

TO: THE BOARD OF SELECTMEN
FROM: THE GOVERNMENT STRUCTURE REVIEW COMMITTEE
DATE: MARCH 25, 2009
RE: FINAL RECOMMENDATIONS

I: INTRODUCTION

This is the final report of the Government Structure Review Committee. The Committee was appointed on March 31, 2008, and began meeting on May 1, 2008. We have met twice monthly since May 1 (except in the summer), and held two public meetings on September 25, 2008, and February 26, 2009. We presented our preliminary recommendations to the Board on January 26, 2009.

The goal of the Committee has been to make recommendations for changes in the structure of our town government which would increase its efficiency and decrease cost, and would increase participation in town government by Belmont citizens.

Tom Younger, Town Administrator, has served as consultant to the Committee.

Attached to this report are:

- Our final recommendations
- Proposed changes in our bylaws and special acts of the Legislature needed to implement our recommendations
- Organization charts of town government, before and after the recommended changes

II: FINAL RECOMMENDATIONS: SUMMARY

BOARD OF SELECTMEN AND TOWN ADMINISTRATOR:

We recommend strengthening the role and authority of the Town Administrator, while relieving the Selectmen of many routine responsibilities. This includes the appointment of most permanent town committees, with the exception of those with permitting authority, or other responsibilities mandated by statute. The Selectmen would continue to appoint temporary committees.

If these changes are implemented, we believe the Selectmen would then become a stronger policy board.

If this occurs, we recommend that consideration be given to increasing the size of the Board, but we have not taken a position on this issue.

We also recommend that the Police Chief be given the same appointing authority as the Fire Chief, with both continuing to be appointed by the Selectmen, as provided by law.

TOWN MEETING:

We recommend decreasing the size of Town Meeting by one quarter, from 288 to 216 elected Town Meeting Members, with a minimum number of votes required for election.

We recommend that all materials related to the annual budget, and all committee reports pertinent to warrant articles, be distributed to Town Meeting Members with the Warrant at least two weeks prior to the convening of Town Meeting.

We also recommend that a Town Meeting Member Association be considered.

ELECTED OFFICIALS

We recommend that no change be made at this time in the election of members of the Board of Selectmen, School Committee, Board of Library Trustees, Board of Health, Board of Assessors, or of the Town Clerk or Town Treasurer.

We would like to remind the Selectmen, however, that the Board of Cemetery Commissioners is scheduled to be discontinued as part of an agreement reached with the Cemetery Commissioners when the Department of Public Works was established in 2003.

BELMONT MUNICIPAL LIGHT BOARD

We recommend that the Board of Selectmen appoint a five- member Light Board, ending the current practice of the Selectmen's serving as the Light Board. This change would be contingent on the commitment of the Selectmen and the appointed Light Board to a Memorandum of Understanding outlining the role and responsibilities of the Light Board.

RECALL PROVISION

We recommend that there be a provision in Belmont's government structure for recall of all elected officials.

III: TIMELINE

We suggest that the Board schedule Town Meeting action on recommended bylaw changes next fall, or approximately six months from the submission of this report.

In the interim, we ask the Board of Selectmen to submit these recommendations for vetting and process by Town Counsel.

All of us are grateful for the opportunity to serve on this Committee, and will be available to discuss these recommendations with the Board.

Joan Garland
Henry Hall
Ralph Jones
Andy Levin (vice chair)
Trish Lohmar
Anne Marie Mahoney
Bob McLaughlin
Paul Solomon (chair)
Becky Vose