

**Committee to Study the Number of Selectmen ("CSNS")  
Town Hall, Conference Room 1  
Minutes of Meeting held October 3, 2017**

2017 OCT 25 PM 2: 24

Present: Michael Crowley, Debra Deutsch, Judie Feins, Laurie Graham, Daniel Halston, Doug John, Ralph Jones, Andrew Plunkett, Lynn Read, Paul Rickter, Maryann Scali, Amy Trotsky

Absent: Peter Whitmer

Meeting started at 7:00pm and concluded at 9:00pm.

**Approval of minutes of Meeting held September 26, 2017**

After a brief discussion of the draft minutes, and corrections made to the present and absent members including spelling corrections, a motion was made to approve the minutes with the corrections noted. The motion passed unanimously.

**Review of feedback from Selectmen survey**

Members reviewed the feedback received so far from nine out of the sixteen former and current Selectmen who were asked to participate in the committee's survey. The amount of time the position required was variable and inconclusive. However, it was noted that more time was required of new Selectmen to "come up to speed" with their new responsibilities. The time required was generally manageable, but was also variable depending on whether or not there was a town crisis. The amount of time spent on the job was generally up to the individual Selectmen. Whether their time was used efficiently or not is unknown. The time it takes for Selectmen to fulfill the requirements of the job is also highly dependent on whether they have to work on various sub-committees. Finally, it is dependent on town government structure and whether Selectmen can offload responsibilities to a strong town administrator or town manager.

It was noted the Selectmen who are in favor of increasing the size of the board to 5 might have felt like a minority voice of three while serving, and were basically shut out of most major decisions. These former Selectmen seemed to think more people serving on the board would lead to more diversity of opinions. It was also noted that the Open Meeting Law might have been more loosely interpreted in the past. Factions can develop whether or not the BOS is composed of three or five members. Five members could divide up responsibilities.

The Selectmen who were in favor of retaining the current configuration of three seemed to believe three Selectmen leads to more efficiency and more responsiveness of the board. More people serving could lead to longer meetings.

Members pointed out that since the majority of respondents were in favor of retaining three members to the BOS, maybe this was because they were commenting on "what they knew." Others seemed to think past Selectmen were in the best position to deem whether increasing the size of the board would be beneficial to the town or not.

It was decided that members would nudge the remaining past and present Selectmen who haven't responded to the survey to do so as soon as possible. It was felt that the more responses the committee

receives the better. The members have not yet determined whether to follow up with further questions for the Selectmen. That discussion will take place after the public meeting on October 12, 2017.

It was also decided that two committee members would try to contact Hanover, a town that recently increased its BOS size to five from three and also strengthened its town manager position, to solicit data regarding its decision.

#### **Other sources to consult – town staff? town committees?**

On the subject of whether or not to consult town staff and town committees directly for their opinions on the BOS question, the members thought it might be helpful to contact a few town administrators, especially those with prior experience in Belmont and with experience in other communities. It was also decided that it might be too time consuming and not helpful enough to try to interview town committee members or town staff. Instead, invitations to our open meeting would be widely sent out and attendance encouraged.

#### **Planning for October 12 public feedback meeting**

Members had a brief discussion on Paul Rickter's planned introduction and the timing of the meeting. Certain FAQ slides will be prepared but not discussed unless these specific topics are raised by audience members. It was decided that audience opinions would be solicited on a subject by subject manner until the end of the meeting, when any and all comments would be welcome. There will be a time limit for each audience speaker. Members talked about the logistics of the room, where the committee members would sit, and where the scribe would stand to take notes during the meeting. Paul Rickter's email address will be given for Belmont residents to submit additional comments to us after the meeting.

#### **Review of written report outline**

The members reviewed the first draft of the written report outline and made several suggestions and modifications. It was questioned whether listing the pros and cons of increasing the number of Selectmen versus keeping the status quo would be different from the rationale supporting our ultimate recommendation. It was determined that the two are different and that all arguments for and against each proposal should be spelled out in the report. It was also decided that the logistical steps necessary to put any recommended change into law should not be included in the main body of the report, but in the appendix, since it is beyond our duty or expertise to opine on the matter. Also, it was determined that the FAQs which were being prepared for the open meeting should be included in the appendix of our final report.

#### **Next steps**

The meeting concluded with a discussion of next steps. Paul Rickter will talk to Michael Widmer about whether the committee should consider the role of our town administrator, and how that might impact our final recommendation for the number of Selectmen. Members were assigned to contact Selectmen who haven't responded to our survey. A PowerPoint presentation will be prepared for the open meeting introduction. Plans for further outreach to encourage attendance to the open meeting were assigned. Follow-up on the town of Hanover will be done. Future secretary assignments for minutes were dispensed.

#### **Adjournment**

A motion was made to adjourn the meeting and the motion passed unanimously.

**Documents used in the meeting**

Agenda for the meeting

Draft minutes from the previous week

Responses so far from current and former Belmont Selectmen

Outline of Public Meeting, October 12, 2017

Final report outline – Draft #1, October 3, 2017

**Minutes recorded**

Amy Trotsky