

Governance Committee Town Report - 2021

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 by the Select Board 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 30 years.

The Governance Committee consist of five Holliston residents with diverse professional backgrounds and prior experience in Holliston government. The original members still on the Committee are: Samuel Tyler, Chair; Scott McKechnie, Vice Chair; Paul LeBeau, Clerk; and Leonard Engel. Christina Lingham, also appointed in 2020, completed her one-year appointment and resigned due to family and work demands. We thank her for her contributions to the Governance Committee and her service to the Town. Joan Shaughnessy, former School Committee member and Chair of the Stipend Committee, was appointed by the Select Board to the Governance Committee in July, 2021. Snapshot bios of each member are provided on the Governance Committee's town webpage.

Leading up to the May 10, 2021 Annual Town Meeting, the Governance Committee met 21 times and devoted its efforts to creating a budget development Bylaw Article since the current Bylaws do not provide for a cohesive budget process with the duties of involved officials clearly outlined. The plan developed was based on research of best practices of other comparable towns and towns with existing budget articles in their town charters or bylaws. The Committee also made recommendations simplifying the dates of the May Annual Town Meeting and Fall Annual Town Meeting and establishing an electronic talent bank system. At the May 10th Annual Town Meeting, the Committee's recommendation for the budget development process was not approved, while the Annual Town Meeting date changes and talent bank recommendations were approved

Following the May Annual Town Meeting, the Governance Committee met three times before the end of fiscal 2021 to review the selection process, state laws and bylaws for the positions of Treasurer-Collector, Town Accountant and Principal Assessor, but decided not to pursue any changes for now. Consequently, the Committee did not make any recommendations at the October Annual Town Meeting.

At the request of the Governance Committee, the Select Board requested the state Financial Management Resource Bureau to conduct a Financial Management Review of Holliston. In November, 2021, the Bureau issued its report in which a key recommendation was that Holliston should create a budget development bylaw since "town budget practices are not completely documented by its bylaws".