

**Town of Topsfield
FY2019 Government Review Committee (GRC)**

Meeting Minutes

February 19, 2019

7:30 P.M.

Topsfield Town Hall
First Floor Conference Room

1. **Call to Order:** Chairman Lou Ross called the meeting to order at 7:30 P.M. with Jon Palace, Roberta Sapienza and Libby Wilson present. Others present: Eldon Goodhue and Dave Larson. Dave Read arrived mid-meeting.
2. **Minutes:** Minutes from the meeting on January 22, 2019, were discussed. Clarifying edits were made. Roberta Sapienza made a motion to accept the minutes, as amended, from January 22. Libby Wilson seconded the motion. Voted in favor 4-0-1.
3. **Discussion on Questions and Interviews with Town Board Members and Officials:**
 - a. Discussion of interviews so far. Most interviewees like the existing checks and balances; few interviewees are advocating for structural changes. Most interviewees may be operating in “silos.” The GRC may be able to suggest enhancements.
 - b. GRC committee members should email interview responses to chairman Lou Ross. We should not email them to all committee members. Lou Ross will consolidate responses.
 - c. The GRC discussed recent interviews with members of the Topsfield School Committee, the Tri-Town Union School Committee, the Zoning Board of Appeals, the Board of Assessors, and the Commissioners of Trust Funds.
4. **Investigating Town Governance Effectiveness and Efficiency:**
 - a. The GRC discussed possible next steps. Possibilities include interviewing members of boards (not just chairs); speaking with the Board of Selectmen; speaking with department heads; speaking with the Town Administrator; speaking with town counsel; and/or speaking with officials (e.g., selectmen) in other towns. We will decide which next steps to take after we consolidate and assess the interview responses we have already received.
 - b. The GRC has not yet decided whether to do an online survey (like Survey Monkey). We do not have an “agenda,” so our questions will probably not be skewed.
 - c. Chairman Lou Ross will distribute a consolidated list of interview responses at a future meeting.
5. **Correspondence and Materials.** None

6. **Upcoming Meeting Schedule:** The GRC will meet on Tuesday 23/5 at 7:30 p.m., and again on Tuesday 3/19 at 7:30 p.m.
7. **Other Topics:** (a) Dave Larson suggested the consolidated interview answers could be posted online publicly, to save time. (b) Eldon Goodhue said that selectmen from other towns would probably be happy to speak with us. (c) Eldon Goodhue suggested the GRC may want to interview individuals who used to volunteer but may not be on any boards currently. (d) Chairman Lou Ross reminded everyone that our recommendations should be focused on the structure of town government, not personalities.
8. **Adjourn:** A motion to adjourn was made by Libby Wilson at 8:34 p.m. Seconded by Roberta Sapienza. Voted in favor 5-0.

Materials used at the meeting:

1. Agenda