

Response to Questions for Town Government Study Committee from WPL Trustees 8-11-15
Follow-up from Discussion at July Library Trustee Meeting with TGSC Representatives

August 28, 2105

1. What is the timetable for implementation of the TGSC recommendations?

Answer: A series of warrant articles will be presented to Town Meeting in November 2015, one of which is to authorize the Selectmen to file special legislation creating the position of Town Manager. If voted by Town Meeting, then the General Court must approve the special legislation. If it does, then the voters will be asked at a municipal election, probably in the spring of 2016, for their approval. If the voters approve, then the Board of Selectmen will institute a search process with the intention of hiring a Town Manager by the time of Mr. Larsen's scheduled retirement at the end of November, 2016. Please note that there will be a number of other warrant articles brought to the 2015 Fall Town Meeting which will include amendments to a number of bylaws that are intended to implement the provisions of the special legislation. As noted in several public meetings, TGSC intends to have the proposed Special Act, the bylaws, a draft job description and search process memo (drafted by the Selectmen), and our background memos on Land Use, Budget, HR and Town Manager in final form available when we meet with the Selectmen on September 8.

2. How will the implementation of TGSC recommendations improve patron relations and the customer experience at the Library?

Answer: Of course, the creation of the position of Town Manager will not change the responsibilities of the Library Trustees to their patrons. While we appreciate the importance of this issue for the Library - that is, how will the Town Manager "improve patron relations" - our charge has been to look at the structure that will provide the best form of government for our Town on a town-wide basis. While there is nothing in the recommendations that will directly affect patron relations and service, it is anticipated that the form of government proposed will improve the efficiency and effectiveness of Wellesley's government to the benefit of all of our residents whom we serve. We envision that the Library Director will play an important role in the "management team" that can only help to advance improvements in the way that Town government serves the community. Finally, we believe that an improved budget process will become more transparent and allow for flexibility for important department priorities. There are lots of libraries in communities with a Town Manager forms of government. We assume that perhaps some of them enjoy as good a reputation as the ones here in Wellesley.

3. What problems are you trying to fix with the proposed changes specifically with respect to the Library?

Answer: The WPL is a fine and well run institution. Better integration of the Library with all of the other departments of the community, and development of a strong management team will be beneficial to the library and to the other departments. Even if there were no "problems" that needed to be fixed in the Library, our charge is to look at this question from the perspective of the Town as a whole. A more centralized approach to town resources and a structure that encourages collaboration is our goal. TGSC recommends moving from a governmental model which underscores independent department planning to a cohesive integrated form of government which will add support to both management and resources of a department.

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4. We strongly support the Town conducting a strategic plan and agree it would be very beneficial as a context for WFL planning. Is there any reason the strategic planning process could not be conducted under our current form of government? In the proposal, we would like to know if you anticipate that the process for the strategic plan should happen before the recruitment and hiring of a Town Manager.

Answer: Theoretically it would be possible to conduct strategic planning under our current form of government if all boards were willing to participate in the process, and if they could then agree to the competing Town priorities. But since there is no mechanism for coordination of strategic plans, and no executive accountable for its development and ongoing implementation, such an effort has not yet happened under our current form of government.

Recently the Selectmen and Planning Board representatives have been meeting to set out the framework for the strategic plan which would also encompass the Planning Board's Comprehensive Plan. It is anticipated that most or all work on this initial strategic planning effort will be completed by the time a Town Manager is hired. A bylaw on strategic planning will be presented at the Special Town Meeting in the fall.

5. There is lack of clarity about what the new management structure looks like. Could you elaborate on what the changes would look like? Please provide a copy of the proposed organizational chart. To whom would the Library Trustees "report"? Would it continue to be Town Meeting? To whom would the Library Director directly "report"?

Answer: There is no proposed change in the role of the Library Board of Trustees as a policy making body, and the Trustees will continue to be an elected body. There are changes proposed in the personnel processes town-wide. We have attempted to set them out in the HR memo that you should have received by now. The Library Director will have a reporting relationship with the Town Manager for administrative and operational purposes, and to the Library Trustees for policy purposes. The Library Trustees will "report" to the voters as they do now. We will have an org chart for review in the early fall.

6. Could you clarify the difference between a Town Manager and a Town Administrator, as the terms seem to often be used interchangeably? What specific differences would be notable for the WFL if the town were led by each of these titles?

Answer: We have prepared a memo on the Town Manager which you will have received by now. In it, we describe the differences between a Town Manager and Town Administrator.

7. The statement about Wellesley needing a Town Manager because we are like a \$150,000,000 corporation doesn't seem accurate, as the majority of that total is the school budget and schools would not be affected by the by-law changes including not reporting to the town manager. How effective can these changes be and what can be accomplished if the Town Manager has control of less than 50% of the overall budget and this portion consistently meets very tight guidelines?

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Answer: Under the current form of government, there are some functions within the Wellesley's government for which the Executive Director of General Government Services is responsible on an across-town basis, such as purchasing. In practice, however, the Executive Director has taken on the responsibility for other areas such as coordinating the budget and development of the health insurance program. As the Town Manager position is envisioned, there are some broader town-wide responsibilities that are proposed, including a better defined responsibility for town-wide budgeting, capital planning, and financial planning; responsibility for implementing strategic planning; and establishing consistency in the HR functions across all Town employees. Even if the school-related functions are discounted, there are 500 employees on the "Town" side. Both the School and Town call for someone who is ultimately responsible for the budget and who will be responsible for the administration of the Town.

8. What would Advisory's role be under a Town Manager? How do you anticipate the relationship and responsibilities of the WFL to Advisory changing under your recommendation?

Answer: We do not anticipate the relationship and responsibilities of the WFL to Advisory will change. We note in your covering letter that you distinguish between "submit" the budget and "present" the budget. Our current bylaws require boards to "submit" their budgets to the Advisory Committee. Boards will continue to be required to "submit" their budgets, but now to the Town Manager. The Town Manager will develop the comprehensive budget, 5 year capital plan, and Town-wide Financial Plan and the Town Manager will submit and present these budgets to the Board of Selectmen, the Advisory Committee and Town Meeting. Each of the Boards will retain the ability to be present at each of these presentations and to present differences with the budgets and capital plans presented. The Board of Selectmen, the Advisory Committee, and Town Meeting will retain their roles vis-à-vis the budget. We had attempted to spell out that process in our budget memo dated June 10. It will be finalized and part of our "package" for September 8.

9. What you've presented sounds very different from what was presented on May 11. Perhaps if people were given more time (rather than at a November Town Meeting) there would be a greater chance of coming to a more comfortable arrangement. Would TGSC consider a slower and more incremental process?

Answer: The TGSC had committed to listen to feedback based on the Draft Recommendations presented at the May 11 meeting. Some changes have been made in response to comments, questions, and suggestions that were made in the extensive process of obtaining feedback in May and June. There were sessions for Town Meeting Members and residents; sessions for department heads; and meetings with most boards. Some of those meetings and our TGSC meetings were televised. We also obtained some feedback through our "page" on the Town's website. As a result of this process, we have put aside a number of matters we had planned to pursue so that we could focus on our main objectives: strategic plan, creation of position of Town Manager, and the establishment of a Land Use Division. And, now, with Mr. Larsen's pending retirement, we need to move forward so that the community and the applicants for the Chief Operating Officer position will be clear as to the nature of the position. The time-frame

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outlined in response to question 1 has to be met in order to have the position filled when Mr. Larsen retires.

10. What are the plans to engage with boards and committees for feedback going forward? Will you be returning to the Library Trustees with a more detailed proposal in early September, with the intent to receive input and further refine your recommendation?

Answer: As noted to your chair previously and in a recent email to board chairs, we are providing several times when board members, individually or as a board, can meet with TGSC. In addition, we have specifically invited the Library Trustees to one of our meetings in September. And, we also suggested if those dates do not work out, we will endeavor to work out an alternative time with you. However, any meeting with the Trustees (and other boards) will need to be in a televised setting.

We expect that there will be refinements to the proposed bylaws, given the number of them. There may also be refinements to the Special Act that sets out the position of Town Manager.

11. We understand that the current proposal contemplates giving Boards approval rights over Department Head hires. What specific opportunities will the Boards have to participate in the hiring process in order to make this approval meaningful?

Answer: Our recommendation is that the Town Manager will work with the HR Director and Board to devise procedures that will set out the parameters of board participation. Common practice is for involvement of the entire Board of Trustees in establishing the profile for a Director (including public input), and to then establish a Screening Committee to be made up of people appropriate for the position being hired – less than a quorum of the Board of Trustees, perhaps a library director from another community, patrons, and others. The HR Department would be responsible for managing the recruitment process. The Screening Committee would screen and interview applicants, and make a recommendation of a certain number of finalists (usually 3 to 5) to be interviewed by the Town Manager. The Town Manager would make the decision and present that applicant to the Library Board of Trustees for their review and approval. All of the process up to the final review by the full Board is done confidentially to preserve the anonymity of the applicants.

12. It sounds like TGSC is uncomfortable with volunteers in substantive roles regarding finance and human resources. Is that the case? If so, could you provide specific information about how our current structure is unable to adequately address these failings?

Answer: To the contrary – the TGSC is very comfortable with volunteers in substantive roles regarding finance and human resources. The TGSC is respectful of the value of volunteers in all aspects of Wellesley's Town government and is very aware that the Town enjoys the involvement of strong and skilled volunteers. We believe that we can do a better job for our volunteers by providing them with better and more consistent staff support while, at the same time, ensuring consistency in HR functions throughout the town.

The question raises an interesting issue. Even if there were a board that did an excellent job in evaluation of its department head, the board has no way of viewing its department head in the

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context of the Town-wide structure. A board cannot know how its department head compares to other department heads in promoting town goals, in broad management issues, etc. Someone who knows the whole management structure and works closely with the department heads has that unique perspective. Once there is a strategic plan in place, then goals need to be set not only for the individual department but for the town as a whole. This form of goal setting needs one person who has the responsibility to oversee and implement the process.

13. What do you envision for increase in Town staffing? How will these increases in costs work with the budget? What impact do you expect they will have specifically on the Library budget?

Answer: At this point in time, we do not anticipate that our recommendations will result in an increase in Town staffing. We expect that the Town Manager may have a salary slightly more than the current salary of our Executive Director; that the salary of an appointed Town Clerk may be a little more than the salary of the elected town clerk; and if the Land Use Division is approved, then the salary of a Deputy Town Manager will be more than the current salary of the Deputy Executive Director. We intend to have information on these costs in the early fall. We do not believe that these costs would impact the Library budget.

14. Based on your competitive analysis, could you explain in what ways our peer towns are superior to Wellesley in terms of service delivery or financial performance because of their Town Manager structure? We would be particularly interested in specifics of how Library Services are better delivered or managed by peer Towns that have a Town Manager structure.

Answer: The TGSC has done a review that shows that communities with a Town Manager form of government have had lower levels of budget increases, and fewer Proposition 2 ½ overrides, than Wellesley's experience over the same time. However, it is impossible to determine if that is entirely because of the form of government. It also appears that development of a strong management team including the Library Director benefits both the town government and the Library itself. The Town Manager structure provides clear lines of accountability and it offers employees and residents a consistent set of values and expectations for the highest delivery of services day to day.

Again, the TGSC is looking at these issues from a town-wide perspective, not from a particular department perspective. As we have stated, we believe that in the aggregate, the Town will be in a better position with a system of more accountability lodged in a Town Manager responsible for the centralized administration of staff and the budget.

15. The responses state that the Board will be liberated from some administrative functions so they can focus on policy, etc. Can you be more specific as to what administrative functions would be eliminated?

Answer: The various Boards in Wellesley have been responsible for appointment of their Department Heads, evaluation of their Department Heads, approval of evaluation of all employees over which they have responsibility (most Boards have not done this although it is required by bylaw), a role in collective bargaining, and other requirements. In these areas the administrative responsibilities will change, although our proposals preserve a role for the boards

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in the hiring and evaluation of Department Heads, and in establishing the parameters for collective bargaining.

We think it is important to consider this question in context. For now, there are board members who enjoy and have the time to delve deeply into the management of their departments. However, we were also charged with the question of looking at the structure as it supports our town government in the future. We question whether the town will continue to have volunteers who are willing and able to devote the same level of time now devoted by some volunteers to town government. The trend of fewer candidates and fewer contested elections for our boards and fewer candidates for Town Meeting Member positions mirrors the experience of many volunteer organizations in our town and elsewhere. Therefore, we believe creating a structure that will support our volunteers and relieve them of some administrative tasks will strengthen our position for the future.

16. Much is made of how the new structure will allow cross-board communication and collaboration. Why is this currently not possible – what are the aspects of the current structure that prevent the Executive Director from bringing boards together? If there are barriers preventing this, can't these barriers be eliminated without completely reorganizing the structure?

Answer: We do not agree with the premise of the question - that is, that the TGSC recommendations call for "completely reorganizing the structure". The TGSC has been careful to try to retain the best of Wellesley's current form of government, but to propose changes in the areas of personnel and some changes in the budget process which will improve efficiency and effectiveness of the entire structure. The fundamental structure of 10 elected boards, a Representative Town Meeting, and the responsibilities of each board in the execution of its statutory and bylaw mandates will not change.

Theoretically, cross-board communication and collaboration is possible under the current form of government, and we have had some notable examples such as Fullerbrook Park, the North 40 project, and others. The collaboration happens when boards want it to happen and in most instances on a case-by-case or project-by-project basis. We want a structure that facilitates town wide collaboration in all that we do. To do so requires placing authority in a position in the community to make this kind of communication and collaboration happen as part of everyday government in our Town..

17. You have stated that Advisory's workload would be reduced and the book would get shorter – why is that?

Answer: We have said that Advisory's workload MIGHT be reduced. We do not know if the book will be shorter. However, the experience in peer communities indicates that this is the case. Wellesley has a poor track record in retaining members on Advisory for more than one term, and the information obtained by the TGSC indicates that this is largely related to the amount and type of work required. In actuality, the Advisory Committee will decide what should be the proper level of activity and the size of the book in order to properly advise Town Meeting on the various warrant articles. The Town Meeting Member survey taken in the spring

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will provide information helpful for the Advisory Committee to consider in compiling its Report to Town Meeting.

18. Could you describe in more detail the selection process for the proposed Town Manager? Specifically, what process is TGSC proposing? What are the criteria being used to allocate voting seats during the screening, interviewing and selection process? What specific role and level of engagement is envisioned for the Board of Library Trustees in the proposed process?

Answer: The Selectmen are in the process of putting together a draft overview of the selection process for the Town Manager. It will be broadly available for review. We expect it will be ready in early September.

Experience indicates that the process for recruitment and selection is extensive, and includes opportunities for broad community input, Board input, and staff input. A profile of qualifications is developed. The HR Director manages the administrative process, and a consultant is usually hired. A screening committee is established, and candidates are interviewed by the Screening Committee in executive session. A determined number of applicants (usually 3 to 5) are forwarded to the Board of Selectmen for interview in public session, and the Board of Selectmen make a decision on the successful applicant.

While there are not usually “designated seats” for specific boards, the Board of Selectmen will need to consider the optimal mix, number, and make-up of members on the screening committee to yield the best results.