

**TOWN MEETING STUDY AND IMPROVEMENT COMMITTEE
(TMSIC)**

**TOWN HALL
52 MAIN STREET
MILFORD, MA 01757**

Meeting Minutes

The regular meeting of the Town Meeting Study and Improvement Committee was held on Monday, November 16, 2020, via a Vast conference call. Renaldo A. DeLuzio being in the chair called the meeting to order at 7:05 p.m.

Present at the meeting were seven members of the Committee: Michelangelo Bon Tempo, Charles M. Clark, Sr., Renaldo A. DeLuzio, Richard A. Heller, Kathryn L. Mastroianni, Jose M. Morais, and Justin Redden. One member of the Committee was absent: Susan Marie Hastert. Three Participating Applicants to the Committee were present: Christine Crean, B. Gregory Johnson and Brian W. Long.

Administrative Items

Chairman DeLuzio requested that Mr. Bon Tempo take a roll call of members of the Committee present. Present for the roll call were Mr. Bon Tempo, Mr. Clark, Chairman DeLuzio, Dr. Heller, Mr. Morais, and Mr. Redden.

Chairman DeLuzio read a revised statement from Charles D. Boddy, Jr., Esq., Town Counsel, regarding the conduct of public meetings via remote participation post COVID-19 under Governor Charlie Baker's March 12, 2020 Executive Order modifying certain requirements of the Open Meeting Law.

[Ms. Mastroianni entered the meeting at 7:08 p.m.]

Chairman DeLuzio reviewed the protocol for a meeting being held via a Vast conference call.

1. Approve Previous Meeting Minutes

Chairman DeLuzio moved and the minutes of the regular meeting of September 21, 2020 were accepted as read.

2. Communications from the Public

No communication (e-mail or U.S. mail) from the public was received in advance of the meeting by the Committee.

3. Committee Initiatives Going Forward

Chairman DeLuzio provided background information for an assessment of the Committee's efforts with respect to its specified duties. Those duties can be divided into two categories.

Category A – those duties that are explicitly defined

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1. Develop and maintain a comprehensive Town Meeting handbook, including presentation guidelines. This has evolved into three parts – a procedural guide, handbook, and presentation guidelines. The procedural guide is in process; the handbook status is not known; and a presentation guidelines draft was prepared but needs simplification.
2. Take responsibility for the education and orientation of new Town Meeting members. This program has not started and needs research, and eventually a Sub-committee.
3. Assess the adequacy of the physical facilities at Upper Town Hall. This assessment has been completed. The audio/video systems were upgraded and are now more than adequate to service the Upper Hall. The remaining and more difficult issue to resolve is how to improve the quality of those speaking at the microphone(s).
4. Organize pre-town meeting forums. This has been accomplished. However, it should be noted that this duty was included to provide an opportunity to ask questions which is not widely afforded at Town Meeting. If the Town Meeting procedures were changed to allow for the asking of questions, there would no longer be a need for a pre-town meeting forum.

Category B – those duties that are generally defined

1. Periodically conduct surveys.
2. Communicate with Town Meeting members.
3. Assess the adequacy and timeliness of information.
4. Perform other duties as Town Meeting shall determine.

The Committee identified four other initiatives to pursue.

1. Electronic Voting. Stalled due to COVID-19 and the death of Steve Trettel who was heading up this initiative.
2. Twice reading of motions. Study report forwarded to Michael J. Noferi, Esq., Town Moderator. Due to the death of Atty. Noferi, the report was forwarded to Charles J. Boddy, Jr., Esq., Town Counsel.
3. Asking questions at Town Meeting. Mr. Long initiated research by viewing other town meeting videos. Need for additional research to determine if any towns have procedures governing the asking of questions.
4. Capital Expenditures/Improvements: amending capital expenditures under Standing Votes of Town Meeting – Town Meeting Rules Section 5 and capital improvements under General By-law Article 2. Final Committee memorandum (Rev. 3, dated 9-1-20) sent to Chris Morin, Chair of the Finance Committee, with two Town Meeting Article Submission forms for the September 2020 Special Town Meeting. The matter was referred to the Finance Committee's Sub-committee on Capital Improvements, which did not address it in time for the September 2020 warrant. The Sub-committee committed to take it up again for the 2021 Annual Town Meeting.

Chairman DeLuzio opened discussion on how the Committee should proceed with the above defined duties and initiatives going forward.

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By unanimous consent, the Committee agreed with Chairman DeLuzio's recommendation that given the Committee's limited resources and available time, the Committee should focus on those duties that are explicitly defined (Category A above) as the top priority.

Category A – those duties that are explicitly defined

1. *Procedural guide, town meeting handbook, and presentation guideline:* Mr. Bon Tempo will present a draft of the procedural guide at the next regular meeting and then work on a draft for a town meeting handbook.

Chairman DeLuzio will work on simplifying the presentation guidelines draft.

2. *Education and orientation of new Town Meeting members:* Mrs. Crean will work with Bryan Cole, Consultant Volunteer.
3. *Adequacy of the physical facilities at Upper Town Hall:* assessment completed, though improving the quality of those speaking at the microphone(s) is an unresolved issue.
4. *Pre-town Meeting Forums:* still a Committee obligation. Chairman DeLuzio will continue to organize these forums with the Pre-Town Meeting Forum Sub-committee.

Category B – those duties that are generally defined

1. *Periodically conduct surveys:* As needed. None anticipated, so no need to assign a Committee member, Participating Applicant or Consultant Volunteer that task, though Mr. Cole is adept at utilizing Survey Monkey when needed.
2. *Communicate with Town Meeting members:* As needed.
3. *Assess the adequacy and timeliness of information:* Received notice of cooperation from Zachary Taylor, Finance Director, on providing financial data to Town Meeting members; however, with the COVID-19 pandemic no one in Town Hall has the time to entertain enhancements for providing financial information to Town Meeting members.
4. *Perform other duties as determined by Town Meeting:* None anticipated.

The Committee identified four other initiatives to pursue.

1. *Electronic Voting:* per an action item from the September 21, 2020 regular meeting, Chairman DeLuzio provided the Committee with an update on this initiative (handout entitled Electronic Voting Detail Plan (1-17-20) Status). Chairman DeLuzio and Mr. Cole were working with Mr. Trettel on this initiative. The update highlighted those tasks that still needed to be completed before the Committee can organize a demonstration of electronic voting at a town meeting.

By unanimous consent, the Committee agreed with Chairman DeLuzio's recommendation that the Committee defer action on those tasks and de-emphasize the electronic voting initiative; and, furthermore, allow Mr. Cole to focus on the task of developing a program for the education and orientation of new Town Meeting members.

2. *Twice reading of motions:* Chairman DeLuzio forwarded the study report to Charles J. Boddy, Jr., Esq., Town Counsel and inquired of Atty. Boddy whether the procedure identified in the report to shorten the process by which main motions are presented at

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town meetings would be of any merit for the upcoming Special Town Meeting being held remotely. Chairman DeLuzio will follow up with Town Counsel.

3. *Asking questions at Town Meeting:* Chairman DeLuzio stated that pre-town meeting forums were introduced to afford Town Meeting members an opportunity to ask sponsors of articles questions. The town meeting format itself allows for questions, but this allowance has not been a custom of Milford's town meetings. Chairman DeLuzio opined that a more liberal policy for the allowance of questions at town meetings would alleviate the need for a pre-town meeting forum.

A lengthy discussion ensued with Mr. Long, Chairman DeLuzio, Ms. Mastroianni, Dr. Heller, Mrs. Crean and Mr. Johnson on the following:

- Putting the issue on hold given the COVID-19 pandemic and the remote aspect of the upcoming Special Town Meeting, as well as the more pressing priorities identified by the Chair.
- Waiting until after the election of a new moderator and then broaching the subject with the new moderator to gauge his or her opinion, and then do research and due diligence on the topic.
- Initiating the research and due diligence now to have a presentable case for asking questions at town meetings to the newly elected moderator.
- Dissatisfaction with the way questions are asked and answered or not answered at town meetings.
- Balancing putting in place some protocol to ensure that questions are answered satisfactorily with the potential of protracted adjourned town meeting sessions.
- Establishing a town meeting rule that requires a sponsor to answer a question posed by a Town Meeting member.
- Collaborating on the issue with the newly elected moderator.

During the discussion on putting the issue of asking questions on hold relative to more pressing priorities, Chairman DeLuzio inquired if Mr. Long would take on the responsibility of simplifying the presentation guidelines draft. Mr. Long agreed.

By unanimous consent, the Committee agreed with Chairman DeLuzio's recommendation of continuing to pursue the initiative of asking questions at town meeting as a secondary priority.

4. *Capital Expenditures/Improvements:* initiative in the hands of the Finance Committee.

The meeting adjourned at 7:55 p.m.

Michelangelo Bon Tempo
Clerk

Approved

12-21-2020