

Notes from Meeting of the Task Force on Town Governance, 10/11/16

Present: David Grant and John Hawkins, co-chairs; John Echeverria, Russ Farley, Roz Finn, Arthur Hanchett, Therese Linehan, committee members. Other Strafford residents: Beverly Bilsky; Chip Lewis.

The task force reviewed its sense of purpose and tentative schedule/timetable. We agreed that our central task is to take a forward-oriented look at how town government can best be set up to serve the residents of Strafford. We felt that if we create a transparent process and share what we are learning, we might help clarify how town government works and lessen any mystery or confusion where it exists. Our focus will not be on WHO is serving as Selectboard members or town employees, but rather on what structures, systems, and standards will help them succeed in serving the town.

We decided on three tasks to complete before our next meeting on November 1st:

- 1) Contact the Vermont League of Cities and Towns to understand the structural options available to towns like Strafford and, if possible, get considered advice and data on the pros and cons of various approaches.
- 2) Create the first questionnaire we will use to reach out to townspeople to enrich this process and keep people informed. At this early stage we are interested in what townspeople do and do not understand about how town government works, and what townspeople feel they most need from their town government.
- 3) Refine a small list of questions we will use in interviewing current and past town officials and employees. We want to know from them: how town government and their jobs are changing, and if current structures and practices are keeping up with those changes; what works well and not well, in their opinions; what they see as obstacles to a high-functioning town government; and what changes, if any, they would recommend. We will begin those interviews in early November.

submitted by David Grant and John Hawkins
10/12/16