

Town Meeting Study Committee Minutes 7/11/2018

Committee In Attendance: Beth Murphy, Jim Angelo, Craig Schultze, Mary Russo, Tammy Coats, Jim McCaffrey

Others In Attendance: Erin Underhill, Nancy, Rick Neves, Representatives of the Electronic Voting Group (Jesse Andrews did demo), Judy O’Gara

Not In Attendance: Mark Conroy

- **Call to order at 7:35**
- **Discussion: Move TM to Saturday:**
 - M. Russo presented a desire to move TM from Monday at 7:30pm to Saturday at 1:00pm (See attached).
 - Mary spoke to various groups, but did not speak to sports parents.
 - We should do a survey.
 - Check with Millis Community Cable, can they do a survey for us?
 - Survey at September Primary
 - Survey on the November General
 - Check on towns that have Saturday for meetings
 - Westborough
 - Rockport
 - Wilmington
 - Monterey
 - Shutesbury
 - Montague
 - Templeton
 - Hamilton
- **Discussion: Electronic Voting –**
 - Jesse from “Voatz” – Mobile voting system (secure) – Boston Based. Polling, Surveying and Town Meeting votes. Clients include West Virginia primaries and military voting, teachers unions, Tufts student government and other groups. No Town Meetings yet, but in testing/ talks with Hopkinton TM. Used on two articles at the last Hopkinton Town Meeting.
 - System uses smart phones, download app, scan ticket (that you get on check in at meeting), tablets will be provided to those that need them.
 - Anonymous, can show real time voting counts as people vote.
 - Can this “push a question” out? We can create ballots that are “generic” (yes/ no) or are article specific. It is easier to just show the number, the information screen will show the details, but you can pre-load each question.
 - Geo Fenced to the location of the vote.
 - Fixed annual price... for a specific number of meetings or time period.

- How do we assure that one vote per person? QR code is unique to each voter, so this QR code can only be used on one device.
- Voatz staff will train team and attend first few meetings, then it is self service, unless we ask for (and pay for) assistance.
- Cell service question – Voatz will check the carrier signal and WiFi to make sure it is strong enough. If the WiFi is weak, then they can install Wireless system.
- Hardware agnostic – IOS or Android
- Do we purchase the tablets or are they provided by Voatz? 120 tablets in stock, so they will bring appropriate number of tablets to cover the voters.
- Seems to be well accepted by Young Adults and Seniors.
- Can elected officials take a public stand (secret for everyone, and public for elected officials)? Yes, this can be configured... with some work. “Named tickets” will be needed for those that are officials.
- Town Meeting needs to decide if there is a need for a secret ballot, then this is a viable tool, if there is no need for a secret ballot, then do we need this technology.
- Costs:
 - Set up fee: \$3,500
 - Recurring annual fee: \$5,000 (this would include tablets and staff for night of meeting).
 - Pilot meeting: \$2,500 for the test meeting, but this is credited to the recurring fee if we sign up.
- Process:
 - Survey or poll at November vote (free, or low cost... \$500 or so). Multi question, match to demographics of voters at November ballot.
 - Test on non-controversial items (don’t use it on the hot issues), see if it works.
 - Town Clerk would need to “approve” voting method.
 - Town Moderator would need to agree to do it.
 - Town Meeting may need to vote to allow secret ballot.
- Motion:
 - I move that we recommend that the moderator ask the appropriate town official to enter into a low/ no cost contract with Voatz for a poll in the fall... C. Schultze, T. Coots. Passed 3 to 2.
- Ideas:
 - First, check to see if towns want a secret ballot “using available technology”, effective May (or November 2019)... This would be a bylaw change.
 - If TM want’s secret ballot, then we pick the best electronic version.
 - We don’t want paper ballot.
 - Roll out of devices:
 - Test with poll at November Polls.
 - Demo in hall at November TM.
 - May TM trial (no cost).
 - November ’19 vote on this.
- Meeting Adjourned 8:35: Motion made by C. Schultze, T. Coots – Passed unanimous.

Recommendations

Topic	Category	Moderator Action	FinCom	Selectmen	By Law/ Charter	Other	Action
Time Limit for speakers		Limit time per mic appearance to 1 – 3 minutes					
Group "Mandatory" articles into one consent article		Vote all "Mandatory" articles as a block, only taking questions, no presentation	No Presentation on each "Mandatory" article from FinCom, just answer questions if they arise	Group "Mandatory" Items (Audit, Lease Pmt, etc) into one article			
Move Meeting Day/ Time					Move TM day from Monday night (time and daymto be designated).		
Secret Ballot					At the very least, define the process for secret ballot, or even spell out when and if a secret ballot is allowed.		
Shorten presentation by FinCom members			Attempt to make motions and original discussion more concise.				
Special Town Meetings for topics that are anticipated to generate long meetings				Consider special TM for major capital projects, or other highly charged topics.			

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Electronic Voting						Sub committee (either this committee or another) should study this, once the details of Secret Ballots are spelled out in By Laws.	
Bring back Constables							
Mandatory recess at 10:00 pm					Set end time for TM, with a second night to wrap up if needed.		
Double reading of Motion		Check with legal council to see if we can dispense with the double reading.					
Improved Audio at meeting						Add at least two Mics in auditorium, and have at least two remote mics.	
Detail Town Meeting processes in By Law					By Laws are lacking in details around TM, these need to be spelled out.		