

Minutes of Meeting of the Task Force on Town Governance, 11/1/16

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

The task force reviewed information obtained by Therese from the Vermont League of Cities and Towns. Comment: Structural options available under Vermont law are limited. Most towns have the basic statutory form of town government, as we do, where a 3 to 5 member selectboard performs almost all of the executive, legislative, and quasi-judicial functions. The other major option is a municipal manager form of government, which vests most of the administrative and management functions in a professional manager who reports to the selectboard. Sixty-one municipalities in Vermont, representing roughly half of the State's population, currently operate under the manager form. Only four of those municipalities have fewer residents than Strafford does, and we suspect they share managers with other larger towns.

Next Steps: Therese will see if there is anyone connected to the League who could meet with us and share "town stories" related to local governance. We are interested in finding if there are any examples that might have relevance for Strafford.

The task force reviewed the questions we will use in interviewing current and past town officials and employees. We decided to begin our interviews with all past and present selectboard members and current employees who work in the Town Office. Interview protocols were discussed, and names were distributed to members of the committee.

Next Steps: Committee members will reach out to 1-3 people, as assigned, and conduct interviews before our next meeting on November 21st

The task force reviewed the questions we will use in a first survey of residents of the town.

Next Steps: David will prepare the electronic version of the survey, and we will make a link to the survey available via the list-serve, the town website, and the town Facebook page. We will also make paper copies available at Coburn's Store and the Town Office. We will conduct the survey during the week of November 14th.

submitted by David Grant and John Hawkins
11/03/16