

Town Government Study Committee 2014

Warren Building Room 008

November 18, 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

Guests: Kate Fitzpatrick, Needham Town Manager

In attendance: Mary Ann Cluggish, Ellen Gibbs, Jack Morgan, Lucy Kapples, Ann Rappaport, David Murphy, Barbara Searle, Marjorie Freiman, Hans Larson, David McCauley

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.

Mary Ann Cluggish offered prepared remarks to the committee. Cluggish stated that Wellesley has a fine reputation in the state for good governance and finance. There are still opportunities for improvement. One area that should be considered is Land use regulation.

She urged the Committee to establish and publish criteria for any changes proposed.

She stated that changes that increase the professionalism and training of department heads and committees would be a positive change. She suggested consideration of appointing those boards that require a specific background and professional expertise.

There were no other citizen who wished to address the committee.

Ms Babson introduced Kate Fitzpatrick, Town Manager of Needham. Babson invited audience members to participate as desired in the discussion with Ms. Fitzpatrick.

Ms. Fitzpatrick spoke to the committee about the structure of the Town Manager position in Needham, the process of making the change and the benefits of the structure for Needham.

2003 Board of Selectmen in Needham spearheaded the effort to change the structure of governance in Needham to Town Manager. BOS created a charter for the town without going through charter commission process. Town Boards and Committees agreed to several compromises to achieve the change. They attempted to discern the essential qualities of Needham to preserve while making a change. The town petitioned for a special act in the summer of 2004, which was approved at a vote of the town in November 2004 , and became effective in 2005.

The BOS conducted an outside search for Town Manager. Existing Assistant Town Administrator Kate Fitzpatrick was selected.

Issues that drove the change were: seeking a single voice to set town priorities; management of budgeting in a more centralized process.

The Budget process includes Finance Committee and Town Manager (TM) and the departments. In the fall the departments submit budgets to the TM. The TM submits the total budget requests to the Finance Committee. Both Finance Committee and TM work on the budget until final prioritized budget is submitted by Finance Committee for action by Town Meeting. If departments are not satisfied with the recommendation of the TM they can ask the BOS to have an override election . The override occurs at the same time as the annual town election and prior to the Town Meeting (this timing has been Needham practice since the beginning of Prop 2 ½). TM has authority to set the budgets by department to achieve the town wide goals for the year. She also sets a figure for the schools, which the schools can ask for more by way of override if necessary. Generally departments can submit a level budget and then advocate for spending above the prior year budget. TM evaluates the spending requests in light of the town's priorities. Consolidated budgeting allows TM to "find" funds for priority projects by having a total picture of the requests and the resources available. FinCom holds hearings, makes some modest changes, negotiates with departments to find alternatives if possible. The BOS endorses the TM budget and Finance Committee actually brings the budget to ATM. The budget process occurs on multiple parallel tracks and involves compromises along the way. TM makes final decisions on the budget. Citizen satisfaction surveys are conducted biennially to assist in setting priorities.

FinCom is fairly strong entity in Needham. Appointed by Moderator for three year terms. FinCOM can serve multiple terms. FinCOM can make comments on anything before ATM but is limited to "financial impacts", that term is broadly interpreted.

The TM has supervisory and hiring authority over most staff and department heads. Needham still has elected boards for policy making role, but the staff/hiring/supervision role is assigned to TM. TM operates with two assistants who oversee broad areas of oversight- Finance and Operations. These assistants do the supervision of Department heads in their areas and report to TM. Evaluations are based on town goals, and management capability but not necessarily department specifics.

Hiring of department heads usually requires a committee appointed by TM. (Asst Manager, HR representative, other related department heads, a representative of the board). Board retains veto power over an appointment recommended by the TM. TM is deemed to be the appointing authority for all hires.

One compromise was that the change in governance was designed to be evolutionary. Currently they are working on consolidation of Health and Human Services departments. The budget has been consolidated but the departments retain their own heads now. Kate is working to consolidate the department heads under one person to allow greater flexibility in the use of resources in the general operational area. For example – better utilization of social worker positions might be a beneficial outcome. Planning and Community Development is another area where they are working toward consolidation. (NB DPW was already under the authority of BOS in Needham – did not need to consolidate)

Ms Fitzpatrick reported a positive relationship with School superintendent. She tours schools twice a year with the Superintendent and has regular meetings with him. TM makes a total recommendation on the School Budget operating and capital. Schools decide how to allocate and can go to BOS for override for additional funding.

Needham has Public Facilities Department (PFD) that oversees Public Construction. They consolidated maintenance operations into PFD. There is a director of construction and a director for maintenance. Needham has its own OPM in the PFD staff. There is also a PBC committee appointed by the a variety of sources (BOS, MODERATOR, LIBRARY, SCHOOLS, PARKS)

Ms Babson thanked Ms Fitzpatrick for her comments and she departed at 8:45 pm.

The Committee approve the minutes of October 15.

The Committee reviewed progress on interview assignments and discussed scheduling of interview with other towns beginning in early December.

The Committee commented on some of the key items they had heard from Ms Fitzpatrick

- BOS spearheaded the desire for change
- It was a process and took time to achieve compromise and acceptance of the boards
- The consolidation of personnel hiring and supervision seemed to be a relief for boards
  - Safety valve for boards that boards have authority to approve any hires
- Set up model with opportunities to evolve to meet changed needs of the town
- Creates model to review operations and make changes to efficiently utilize resources
- Based on shared values and goals of the town

Committee members reported on department interviews.

Ann Marie Gross – Health Department and Board of Health

- Governed by state law for duties. Legal authority over public health issues and policy
- Director collaborates with many other departments effectively
- Recommendation of better use of social media for health issues
- Consolidation of Health and other human services departments might strengthen delivery of services.
- Board prefers being elected.

Arthur Goldberg- Wellesley Housing Development Corporation

- Nonprofit board appointed by BOS
- No staff
- Uses CPC funds and payments for inclusionary housing to purchase affordable housing units for resale

- Would like to see stronger advocate for affordable housing in town

#### Gig Babson- Retirement Board

- Statutory board essentially independent of other town boards
- Would like BOS to be more proactive in pension reform discussion

#### Gig Babson – Sustainable Energy Committee

- Established in 2010; appointed board
- .5 staff position eliminated in 2014, now FMD energy coordinator position provides some support
- Committee suggests expanding mandate to other issues beyond energy use, but do not have the “bandwidth” to expand
- Suggest embedding sustainability into permitting process

#### Linda Perlmutter – Council on Aging

- Much of the work is done by the volunteers- example the COA bus
- Some things can fall through the cracks when staff is on vacation
- Need to look at skill sets that can support the work of the COA

#### BUCKET LIST

Ms Babson requested the committee to review bucket list ideas and add contributions so that at Dec 6 meeting the list can be prioritized.

#### FUTURE MEETINGS

Dec 3 next meeting

Dec 6 – at Library – discuss priorities and ways to evaluate ideas committee has heard (Julian Lange will join committee to facilitate discussion)

Dec 9 – at Town Hall – guest Marilyn Contreas from state to discuss alternate forms of government organization

The meeting adjourned at 9:30 pm.

