

Master Plan Working Group

Minutes 10/18/17

Attending: Meryl Mandell – Chair, Mike Vinsky, Jeff Lacy, Allen Hanson, Tim Logan, Michele Cunningham, Mary Anne Antonellis

Visiting Michael Di Chiara, Becky Torres, Eric Stocker

Group accepted the minutes from 10/4/17 with edits.

Group continued discussion on fiscal/financial sustainability/responsibility and began with Mary Anne's suggestion from last meeting (contained in minutes). Shared Meryl's document that elaborated on the points in Mary Anne's suggestion/statement and Tim's document that contained a mixture of both and some additions. Becky clarified for the group where the process is with Joe Markarian, the consultant who is working with the Select Board to clarify policy, budget calendar, and his charge to come up with spreadsheets.

Additional discussion about the roles of Finance Committee and Select Board and financial policy vs. budget decision making, and the role of Town Administrator. What are the roles and responsibilities and how are those done in our town.

After much discussion the group decided this discussion was beyond the scope of our charge.

Motion by Allen to accept Mary Anne's statement. Motion not seconded.

More discussion around the documents/suggestions on the floor.

Meryl made a motion to accept Tim's document with edits. Seconded with discussion and the following edits were made.

Frist Paragraph accepted. Second paragraph accepted with the following changes:

The four financial themes that arose during the visioning process were:

- 1) Fiscal sustainability
- 2) Concern regarding the property tax burden
- 3) Community services relative to taxes
- 4) Future property value trends

More discussion regarding 5th paragraph that began with "Practicing such financial development means..."

Tim, author of the document decided he no longer agreed with that paragraph and wanted to make other changes. Mary Anne was also interested in revising Tim's document using pieces from all three.

Question proposed to the group on what might be done should fiscal sustainability be hindered by the current structure in our Town's government. Most felt this was beyond the scope of our charge, but something to be brought up in context of town board/committee meetings.

Meryl withdrew her motion.

We agreed that Mary Anne and Allen would work together to make document changes. Tim would also work on his changes. Final revisions by both will be sent to the group members prior to the next meeting. Noted that meeting scheduled for 11/15 needed to be changed. Possibly a Sunday night. Reminder that 11/14 All Boards Meeting and 11/28 Select Board Meeting.

Next Meeting Wednesday 11/1/17, 7:30, Town Hall.

Agenda:

- Continue discussion of Financial sustainability/responsibility topic recommendations using documents sent to group
- Begin discussion of "low hanging fruit topic."
- Discuss extending board's timeframe or bringing what we have to Select Board for the 11/28 Select Board Meeting. (Note from Michele after meeting: It looks like our first meeting as a MPWG follow up group was August 3, 2017, when Michele began taking minutes. That was the first meeting after the Select Board acceptance of the Vision.)

To: Members of the Master Plan Working Group
From: Penelope Kim, Town Moderator
Re: Finance Committee Appointments
Date: 10/24/2017

It was brought to my attention that, at a recent meeting, there was discussion about alternatives to having the Town Moderator appoint the Finance Committee. I would like to share some observations (based on my experience and my interpretation of that role) with you that may help in your considerations.

What Other Towns Do

The MA Moderators Association periodically does surveys. A question was asked a while ago about how local Finance Committees are chosen. According to the 66 Moderators (whose towns have Open Town Meetings) who responded, the results showed: (not a complete sampling)

- 42 appointed by Moderator
- 17 appointed by Board of Selectmen
- 7 elected

Shutesbury Moderator Role and Tenure

I was asked to fill in at annual town meeting in 2008 and was subsequently elected to a series of one year terms. At some point, the term was expanded to a 3 year term by vote of Town Meeting. I was unopposed each time I ran.

The Moderator ideally is someone with experience in, and an understanding of, how our small town operates – its committee structure, its by-laws – and how to run a meeting (e.g. knowledge of parliamentary procedures). Since I had served on numerous town boards over my many years in town and had been employed in municipal government, I could bring that experience to the role. Such a background equates with a commitment to serving the community in a professional manner.

Appointments

A brief review of the appointments made during my tenure might be useful.

1. No one who volunteered to serve has been turned away/not appointed. There has not been an overabundance of people wanting to do the hard work and attend all those meetings.
2. I have never asked people about their “politics” (local or national). I have appointed people I did not know personally. Most recently, James Hemingway, Jim Walton and Bob Groves were appointed. In my conversations with them and others, I was assured they would bring financial savvy and diversity to the committee. The other people I appointed, who were first time members, were Allen Hanson and Gary Hirshfield.
3. Additionally, I have consistently re-appointed people to fill out their three 3-year terms, if they were willing, in recognition of the time it takes to: learn about municipal finance; gain perspective; and provide continuity to the process.
4. Finally, I have sought to achieve a balance (new and old, men and women, etc.) on the committee.

If your committee decides to discuss this further, I would be happy to provide any information or insights which might be useful.