school construction project. The Moderator is currently appointing more members on a project basis which is helpful; this practice, however, is not reflected in the Charter. With regard to specifying requirements for members on the Charter, Mr. Shapiro cautioned that the Charter not include types of professions for members but expertise and skills; this provides for more flexibility in membership. This Committee is a demanding board that can be difficult to fill at times.

Ms. Hyde and Mr. Shapiro are not in favor of Term Limits.

Ms. Hyde does not envision a Charter Commission to be elected to do the work the Task Force has completed thus far.

A brief discussion ensued on the presentation of a comprehensive report or a summarized report from the Task Force to the Board of Selectmen at this year's Town Meeting.

The change to two Town Meetings could be a bylaw change rather than a Charter change.

Public Forum will be February 3, 2010.

Next meeting is scheduled for February 24, 2010 with Planning Board and Permanent Building Committee discussed as possible guests.

**\*\*COMPLETE RECORDED VERSION OF MEETING AVAILABLE ON TASK FORCE NETWORK\*\***