

2018 JAN 22 AM 8:56

**Committee to Study the Number of Selectmen ("CSNS")****Minutes of Meeting held November 21, 2017**

Present: Michael Crowley, Debra Deutsch, Judie Feins, Laurie Graham, Doug John, Ralph Jones, Andrew Plunkett, Lynn Read, Paul Rickter, Maryanne Scali, Amy Trotsky, Peter Whitmer.

Mr. Rickter called the meeting to order at approximately 7:10 p.m.

**Approval of Minutes of Meeting held November 7, 2017**

After a brief discussion of the draft minutes of the meeting held November 7, 2017, a MOTION was made and seconded to approve the minutes as amended. The Motion passed unanimously.

**Review of Remaining Comparable Town Research**

Reports were made on interviews conducted with Selectmen from Arlington, Marblehead, Westford and Lexington. Opinions expressed by those interviewed included that some five-member Boards of Selectmen ("Board") with a strong Town Administrator are policy-making boards; some Boards of five or more members do not communicate with each other outside of open meetings although the Open Meeting Law would permit some communications by less than a quorum; some Boards of Selectmen meet regularly in Executive Session; some find a five-member Board has a good balance of different views and is very accessible to constituents; elections are more competitive elections when contentious issues are also on the ballot; and candidates are more willing to run when two seats are on the ballot rather than facing off head-to-head for one seat.

**Building List of Arguments for Larger Number of Selectmen and for Status Quo**

The committee assembled arguments for increasing the size of Belmont's Board to five members, and arguments for maintaining the status quo of a three-member board. Members noted that some arguments are not absolute and have corresponding opposing arguments. The committee listed the following arguments for each option:

**Pro Increasing the Size of Board to Five Members**

- Increased diversity, representation and viewpoints
- Greater capacity for effective committee liaisons
- Increased ability to attend external meetings (in other communities)
- Increased access to Board members for Town residents
- Could reduce costs of entry, both financial and psychological
- Less likelihood for one member to be isolated or to dominate

- Easier to attract better candidates for the Town Administrator position, due to more stable BOS
- Greater stability for Town government in planning, policy and hiring
- Potential for wider range of skills and experience on the Board
- Permits members to use one other member as a sounding board
- Increased capacity to establish sub-committees
- Greater ability to share work
- Greater ability to convene a quorum

#### **Pro Status Quo - Board of Three Selectmen**

- Town Administrator does not have to increase time on briefing or de-briefing selectmen individually
- Potential to keep meetings to their current length
- For some people, status quo is working
- Every member is vested and attends meetings
- Elections are competitive now, more potential for staying that way
- Easier to provide transparency (with all communications during open meetings)
- More certain of having a sufficient number of candidates
- The current norm is to reach consensus
- Lower potential for increase in salaries and benefits
- Maintain current level of authority and accountability
- Assumes the pool of candidates is more likely to have relevant range of experience in Town government (Warrant Committee, School Committee)

#### **Review Rationale Text for Report**

The members briefly reviewed a draft rationale that would be part of the final report.

#### **Next Steps**

Mr. Rickter asked each committee member to draft explanatory paragraph for two arguments.

#### **Adjournment**

A MOTION was made and seconded to adjourn the meeting. The motion passed unanimously and the meeting adjourned at approximately 9:05 p.m.

**Documents Used in the Meeting**

Agenda

Draft Minutes of Meeting held November 7, 2017

Notes of Responses by Current and Former Belmont Selectmen

Notes of Responses from Selectmen in Towns of Marblehead, Westford

Draft Arguments

Draft Rationale

The above minutes were approved at the open meeting held on December 5, 2017.

Respectfully submitted,

Lynn Peterson Read