



TOWN OF TOPSFIELD
FY 2019 GOVERNMENT REVIEW COMMITTEE (GRC)

Meeting Minutes

October 23, 2018

7:30 P.M.

Topsfield Town Hall
First Floor Conference Room

1. **Call to Order:** Lou Ross called the meeting to order at 7:30 P.M. with Jon Palace, Roberta Sapienza, and Libby Wilson present. Others present: Dick Gandt, Phil Goguen, Eldon Goodhue, Dave Larson. Committee member Dave Reade arrived at 8:22 P.M. Dick Gandt made a video recording of the meeting.
2. **Minutes:** Libby Wilson made a motion to accept the minutes from October 9, 2018. Roberta Sapienza seconded the motion. Voted in favor 4-0.
3. **Identifying Questions for Elected Boards and Chairpersons:** (a) Discussion of deadline. The committee acknowledged that a recommendation would be desirable in time for Town Meeting, and also acknowledged the competing desire to “do this right.” Too soon to say whether 5 months is enough time. (b) Discussion of getting a better understanding of town government as it currently exists. Each committee member will do self-education independently. The committee might include a regular agenda item in future meetings to spend a few minutes discussing the structure of existing town government. The committee agreed it will not become experts about every town board. The committee can invite Town Counsel to a meeting, but for efficiency, Town Counsel should come only once. (c) Roberta Sapienza shared a draft organization chart. The committee discussed updating the org chart in future with additional information (e.g., responsibilities, indicate whether appointed or elected, which have staff, etc.). There are no immediate action items regarding the org chart. (d) Each committee member shared possible questions verbally or in writing. Lou Ross asked each committee member to email their possible questions to him directly. He will aggregate into a single document. The questions need to be simplified and organized and will be discussed at the next committee meeting. (e) Discussion of an “introduction” before the questions, e.g., why we are asking, structure not personnel, public record reminder, etc. Roberta Sapienza will

draft an introduction. (f) Discussion of sending questions to interviewees ahead of time. The committee discussed the possibility that the list questions may evolve over time, and also the possibility of sending a written survey, though the committee should not necessarily expect written responses.

4. **Investigating Topsfield Town Governance Effectiveness and Efficiency.** Discussion that effectiveness and efficiency may be anecdotal. The committee discussed the number of boards and others to be potentially interviewed. The committee will need to decide who to interview first (which board chairs, board members, town employees, or others to interview first).
5. **Becoming Knowledgeable about Other Town Governments.** (a) Lou Ross shared a 4-page summary of "Forms of Municipal Government" from the Massachusetts Municipal Association. (b) Roberta Sapienza asked about a 2008 report. Dick Gandt said the state did an assessment in 2008, with suggestions. The assessment might have been done by DLS (Department of Local Services). Lou Ross will try to get a copy of it.
6. **Correspondence.** Lou Ross said he received some suggestions (possible questions) from Dave Larson.
7. **Upcoming Meeting Schedule.** The next committee meeting will occur on Tuesday November 6, 2018 (election day) at 7:30 P.M. in the Town Hall First Floor Conference Room.
8. **Other topics:** (a) Eldon Goodhue suggested all exhibits be included as part of the meeting minutes. Lou Ross said materials used at the meeting will be listed at the end of the meeting minutes. (b) Dave Larson suggested the committee think about a matrix to capture answers to questions. (c) Discussion of starting interviews with board chairs, and possibly inviting other committee members to the Government Review Committee (GRC) and/or members of the GRC attending public sessions of other boards.
9. **Adjourn:** A motion to adjourn was made by Libby Wilson at 8:43 P.M., seconded by Roberta Sapienza. Voted in favor 5-0.

Materials used at the meeting:

1. Draft org chart of existing town government
2. Draft list of questions to ask board chairs and others
3. Copy of Report of FY2012 Government Review Committee
4. A summary of "Forms of Municipal Government" from the Massachusetts Municipal Association