

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 Tuesday, April 20, 2021, via a Vast conference call. Renaldo A. DeLuzio being in the chair called the meeting to order at 7:03 p.m.

Present at the meeting were seven members of the Committee: Charles M. Clark, Sr., Renaldo A. DeLuzio, , Kathryn L. Mastroianni, Justin Redden, Christine Crean, Catherine S. Porter, and Jose M. Morais. Two members of the Committee were absent: Susan Marie Hastert and Richard A. Heller. Two Participating Applicant to the Committee were present: B. Gregory Johnson and Brian W. Long. Michaelangelo Bon Tempo, Consultant Volunteer, was also present.

Administrative Items

Chairman DeLuzio took a roll call of members of the Committee present. Present for the roll call were Mr. Clark, Chairman DeLuzio, Mr. Morais, Mr. Redden, Ms. Crean, Ms. Porter, and Ms. Mastroianni .

Chairman Deluzio announced the appointment of two new members, Ms. Crean and Ms. Porter and welcomed them to the Committee.

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.

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 March 16, 2021 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. Pre-Town Meeting Forum Planning

The Committee solicits articles for consideration at the Forum from Town Meeting Members via email or US mail for those who do not have their email address filed with the Town Clerk. Chairman DeLuzio announced that the Committee is no longer authorized to send emails to Town Meeting Members. However, Christopher George, Information Technology Director agreed to send our emails. Chairman DeLuzio sent an example of the email to the IT Director, noting that

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the reply has to be set such that the Town Meeting Member's response is to the TMSIC email account, not to the IT Department account. The introduction of the IT Department into the process adds an untested variable in the time line and is of concern.

In reviewing the time line chart, Chairman Deluzio noted that it is based on the assumption that the Warrant will be available on the Town Website on April 22nd. The Committee cannot solicit articles nor send press releases until the Warrant is available. As the Warrant availability date slips, the time line moves to the right which reduces the Town Meeting Members response time.

Ms. Mastroianni inquired about a meeting called by Richard A. Villani, Esq. Town Administrator, and being held today regarding the May 24th Town Meeting. Mr. Bon Tempo informed the Committee that the meeting will be held tomorrow and that the Town Meeting and Forum will be remote.

Chairman DeLuzio expressed nervousness about having the Forum due to the uncertainty in the Warrant availability which is the key event that initiates the series of events shown on the time line and having sufficient time to execute them.

Chairman DeLuzio reminded the Committee that a Pre-Town Meeting forum is not required for every Town Meeting as confirmed by Atty. Boddy, Town Counsel. He then opened the floor for discussion.

Ms. Porter asked if she could help. Chairman DeLuzio noted that most of the notices are essentially done except for inserting the Article submission response date (which is yet unknown). It is really a one person operation. It is a matter of getting everything that is shown on the time line finalized and out to the media and to Town Meeting Members within a couple of days from when the Warrant appears on the Town Website.

Ms. Mastroianni asked if the Chairman could tally the articles submitted by Town Meeting Members. Chairman DeLuzio reminded the Committee that previous tallies were done at public meetings (i.e., Sub-Committee or TMSIC) to avoid any perception of impropriety in the tally and the selection of Articles.

Ms. Mastroianni commented that we have a week after the Articles are selected to contact the sponsors and insure their availability. Chairman DeLuzio explained that Atty. Villani contacts the sponsors of Town Articles [and relevant supporting departments]. The Committee contacts sponsors of private party Articles.

Ms. Crean commented that this is cutting it very close and asked why the Warrant is being held up. Chairman DeLuzio went through the Warrant cycle from when the Select Board first approves the Warrant to when it is signed and posted on the Town Website.

Ms. Porter asked how many Town Meeting Members attend the Forum. Chairman Deluzio explained that informal observation estimates ranged from 30 to 70 in attendance. [which includes Town Meeting Members, TMSIC members, article sponsors, the press, supporting department heads, and the public]. However, Chairman DeLuzio commented that this is a good point. Based on the low number of responses from Town Meeting in submitting articles, he questioned whether

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all this effort by us and Town Departments is worth doing for a small percentage of Town Members who show an interest.

Mr. Johnson suggested the low turnout at the Forum may give more credence to why Town Meeting should be more of a question and answer occasion. Chairman DeLuzio explained that organizing Pre- Town Meeting Forums was made one of the TMSIC duties because of this issue. Having the privilege of asking questions at Town Meeting is the most efficient way of asking questions. He reported that Mr. Long is researching other towns to see if and how they deal with asking questions at Town Meeting. However, there is a downside in doing so in that the Town Meeting could be extended to additional sessions which our Town Meeting Members may not favor.

Ms. Porter asked if a survey could be conducted to determine why Town Meeting Members do not attend and if the Forum was a Zoom meeting would they be able to attend them. Chairman DeLuzio explained that these remote meeting will end when the Covid- 9 restrictions for public meetings are lifted. A survey as suggested could be conducted. In addition, if Mr. Long's research shows other Towns are more open to allowing questions a survey questionnaire could be developed to see if Town Meeting Members would favor this privilege using a real example.

Chairman DeLuzio favored not having a Pre-Town Meeting Forum for the May 24, 2021 Town Meeting.

Hearing no other comments Chairman DeLuzio called for a motion to not have a Pre-Town Meeting Forum for the May 24, 2021 Town Meeting. Ms. Mastroianni so moved, seconded by Ms. Crean. A roll call vote was taken.

Mr. Clark	yes	Ms. Porter	yes
Ms. Crean	yes	Mr. Redden	yes
Ms. Mastroianni	yes	Chairman DeLuzio	yes
Mr. Morais	no		

Six in favor, one opposed – the motion carried.

In closing, Chairman DeLuzio commented that, between now and the fall Town Meeting, the Committee needs to come up with a better way of organizing the Forum and come up with some new ideas to encourage more participation. Perhaps by that time we will have some information regarding how other towns, if any, allow more questioning at Town Meeting.

Mr. Long offered a thought for a future TMSIC meeting discussion to look at the Warrant process and provide suggestions for improvement because this is not working well.

The meeting adjourned at 7:43 p.m.

Reno DeLuzio
Chairman

Approved 6-16-21