

**Town Government Study Committee
Meeting Minutes
December 12, 2018
7:00 P.M.**

Commission Members	Other
Kristen Balash ----- Present	David Rosenberg ----- resident
Chris Cleverdon ----- Present	
Rob Garrity ----- Absent	
Anthony Kennedy ----- Present	
Chairman Jonathan Smith ----- Present	
Secretary Anthony Turi ----- Present	

The duly posted meeting of the Town Government Study Committee convened at 7:08 P.M. in Room 204 at the Norfolk Town Hall.

Acceptance of November 19, 2018 minutes with corrections – unanimous

New member Tony Kennedy introduced himself. New to Norfolk but was very active in the Town of Stoneham and wanted to be involved in his new community.

Resident David Rosenberg attended our Dec. 12 meeting and is interested in participating. Due to a conflict with his being a Registrar for the town he cannot officially be a member of any committee. We encouraged David to be an active participant with our committee even if he is not an official member.

Chairman’s Report

- Chairman Jonathan Smith gave a brief Chairman’s report. He gave an update about his speech at Town Meeting. Both Tony Kennedy and David Rosenberg spoke with Jonathan after Town Meeting.

Secretary’s Report

- Secretary Anthony Turi gave a brief Secretary’s report. Rooms are booked for the January 16 meeting and the January 23rd public forum. NCTV is aware of the forum and will be broadcasting it, potentially live. We have a banner running on NCTV advertising the public forum as well. NCTV is also interested in doing a PSA about our committee and the public forum. Jonathan Smith said he would do the NCTV PSA. The committee’s town webpage is active and will be updated as we begin to hold forums. <http://norfolk.ma.us/boards-committees/government-study-committee.htm>

**Public Forum Discussion
Publicity**

- The committee discussed the need for publicity for our committee beyond NCTV, to appeal to a broader cross-section of residents. Other types of publicity we can utilize are Facebook events, posts on the Facebook Community page, press releases to The Sun Chronicle & Country Gazette, flyers at bulletin boards around town. Kristen Balash wrote up a small article about the forum and the committee agreed that she can submit it to newspapers and to the Norfolk Community Facebook page. Anthony Turi will be making up a flyer for posting in the Town Hall, Library, and MBTA station among other spots around town.
- Kristen brought up the point about how we get perspectives of people who can't attend our public forums or meetings. We need to get input from people who aren't necessarily online as well. Some suggestions were online and/or paper surveys, holding listening sessions at the Senior Center, Hillcrest, etc. An extension of this is for our committee to have a table at town events to reach out to people; such as during the summer concerts on Town Hill.

Format

- Discussion revolved around different approaches we can take to Public Forums. We want to get unfiltered comments from people and not drive them in a specific direction or idea. The forum isn't meant to be an open discussion but more of a venue for residents to express their thoughts.
- Kristen spoke about her idea of a "gallery walk" vision exercise. Different flipcharts/whiteboards are placed around the room with a board member writing down ideas. Each station would have a question. Potential questions include:
 - “what do you like about current town government?”
 - “what is special about Norfolk?”
 - “what government structures should be changed? retained?”
 - “what don't you understand about how town government works?”
 - “how do you find out about things around town or how would you like the town to communicate with residents?”
 - “how would you like to be engaged in town decision making?”
 - “what would increase your participation at Town Meeting?”
- This method would give people a question to answer that would also provide us with the information we are looking for on how to focus our efforts. This would also let people reinforce ideas they agree with so we can see what people feel strongly about and what is less important. Some other potential questions that we want the public to answer are
- Chris Cleverdon emphasized the need for us as a committee to state our objective at the beginning of the forum so that people understand what we are looking for.

David was concerned that giving people questions to answer will constrain them to only answering those questions. If we do the flipchart idea we should make sure to have an open ended chart as well. Just a “question mark” for peoples other ideas.

- The committee discussed our role as facilitators during these forums. We can answer basic questions about how the town government works but we can't answer for the town nor do we have the experience to explain everything. Our job is to facilitate the discussion and listen to people's concerns and ideas.
- David recommended a couple of resources that may of interest to the committee. First is a book named “Innovation Games” which talks about creative ways companies have used games to learn about what products and features people would like and how it can be applied to government planning and participation. The link to the Wikipedia page is here:
https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Innovation_game
The second resource is a webpage David created when running for moderator. It has a list of comments and suggestions he received during his campaign. The link is: <https://sites.google.com/site/rosenberg4moderator/home/comments>
- Anthony Turi suggested a brief presentation how the town is actually organized. As simple as a flowchart depicting which parts of town government are elected, which are appointed and by whom, and the basic structure of the town. He will put together a brief presentation on how the town is currently structured for residents and the community to have.
- We discussed about how to include the various Town Departments in the committees work. Anthony Turi talked about reaching out to the Town departments to find out what their needs are, from a government structure point of view. Tony Kennedy suggested an inter-department Q&A session with the public. That will help shed light on what the various departments' areas of responsibilities. Instead of wrapping this into our public forum we could facilitate another discussion, preferably before Town Meeting, between towns departments and residents. David brought up his past Town Meeting warrant article (Spring 2017) that called on the Town to develop a more inclusive and participatory approach to budget development and Town Meeting.
- Tony Kennedy asked about why we're holding a public forum so soon. It was explained that we need to get some guidance and input from the public about where to direct our energy and efforts. The Selectmen would like us to focus on structural changes, such as appointed vs elected board members, recall provisions, etc.

Town Bylaw Update

- Anthony Turi has been working on updated Town bylaws that would correct typos, incorrect references, poor formatting, etc. The idea is to present a non-controversial new set of town bylaws. Policy will not be changed here, just simple fixes to clean them up. Going forward we could also look at changing the order and layout of the bylaws as well as small changes, such as changing Selectmen to Select Board.

Future meeting dates

- The committee deferred setting future public forum dates until after we see how this first one goes. Potential for maybe quarterly forums if we think participation will be good.

David made some suggestions about letting NCTV tape our meetings to help publicize our committee and our goals. We could meet in the NCTV studio or the community room at the library to help facilitate taping if Room 124 is not available.

Another suggestion by David is for our committee to look at Town Meeting procedures. He understands that we are constrained by MGL and Town Bylaws but there are other things we can do to improve the process. An example is that some towns have a “pre-Town Meeting” meeting where the warrant articles are reviewed and people can ask questions. This has been done previously in Norfolk. Kristen brought up about changing how warrant articles are ordered for town meeting to minimize people just showing up for a particular article and then leaving. The low attendance at Town Meeting has been an issue for a while.

The committee discussed creating an online survey, with paper versions for offline participation, using SurveyMonkey or Google Forms. We can make it available on the Towns webpage and on Facebook. The paper version can be submitted at the Town Hall or at the Library. This might create more work for the committee but should provide a better-rounded set of responses from various population groups in town.

UPCOMING MEETINGS:

Public Forum - Wednesday January 23, 2018 – 7pm – Town Hall Room 124

Regular Meeting – Wednesday February 20, 2019

The meeting was adjourned at 8:26 P.M.



Anthony Turi, Clerk