

Town of Natick - Town Governance Study Committee
DRAFT meeting minutes
May 3, 2023 7:00 PM
Via Zoom

Members present: Carol Gloff (Chair), Matt Brand (Vice-Chair), Josh Ostroff (Clerk), Hillary Truslow, Linda Wollschlager, Dan Sullivan, Lisa Tabenkin, Michael Avitzur, Ex-Officio Member Sue Salamoff. Also present: Bernie Lynch, John Petrin, Carl Valente.

The meeting was called to order by Chair Gloff at 7:01 PM with reference to the regulations applicable to virtual public meetings, followed by a roll call.

Public Speak

None.

Public Forum discussion

Committee members spoke affirmatively about the event.

Dan observed that from the Community Paradigm discussion it seemed that we have not had a substantive discussion about forms of government (FOG), although we have voted about some of the aspects of executive and legislative authority. Carol replied that when she has looked at the issues raised, the one that stood out was Town Meeting. She felt that addressing that early in our process would bog us down. There was further discussion about whether that was intentional or not.

Dan was complimentary about Bernie's presentation.

Josh discussed the intentional nature of not getting into TM vs. Council early in our process as it would potentially influence our discussions and members need to have an open mind.

Bernie observed that a lot of our discussion has been about the executive; with council FOG there would be a different relationship. The consensus seemed to be towards a stronger executive regardless of whether we had TM or not.

Survey

There were 83 responses. Hillary and Mike are agreeable to working on an analysis.

Report

Sue commented that we had not yet had a substantive discussion about legislative structure. There was discussion about how and when to do that.

Josh suggested we may want to individually contribute our views and preferences as an appendix; there may be common themes.

Josh will refine the outline for the next meeting. Community Paradigm will contribute, primarily with work they have delivered but also as reviewers.

Dan suggested an exec summary and presentation for the Select Board. He complimented the format of the Town Seal Committee report as an example of a well presented deliverable.

We will review the Charter and Bylaw Review Committee report to TM.

There was discussion about some of the concerns and problems with the first few nights of TM by Josh, Linda, Carol and Dan. Hillary asked about training and resources for new TM members. There was also discussion about some of the strengths of local government.

Conclusions on Additional Topics Covered on March 1, 2023

Bernie discussed Internal and External Communication Improvements as presented at a previous meeting.

**Communication and Citizen Engagement
Municipal Best Practices**

- Community Information/Participation Officer (in place)
- Communications/Engagement Processes
 - Inventory existing methods and evaluate to identify gaps
 - Cultivate relationships with community partners
 - Establish clear and consistent methods for participation and involvement
 - Use multiple methods for community engagement
 - Reach out to new homeowners (Welcome Wagon)
 - Understand the barriers that prevent residents from attending or participating
 - Continuous improvements through user forums and best practices
- Communicating through Documents
 - Town Report
 - GFOA-style Budget Documents
 - Comprehensive Annual Financial Report
 - Publish Bond Rating Report
 - Committee minutes and agendas
- Use of Cable and Streaming
 - Broadcast meetings
 - YouTube
 - News and Updates with Public Access Shows
- Interactive Dashboards
 - ClearGov
 - Departmental Data
- Communication and Engagement Technology
 - Robust and Easily Usable Website
 - Mobile Alerts by subscription
 - Email
 - Code Red Alerts
 - Electronic Billboards
 - Signage
 - Newsletters and Blogs
 - Social Media
 - Video
- Empower Staff to address citizen concerns
- 311 system
- Citizen surveys and outreach

- Coffee Hours
- Different meeting locations
- Government/Citizens Academy (status)

There was discussion that while the content was more granular than would need to be in a charter, the values could be enshrined in a Natick document. Bernie noted that in the proposed Plymouth charter there was Community Engagement section.

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Lisa joined at 8:02.

Josh moved to recommend that “our governing documents should elevate effective and consistent communications and public engagement.” Matt seconded. There was discussion on how to make this more actionable. Michael discussed how this could go into the body of the report, and that it could be linked to the learning from our research. The motion was unanimously voted by roll call.

Review/Approval of Proposed Overall Governing Principles

We reviewed governing principles with considerable discussion, and we will revisit at the next meeting.

Upcoming issues

We discussed the need to understand both discretionary and statutory committees, and we will discuss Council vs. Town Meeting at a future meeting. There was commentary about the process and whether we want to get down to a deep level of detail.

We will meet on Monday, May 8.

Minutes

Minutes for March 27 with corrections were approved on a motion by Josh, seconded by Matt and unanimously voted by roll call.

Minutes for April 3 with corrections were approved on a motion by Matt, seconded by Linda and unanimously voted by roll call.

Minutes for April 10 with corrections were approved on a motion by Matt, seconded by Dan and unanimously voted by roll call.

On a motion by Josh, seconded by Matt, the meeting was adjourned at 9:02 pm by a unanimous roll call vote.

Respectfully Submitted,
Joshua Ostroff, Clerk