

Governance Committee Town Report-2020

The Governance Committee was established by the Select Board on March 3, 2020 to assist in the development of town-wide policies that relate to governance and recommend changes to the form of government if needed. Appointments to the Committee were completed on June 17, 2020. Regarding governance, Holliston has not undertaken a comprehensive review of its government structure and efficiency for over 40 years.

The Governance Committee consist of five Holliston residents with diverse professional backgrounds and prior experience in Holliston government. Members are: Samuel Tyler, Chair; Scott McKechnie, Vice Chair; Paul LeBeau, Clerk; Leonard Engel and Christina Lingham. These members collectively represent over 100 years of municipal experience. Snapshot bios of each member are provided on the Governance Committee's town webpage.

Starting with its organizational meeting on July 16, 2020, the Governance Committee has conducted a total of 14 virtual public meetings in 2020 to meet with Town officials, review data and information it prepared and discuss governance issues and possible recommendations.

At it meeting on August 19, 2020, the Committee members voted that a new Town By-Law outlining the budget development process in Holliston should be its first initiative. Holliston's current By-Laws are silent on this topic, which has led to tension among some boards and committees. The hiring of a new Town Administrator with direct experience in municipal finance in two other towns and the Committee's extensive review of the Charters or General By-Laws of scores of other Massachusetts towns contributed to this decision.

At the start of its work, the Governance Committee prepared an organizational chart of town offices to help understand the current organizational structure of Holliston government. From data provided from resources of the state's Division of Local Services within the Department of Revenue and the Massachusetts Municipal Association, the Committee developed a table of comparative towns to Holliston.

From this comparable town list, and our review of town Charters and General By-Laws, the Committee developed a list of fifteen (15) comparable towns that each adopted Charters that included Articles outlining its budget development process. The list was divided among the five Governance Committee members so that each was responsible for developing working relationships with officials in three towns to learn more about their town operations than would be possible from merely reviewing written Charters and By-Laws.

By the end of 2020, the Governance Committee has completed developing a draft Article outlining a revised budget development process for Holliston. The provisions of this By-Law will require modifications of four other Town By-Law Articles. In 2021, the Governance Committee will meet with several Town committees, boards and officials to receive feedback on the draft Articles. Public hearings will be held for the same reason. The Committee will make adjustments to its drafts based on these meetings where warranted and submit its final recommendations to be presented to the May 10, 2021 Annual Town Meeting.