



## TOWN OF TOPSFIELD FY 2019 GOVERNMENT REVIEW COMMITTEE (GRC)

### APPROVED MEETING MINUTES

October 9, 2018

7:30 P.M.

Topsfield Town Hall

First Floor Conference Room

(Approved on October 23, 2018, 4-0)

1. **Call to Order:** Chairman Lou Ross called the meeting to order at 7:37 P.M. with Jon Palace, Dave Read, Roberta Sapienza, Libby Wilson present. Others present: Dick Gandt, Eldon Goodhue, Dave Larson.
2. **FY2019 Government Review Committee Organization:** Discussion regarding selection of a Vice-Chair to lead meetings in the absence of the Chairman and a Clerk to help keep meeting minutes. Roberta Sapienza made a motion for Jon Palace to be Clerk. Dave Read seconded the motion. Voted in favor 5-0. Jon Palace made a motion for Dave Read to be Vice-Chair. Roberta Sapienza seconded the motion. Voted in favor 5-0.
3. **Confirmation of Appointee Oaths and Address List:** All GRC members confirmed they have taken their oaths and submitted paperwork.
4. **Public Records Law and Open Meeting Law:** Discussion of public records laws and requirement. Everything written will be a public record, including emails and letters. Government Review Committee responsibility to maintain public records in a public space. Lou Ross to work out details with Kellie Hebert regarding public records storage. Open Meeting laws govern all discussions of the GRC. All discussions need to be in a public forum when there are three or more GRC members, and such discussions need to have advance public notice. Lou Ross suggested the GRC “err” on the conservative side. Lou Ross said that meeting minutes do not need to be verbatim. A summary of discussion will be sufficient. Minutes are to be voted-upon at our next meeting.
5. **Government Review Committee Mission:** Discussion of GRC mission.
  - a. **Board of Selectmen Vote:** Discussion of formal charge of the GRC from the Board of Selectmen. Lou Ross said our charge includes but is not necessarily limited to considering a “Strong Town Administrator.” Discussion on focus and refinement of GRC charge. Lou Ross hopes to give a report or recommendation to the Selectmen by the next Annual Town Meeting. Dave Read asked if the GRC report will go to the Finance Committee. Lou Ross said our charge is to report to the Selectmen.

**b. Operation of Town Government and Legal Framework for Possible Reorganization:**

Lou Ross suggested the following. First, become knowledgeable about the current form of government. Then learn about other options available (other forms of government). Then make a recommendation. Try to keep our focus narrow and efficient while allowing discussion. Dave Read said some of this has been discussed in the past, and he wondered why there hasn't been follow-through. Lou Ross agreed the GRC should learn from the past. Lou Ross mentioned there are different ways to make changes, including home-rule petitions and via by-laws. Dick Gandt provided some background on earlier efforts, in 2004 (approximately) and in 2011-2012 (approximately). Dave Read thanked Mr. Gandt for the background information.

**c. Investigations of and Reporting on Town Government Operations:** Lou Ross suggested the GRC begin by interviewing elected boards. The GRC may discover "nothing is broken." Discussion of availability of Town Counsel to give the GRC advice if needed. Roberta Sapienza asked if the GRC is trying to create a hierarchical org chart. Lou Ross said many towns have an org chart and it could be helpful. Lou Ross said the GRC may want to start with a current org chart since visuals are helpful, and he said Kellie Hebert could help. Dick Gandt offered that an org chart does exist. Roberta Sapienza to follow up with Kellie Hebert for the org chart. Lou Ross said when the GRC does interviews, focus should not be on specific individuals or personnel issues.

Discussions with chairs of Town elected boards should be first, then Kellie Hebert and possibly department heads. Discussion of board and official responsibilities. Discussion regarding GRC first interviewing the chairs of Board of Selectmen, Water Commissioners, Board of Park and Cemetery Commissioners, Board of Road Commissioners, Board of Library Trustees, and Board of Assessors, then the chairs of the Planning Board, Conservation Commission, Zoning Board of Appeals, and School Committee. Lou Ross suggested the selectmen be interviewed later. Libby Wilson suggested each GRC member each interview one selectman.

The GRC to develop a set of questions to ask. GRC will ask one or more questions about efficiency and effectiveness. Lou Ross suggested each GRC member try to draft a handful of questions before the next GRC meeting. GRC should aim to do one-on-one interviews with board chairs by December 2018.

Jon Palace expressed interest in hearing from other town citizens, not just elected officials. Lou Ross agreed and suggested the GRC might have a public forum in the future.

**6. Correspondences and Materials:** None.

**7. Topics not reasonably anticipated by the Chair at least 48 hours before the meeting:** None.

- 8. Upcoming Meeting Schedule:** The next GRC meeting will be Tuesday, October 23. The GRC intends to meet on alternate Tuesdays at 7:30 P.M.
- 9. Adjourn:** Libby Wilson made a motion at 9:05 P.M. to adjourn the meeting. Roberta Sapienza seconded the motion. Voted in favor 5-0.

**Materials used at the meeting:**

Copy of Board of Selectmen vote to establish GRC

Copy of Report of FY2012 Government Review Committee