

**TOWN OF HOLLISTON
Governance Committee
Meeting Minutes**

Date: Thursday, November 10, 2022

Time: 6:00 p.m.

Place: Virtual

Attending: As indicated by roll call: Len Engel, Hayley Fetrow, Sue Nersessian and Sam Tyler were present.

Mr. Tyler called the meeting to order at 6:03 p.m.

Opening Statement

Mr. Tyler read the state required opening statement for virtual public meetings.

Minutes

Ms. Fetrow moved, Ms. Nersessian seconded and it was voted by roll call to approve the minutes of the October 26, 2022 meeting:

	AYE	NAY	ABSTAIN	ABSENT
Mr. Engel	X			
Ms. Fetrow	X			
Ms. Nersessian	X			
Mr. Tyler	X			

Select Board Size

Mr. Tyler said that the underlying issue is the allocation of duties and whether there are changes that can be recommended to allow the Select Board to focus on strategic planning and policy development while the Town Administrator focuses on day-to-day management of the Town. He said Ms. Fetrow did an analysis of the "Board Business" items in the Select Board minutes for calendar 2022 to date and noted that Town Administrator Travis Ahern had joined the meeting.

Ms. Fetrow noted that she had circulated a summary of her findings. She said the review of the matrix of items was focused on items that might be shifted to the Town Administrator and identified a list of 12 possible items. State law identifies local licensing authorities and doesn't allow for delegation of this authority. There are numerous appointments currently made by the Select Board and it appears that the Select Board has to accept gifts to the Town. One issue is to try to identify or define "day-to-day" operations for purposes of trying to distribute responsibilities.

Mr. Tyler asked what steps would have to be taken to shift some of the items identified by Ms. Fetrow. Mr. Ahern said the weekly warrant to pay bills and payroll is a significant issue. The Select Board cannot designate the Town Administrator to sign the weekly warrant but they can

authorize one member of the Select Board to sign the weekly warrant. A charter could authorize a town administrator or town manager to sign the weekly warrants. The acceptance of gifts is a policy instituted by the Town Accountant; that could be changed. Approval of events is also something that could be changed because the Police Chief is the one who reviews the requests for safety issues and then makes a recommendation to the Select Board. Mr. Tyler asked if approval of weekly warrants could be done first by by-law and then later through a change in the Town Administrator Special Act. Mr. Ahern said the Committee's proposal in May 2021 was a by-law change that included allowing the Town Administrator to sign the weekly warrant and was approved as to form by Town Counsel. If the Select Board is increased to five members the Board can still vote to designate one member to sign the weekly warrant. He said that annual alcohol licenses should probably continue to reside with the Select Board but there may be some benefit to shifting authority for approving one day alcohol licenses. He feels that dangerous dog hearings are emotionally charged proceedings that might be better handled outside of a public meeting. He also said that changes in the process of appointing police officers that includes a vetting process by the Assistant Town Administrator has been beneficial. He agreed to go through the list generated by Ms. Fetrow and try to differentiate between policy, statute and day-to-day operations. Mr. Tyler said he would welcome any ideas or suggestions from Mr. Ahern on any changes in responsibilities. Mr. Ahern said the Committee has to try to determine or define the line that is the limit of change acceptable in order to achieve efficiencies within the culture of the Town of Holliston. Mr. Tyler said it might be helpful down the road for the Committee to meet with Town Counsel to discuss proposed changes in responsibilities. Mr. Ahern said he could pass along issues discussed tonight to Town Counsel.

Mr. Ahern left the meeting at 7:01 p.m.

Ms. Nersessian said that she has been in contact with Mr. Leary to get his completed survey form. Mr. Tyler said there are still a few more surveys to be returned but he has started the process of consolidating the answers received in the surveys and will eventually provide a report on all the survey responses to the full Committee.

Meeting with Select Board

Mr. Tyler said that the Committee is scheduled to meet with the Select Board on November 21 at the suggestion of Mr. Sparrell. The primary topic for discussion is what issues the Committee expects to address at the May 2023 town meeting. Potential issues include changing the Town Administrator Special Act, either incrementally or substantially, approval of weekly warrants, size of the Select Board, by-law review committee and capital planning committee. It will be an opportunity to get Select Board feedback on these issues and on the extent of the Select Board's appointment power.

Ms. Nersessian suggested developing a project plan for each of the issues the Committee is going to pursue. Mr. Engel agreed and suggested that each project plan should be in isolation; what needs to be done to successfully finish a specific issue. Ms. Fetrow said we should look to find partners for each issue. Ms. Nersessian suggested looking for cosponsors. She offered to

get feedback from the Finance Committee regarding the proposed capital planning committee. She also commented that in the future the Committee should ask for each by-law change as a separate article.

Other Issues

Mr. Tyler said that one person has indicated expressed possible interest to the Select Board office about joining the Committee.

Public Comment

There was none.

Next Meeting

The next meeting was tentatively scheduled for 6:00 p.m. on Thursday, November 17, 2022. The Committee will meet with the Select Board on November 21 and then have its own meeting on December 7.

At 7:34 p.m. Ms. Nersessian moved, Ms. Fetrow seconded and it was voted by roll call to adjourn the meeting:

	AYE	NAY	ABSTAIN	ABSENT
Mr. Engel	X			
Ms. Fetrow	X			
Ms. Nersessian	X			
Mr. Tyler	X			

Respectfully submitted,



Paul D. LeBeau

Date Approved by the Committee: December 7, 2022