

Town Government Study Committee 2014

Town Hall – Great Hall

October 15, 2014

Committee: Katherine L Babson Jr., Stanley Brooks, Rose Mary Donahue, Arthur J Goldberg, Ann Marie Gross, Richard Page, Linda Perlmutter, Anna Sereiko, Thomas Ulfelder

Also: Kathleen Nagle

Chair Babson called the meeting to order at 7:30 pm. She announced that the session was being taped for Broadcast by the Wellesley Channel. She asked if there was anyone present to address the committee. There was none.

Richard Page introduced guests from the Board of Public Works, David A T Donohue and Owen Dugan Sr. and Municipal Light Board member Katy Gibson. Page thanked the board and their respective staffs for generosity of time spent with TGSC members in understanding the scope of their departments and operations.

Donahue spoke on behalf of the BPW stating that the current governance situation is working well for the operations of the DPW. He finds that the board oversight of the DPW is advantageous as the board members develop expertise in the specific functions of the DPW which are diverse. He believes that centralization of authority over the DPW within the BOS would not be as advantageous as the current structure.

Gibson also thinks the current governance is advantageous for MLP. MLP is somewhat unique entity in the town as it has both operations for the Town of Wellesley and other entrepreneurial activities in other jurisdictions. There is also a requirement to maintain a vigorous protection of the ratepayers as a distinct group from taxpayers. MLP has an independent management team from the other utilities (water and sewer) and distinct operations and skill set for employees. There is no actual overlap with other utility functions.

Donahue and Dugan agreed that there is a distinct skill set and no functional overlap for water and sewer with MLP. However they did emphasize that within DPW divisions there is operational cross training for employees.

Donahue stated where consolidation of operations is efficient MLP and DPW do look for opportunities. A good example is the unified billing, collections, and meter readings for all utilities.

Babson asked if there were any duplication of functions with other town departments – for example finance.

Donahue stated that the finance function is coordinated with Town Hall financial services and no duplication of work. Cash management is done at Town Hall Treasurer/financial Services.

Page asked the BPW to explain the concept of “work for others” in their budget.

Donahue explained that the DPW is frequently called upon to do work for other departments to support capital project and other operations specific to that department. DPW reports such work under the “work for others” line item to show use of departmental resources by other town departments. The budget for such work is carried in the other department budget and is reflected as a interdepartmental transfer to be transparent about how resources are being used.

Donahue stated that DPW may be called upon by other departments needs that requires a cutback in expected activities of the DPW’s own work. The DPW tries to balance the needs of other departments with its own responsibilities. DPW doesn’t think this situation puts any infrastructure at risk, but some years not everything gets down that was planned.

Donahue also stated that personnel functions are already handled by Human Resources department.

The BPW does direct review and supervision for the Director, Mike Pakstis, only.

Page asked if there were benchmarks or service measurements used by the department.

Donahue stated there is some benchmarking but comparisons with other towns is difficult due to operational and budgeting differences. DPW has institutes balanced scorecard approach for its divisions.

Gibson stated that MLP has very good metrics for safety and service interruptions and rates vs other towns and power providers.

Goldberg asked for suggestions for improvements.

Donahue suggested regular newsletter type communications with residents to publicize what is being accomplished by DPW and other departments.

At 8:20 the BPW/MLP guests left and members of the School Committee were introduced.

Matt Kelley, Patti Quigley and KC Kato met with the TGSC to discuss School Committee perspective.

Quigley reported that School Department has recently revised its internal organizational structure to better support the goals of superintendent Lussier. There is an internal Personnel operation.

Kato reported that the role and responsibility of the Finance function has grown in complexity over the years with increased reporting requirements, states mandates and generating revenues to support certain programs. The reorganization added a business manager position reporting to the Assistant Superintendant for Finance.

Quigley sated that by state statute the school department has independent control over its budget and expenses. While schools respect the need to be team player with the town,

sometimes the goals of the department vs the town goals are different. Quigley suggests there should be more interaction among the departments and boards to discuss and agree on common goals prior to budget guidelines being set. She states increased communication that is collaborative would be an improvement. All departments should engage in pre-budget discussions to set priorities. Interboard meetings should be more interactive working meetings rather than presentations of decisions already made. Last year the budget guideline was unrealistic to provide level services. School Committee has goals to both meet level services and move ahead with improvements reflected in its Master plan.

Quigley discussed the capital/building projects situation. It is hard for School Committee to pin down who is responsible for decisions. The School is ultimate user of the project but the decisions are made by FMD and PBC. Schools feel they need a professional at the table to advocate for their interests and monitor the progress of projects.

Kato/Quigley spoke to the scope of responsibilities required of volunteer school committee members. They would like to find some opportunities to shift responsibilities to staff to lessen the burden on volunteers. The current model makes it difficult for residents with full time jobs to run for school committee.

Quigley also suggested a more robust “onboarding” program for elected officials to understand their roles and responsibilities.

The committee asked about the timing of elections and the idea of officials taking office later in the year after ATM. NO consensus.

Quigley suggested the idea of an internal audit group to look at all departments and hold all departments to same standard of reporting.

Babson asked about the idea of implementing a TDRT model to other issues.

General agreement that the TDRT is a model of interdepartment cooperation that is effective in major projects and is a process to look at.

School Committee guests departed at 9:50 pm.

The TGSC members reflected on some of the ideas presented.

The Committee expressed interest in looking at interboard meetings as an opportunity to enhance communication among boards if a different format can be developed to encourage interactive exchange of ideas.

Additions to Bucket list

- Interboard participation
- Setting town wide goals through strategic planning

- Internal operations audit
- Resources for Board hiring for department heads through HR

Next Meeting November 5 – possible conflict with STM session.

Planning for December 6 meeting.

- All reports should be completed.
- Review list of ideas
- Develop criteria for evaluation of ideas
- Look for common themes in filed reports

Minutes of October 1 approved for filing.

The meeting adjourned at 10:30 pm.