

2017 OCT 13 AM 9:06

**Committee to Study the Number of Selectmen ("CSNS")**  
**Minutes of Meeting held September 26, 2017**

Present: Debra Deutsch, Judie Feins, Laurie Graham, Dan Halston, Doug Johns, Ralph Jones, Paul Rickter, Andrew Plunkett, Amy Trotsky, Peter Whitmer, Lynn Peterson Read

Absent: - Michael Crowley, Maryanne Scali

**Approval of Minutes of Meeting held September 6, 2017**

After a brief discussion of the draft minutes of the meeting held September 6, 2017, a MOTION was made by Ms. Feins, seconded by Mr. Jones, to approve the minutes with the corrections noted. The Motion passed unanimously.

**Review of Comparable Town Research, Possible Conclusions and Next Steps**

The members discussed the results of researching comparable towns. The members who researched particular towns summarized their research on the following factors:

Number of Selectmen	Length of Term/rotation
Meeting Frequency	Length of Meetings
Other Town Committees with BOS Representation	Compensation & Benefits
Town Administrator or Manager	Representative/Open Town Meeting
Bond Rating	
No. of Candidates vs. No. of Seats	% Voter Turnout
Candidate Expenditures	

Members discussed the competitiveness of campaigns and voter turnout for selectmen races. Many towns have uncontested elections. One town has very low voter turnout in selectmen races and very low interest in the work of the selectmen. In that town, major decisions are made by committees while the selectmen approve those decisions and are not the center of political activity. In many towns, candidates spend little on their campaigns, thus cost is not a barrier to entry into a race for selectman.

Several towns have changed from 3 to 5 selectmen historically. Often these changes occurred when population and economic activity were increasing as population spread outward from Boston after the World Wars. Belmont had a history of postponing large projects like construction of new public buildings, but the workload increased for the selectmen when economic factors placed more pressure on the town. Data shows that towns with 5 on the Board of Selectmen get enough candidates for 5, and towns with 3 on the Board get enough for 3.

Belmont tends to have a relatively high voter turnout. In recent elections it also had among the highest spending by candidates for selectmen. One candidate spent \$25,000 on printing and sign costs. Belmont selectmen have frequently gone on to higher office. Members discussed whether this trend causes campaigns to become more expensive and if this expense reduces interest in serving as a selectman. Some stated that competitive

racers foster healthy debate on town issues. Concern was expressed that the number of candidates might decrease if the number of selectmen increased. In another town with high spending, each candidate only had a few donors, and in another the candidates self-fund. On the other hand, if a seat on the Board of Selectmen is a steppingstone to higher office, increasing the number could make it easier to get elected and motivation might increase.

### **Next steps**

Members discussed publicity needed and the agenda for the public meeting on October 12, 2017. The agenda will include a synopsis of this committee's work to date, and questions that might be posed to the public.

### **Belmont Selectmen Interviews and Surveys**

Members discussed questions to ask the former Belmont Selectmen in the planned interviews. Questions will include why do most people run for Selectman and what would make more people want to run. Mr. Rickter reported that he will have more responses to his email survey of former selectmen before the committee's next meeting.

### **Written Report Proto-Outline**

Members discussed the basic elements to be included in the committee's ultimate written report. It will include pro and con arguments about increasing the number of selectmen, methodology and data gathered from different towns. The committee hopes the report will be short with data in appendices. It may include the process of how a change would be implemented (e.g., home rule petition).

### **Adjournment**

A MOTION was made by Ms. Graham, seconded by Ms. Deutsch, to adjourn the meeting. The Motion passed unanimously.

### **Documents Used in the Meeting**

- Agenda
- Draft Minutes of Meeting held September 12, 2017
- Compilation of Data from Comparable Towns, Board of Selectmen Membership, Elections and Duties
- Questions for Belmont Selectment

The above Minutes were approved at the open meeting held on October 3, 2017

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Paul Rickter, Committee Chair