

Report to the 1987 Annual Town Meeting
from
TOWN GOVERNMENT STUDY COMMITTEE II

THE CHARGE:

The Town Government Study Committee II ("TGSC II") was established by the Special Town Meeting of May 19, 1986. Its charge was to work with Town boards and committees to:

- Improve communication and coordination among the various boards, committees, and branches of government;
- Improve the budget process;
- Consider the establishment of a Long Range Planning Committee;
- Make other recommendations as seen fit, and report to the 1987 annual Town Meeting.

THE PROCESS:

TGSC II divided its work into three stages: the initial gathering of information and assessment of perceived problems; the analysis of this research and development of any proposals for change; and, finally, the publication and review of the Committee's conclusions and recommendations.

In late summer and early fall TGSC II reviewed the findings of the 1985-86 Town Government Study Committee and scheduled interviews with all major elected and appointed Town boards as well as with senior staff personnel to solicit their opinions and recommendations. The Committee also reviewed Town by-laws and pertinent job descriptions to determine the specific structure, authority and required duties that existed.

In November and December, the TGSC II analyzed its data, reached general conclusions, and formulated an outline of proposals.

Finally, the Committee has spent nearly two months meeting with boards and committees, holding public hearings and refining its recommendations.

It should be noted that the Committee has not addressed the topic of communication separately in its recommendations. With few exceptions, Town boards and staff see no major problems with communications. TGSC II agrees that many initiatives have been taken by boards, committees, and departments to increase coordination and to correct weaknesses in communication. Some formal liaisons have been established between departments, and joint meetings have become more frequent. More extensive media coverage by newspapers and cable television has also aided the exchange of information. However, communication is not an operation distinct from other governmental functions. Coordinating department and board operations, improving the budget process, developing consistent policy and procedures, and establishing a long range planning process should further strengthen the communications network.

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While TGSC II considered a wide range of specific concerns which were brought to its attention, the Committee concluded the following broader recommendations to be the most effective at this time.

RECOMMENDATIONS:

#1: THAT THE MEMBERSHIP OF THE BOARD OF SELECTMEN BE INCREASED FROM THREE TO FIVE.

At the urging of a majority of boards and individuals interviewed, including the present Board of Selectmen, the TGSC II makes this recommendation in acknowledgement of the ever increasing magnitude of the selectmen's responsibilities. Expansion of the Board would ease the burden of overseeing the growing complexities of Town government. It would allow for delegating additional responsibilities to each member as well as establishing more effective liaisons with governmental entities both within and outside the Town. The individuals would also have more time to be involved with the planning process.

Furthermore, an expanded board would bring a wider representation and perspective to discussions and therefore to the ultimate resolution of issues.

TGSC II believes this change should become effective with the Annual Town Election of 1988. At that time three seats on the five member Board of Selectmen could be made available, two for three-year terms and one for a two-year term. The two candidates receiving the highest number of votes would be elected for three-year terms and the candidate with the next highest number of votes would be elected for a two-year term. There after all seats become available on a three-year term basis.

#2: THAT CERTAIN BOARDS, DEPARTMENTS, AND COMMITTEES BE COORDINATED INTO ONE BRANCH OF TOWN GOVERNMENT KNOWN AS "GENERAL GOVERNMENT" FOR PURPOSES OF ADMINISTRATION AND BUDGET (BUT NOT FOR PROGRAM AND POLICY DECISIONS).

TGSC II found that by far the greatest number of comments and suggestions concerning needed improvements in town government related to administration of General Government services which include substantially all areas of Town government other than Schools, Public Works, and Libraries. (See Appendix A for a listing of all such boards, committees and budget functions.)

TGSC II does not favor nor find adequate support for any change in the fundamental status of the various independently elected boards and committees within the General Government area, nor does it suggest any limitations of their powers to set policy and make program decisions. There is a real need, however, for greater coordination of the personnel and resources of various departments of General Government for purposes of administration, budgeting and planning.

Most observers agreed that the proliferation of independent boards and committees in the General Government area over the years has resulted in a cumbersome budget process, inadequate planning, and significant administrative inefficiency and inflexibility. The Selectmen have led efforts to improve communications and coordination, and those efforts have been successful in a number of cases, particularly with respect to the budget process. But, better administrative management through coordination of personnel, budgets, equipment, supplies and other resources would be most beneficial to the Town. TGSC II believes this administrative management should be done for the following reasons:

- The budget process both in preparation, presentation and administration is too burdensome, particularly for the small departments. In addition, appropriations based on small budgetary units result in limited ability to shift funds to meet changing needs during the year, with too much reliance on Reserve Fund Transfers. Budgeting and appropriations based on a larger departmental grouping can reduce the time spent in dealing with relatively trivial amounts and increase administrative flexibility to respond more quickly to unforeseen circumstances during the fiscal year.
- Administration of the various departments would benefit from personnel management that is both more consistent and more adaptable in responding to fluctuating departmental needs. It would help to build a sense of unity.
- Coordination and greater sharing of equipment, supplies, and maintenance services would increase administrative efficiency and cost control.
- Effective long-range planning requires both a broader perspective than that of individual departments and centralized responsibility to carry out the planning process.

TGSC II believes that the Board of Selectmen is the only appropriate office to have administrative authority for coordination of General Government services. Thus, we propose that staff and other resources of the Planning Board, the Recreation Commission, Natural Resources Commission, the Board of Assessors, the Board of Health, the Personnel Board and the Town Clerk as well as all boards and committees currently responsible to or appointed by the Selectmen be subject to the administrative authority of the Selectmen, and that budgeting, personnel management and all other administrative matters be under the Selectmen's supervision.

While this administrative management would affect, to a degree, the day-to-day operations of some departments, it should not result in interference by the Selectmen with the basic policy and program decisions made by other elected officials nor would this administrative management result in the Selectmen assuming any appointive powers. The elected Boards would continue as set forth in the Town By-Laws.

Should disagreements arise between the Selectmen and another Board, and in the event that a resolution cannot be reached between them, that Board would still be entitled to present its case to the Advisory Committee and if necessary to Town Meeting as is provided for in the Town By-Laws. TGSC II, however, sees it as unlikely that daily administrative management will result in any unresolvable disputes.

#3: THAT THE SELECTMEN ESTABLISH THE POSITION OF EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR OF GENERAL GOVERNMENT SERVICES TO COORDINATE THE ADMINISTRATION, PLANNING AND BUDGETS OF ALL DEPARTMENTS WITHIN GENERAL GOVERNMENT.

To enable the General Government to operate effectively, TGSC II strongly recommends the establishment of this position of management and leadership. TGSC II has found encouragement and support for this position among a number of elected officials and senior staff members.

In addition to the responsibilities held currently by the Executive Secretary, the Executive Director of General Government would:

- coordinate the activities of Town departments and arrange meetings between department heads
- supervise day-to-day operations of departments within General Government
- establish and enforce consistent policies for personnel and resource management
- coordinate budget preparation and presentation
- ensure proper maintenance of buildings and equipment within General Government
- coordinate the townwide Long Range Planning process

The specific job description would need to be developed by the Personnel Board in conjunction with the Selectmen.

Under the current Town By-Laws the Selectmen are the chief executives of the Town responsible for coordination and leadership among boards and committees. The Executive Director of General Government Services under the Board of Selectmen would serve as the Chief Administrative Officer for General Government and would have status comparable with the Director of Public Works and the Superintendent of Schools and be placed in the same salary range.

It is emphasized that policy and program decisions would continue to be made by elected and appointed Boards and Committees. Nothing recommended by TGSC II changes their statutory rights and responsibilities.

#4: THAT THE SELECTMEN BE CHARGED WITH THE RESPONSIBILITY OF DIRECTING THE CONTINUOUS PROCESS OF CREATING AND MAINTAINING A TOWNWIDE LONG RANGE MASTER PLAN.

It was the unanimous opinion of those interviewed that the Town take a broad view of its current status, future trends and demands. A Long Range Master Plan provides important guidelines by which the Town can operate. A complete and properly developed Plan helps:

- * inform the public about present and future needs and projects;
- * focus attention on community trends, objectives, and fiscal capacity;
- * coordinate departments' Programs and Plans;
- * facilitate coordination between operating budgets and capital needs and eliminate or reduces duplication;
- * control the tax rate, avoid sudden changes in debt service requirements, and plan for possible reduction in revenue;
- * increase opportunities for obtaining federal and state aid;
- * coordinate activities with neighboring and overlapping units of government to reduce duplication and take advantage of opportunities;
- * prepare for the impact of federal, state, and regional pressures.

In recommending that such a Long Range Planning process be instituted, TGSC II is following direction from Town Meeting. TGSC II does not recommend establishing a separate ad hoc planning committee. It believes that the Long Range Planning process could evolve from the current Fiscal Policy Committee established by the Selectmen. Leadership and direction, however, are essential in achieving the coordination and cooperation of all municipal departments. TGSC II recommends placing the responsibility for this leadership in the hands of the Selectmen, the chief executive board of the Town.

It has been stated and the members of TGSC II agree that "The process is almost as important as the product. It allows all boards to be better informed. They need to know what other boards are doing. It helps them do a better job. They have common issues and common concerns." Working together assists each board and thus the Town as a whole.

As envisioned by TGSC II, the process will include the preparation by each of the four major areas of Government (General Government, Schools, DPW, and Libraries) of information on its programs and budgets, both capital and

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operating, for a period covering 2-5 years. They will detail sources and application of funds, program description, service trends, and long term objectives. This information will include but not be limited to the following:

- any currently existing plans (such as the Comprehensive Plan and the Long Range Plan of the NRC);
- recent and anticipated trends in revenue expenditures, debt, and unfunded liabilities;
- population growth and demographics;
- overall space, land use, development, and zoning needs;
- utility requirements (electric, sewer, water);
- other infrastructure (buildings, roads, bridges, parking areas, etc.);
- capital requirements and financing alternatives;

After collecting all this data and holding a public hearing, the Selectmen would prepare an initial plan which, in their best judgment, matches the goals and objectives of the Town with its financial resources.

This Plan will be presented, in document form, to the Advisory Committee. At that time, any persons who disagree with the Selectmen can present their arguments. The Long Range Master Plan may then be modified and presented to Town Meeting by the Selectmen for Town Meeting consideration.

In recent years the Advisory Committee has set the annual budget guidelines for departments but has been concerned that the "guideline" effort has not adequately addressed the issue of long-term allocation of resources. Through the Long Range Planning process, programs and projects will be evaluated in relation to each other. Through this discussion and analysis, priorities can be established according to the community's goals and needs.

TGSC II debated whether this setting of priorities might appropriately be placed within the province of the Advisory Committee. In recommending that the Selectmen should make the overall initial decisions regarding the Long Range Master Plan, TGSC II places responsibility in the hands of elected rather than appointed Town officials. The Advisory Committee's function would then be that of reviewing, questioning and recommending alternatives. Involving both the Selectmen and the Advisory Committee in creating a final plan for presentation to Town Meeting should maintain appropriate checks and balances to the process.

A Long Range Planning process for the Town of Wellesley is long overdue. A Long Range Master Plan will give Town Meeting a long-term perspective and a basis on which to evaluate current proposals and requests.

#5: THAT THE CAPITAL BUDGETING AND INVESTMENT COMMITTEE, AS IT NOW EXISTS, BE ABOLISHED.

By their own admission, CBIC has been severely hampered in recent years by the constraints and effects of Proposition 2 1/2. With the development of a town wide Long Range Master Plan which includes proposed capital projects and means of financing or paying for these projects, the role of the CBIC would be further diminished or become duplicative at best.

According to the Town By-Laws, the CBIC is also responsible for:

- setting guidelines and criteria for the Department of Financial Services for the investment of any and all types of Town funds
- serving as Trustees of the War Memorial Scholarship Fund.

TGSC II believes that these functions can be performed by the Board of Selectmen and the Financial Services Department with oversight from Advisory and Audit Committee and, therefore, recommends the abolition of the Capital Budgeting and Investment Committee as of July 1, 1989.

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APPENDIX A

- ADVISORY
- ASSESSORS
- AUDIT COMMITTEE
- BUILDING DEPARTMENT
- BUS SHELTERS
- CBIC
- CENTRAL ADMINISTRATIVE SERV.
- CONTRIBUTORY RETIREMENT
- NON-CONTRIBUTORY RETIREMT.
- COUNCIL ON AGING
- DATA PROCESSING
- MATURING DEBT
- INTEREST
- ELECTION & REGISTRATION
- FAIR HOUSING COMMITTEE
- FINANCIAL SERVICES
- FIRE DEPARTMENT
- GROUP INSURANCE
- BOARD OF HEALTH
- HISTORICAL COMMISSION
- INSURANCE
- LAW DEPARTMENT
- MANAGEMENT PAY PLAN
- MEDICAL EXPENSES
- MEMORIAL DAY
- METROWEST PLANNING AGENCY
- NATURAL RESOURCES COMMISSION
- PARKING FINE PROCESSING
- PARKING METER EXPENSES
- PERMANENT BUILDING COMMITTEE
- PERMANENT SCHOOL ACCONODATION COMM.
- PERSONNEL
- PLANNING
- POLICE
- SPECIAL SCHOOL POCICE
- RECREATION
- RESERVE FUND
- SEALER OF WEIGHTS & MEASURES
- SELECTMEN
- TOWN CLERK
- TOWN HALL
- TOWN REPORT
- TRAINING AND DEVELOPMENT
- TREASURER
- UNEMPLOYMENT COMPENSATION
- VACANT BUILDINGS
- VETERANS BENEFITS
- VETERANS DAY
- VETERANS SERVICES
- VOCATIONAL SCHOOL
- YOUTH COMMISSION
- ZONING BOARD OF APPEALS