

Town Administrator Study Committee
Minutes
March 19, 2012

Members Present: Mary Beth Harrity, Clarence Snyder, Mary Lou Knight, Chantal Hirtle, Peter O'Connell, Kevin Erkkila. **Absent:** Cindy Mundell.

Selectman O'Connell opened the meeting and asked for a review of the agenda. No changes were proposed. Mr. O'Connell suggested that he chair the first meeting and that elections of officers be the last item on the agenda. The committee concurred.

The Committee reviewed the Selectmen's Charge to the Committee. The committee felt that continuity of membership would be important and expressed concern that the annual election would require a change in the Committee. Mary Beth Harrity moved and Clarence Snyder seconded a motion to request that the Committee composition be changed to include up to seven at-large members (in addition to the new Selectmen's representative designated after the Town election in May). Mr. O'Connell indicated that he would be willing to continue to serve, should the Selectmen appoint him as an at-large member. Motion carried unanimously.

Chantal Hirtle noted that the Committee may need a budget to reimburse Town Administrators for expenses incurred in making presentations to the Committee or for committee travel expenses going to interview town administrators and/or administrative assistants. Mary Beth Harrity moved to ask the Selectmen to provide a budget not to exceed \$500 out of the Selectmen's expense account for this purpose. Kevin Erkkila seconded the motion. So voted.

The Committee reviewed materials circulated in advance including the job description for Administrative Assistant, Grade 8 and the revised job description, Grade 10 as well as a spreadsheet identifying the duties normally performed by an administrative assistant, Town Administrator, and Town Manager. Mr. O'Connell noted that the Committee Charge was to determine whether there was a need to upgrade the Administrative Assistant position to a Town Administrator, but not to determine whether there was a need for a Town Manager (which requires legislative approval of a charter). Using as a model the process used by a Town Administrator Study Committee in Barre that involved a needs assessment, the committee identified the following as areas of possible areas of need:

1. **Cost and Savings:** What would a Town Administrator cost, what costs might have been avoided and what revenues might have been generated if Brookfield had had a Town Administrator?
2. **Financial Leadership:** What role might a Town Administrator have played in preventing or addressing the issue of back tax collection? Is the Selectmen's Office providing sustained financial leadership? What is the status of coordination among the Town Accountant, Assessors, Tax Collector, and Treasurer? Are issues raised by the auditors being addressed?
3. **Time and Priorities:** What time is required for a Selectman and what are the priorities in spending the time? Does the time commitment narrow the range of people who can run for the

office? What is the cost if a Selectman cannot spend the time necessary to fulfill the duties of Selectman?

4. **Master Planning and Managing Initiatives**: Do the Selectmen have time to provide leadership and management for the initiatives proposed in the Town Master Plan? Are projects suffering or taking too long? Are volunteer committees receiving the support they need from the Selectmen's Office?
5. **Grants**: To what extent is Brookfield competing successfully in grant-writing? Have there been issues in grant management? Does the Selectmen's Office represent the Town in regional planning meetings and in organizations where grants are discussed?
6. **Personnel Management**: What is the status of job descriptions, performance reviews and staff supervision? Are there inequities in pay that are not being addressed?
7. **Communication**: How effectively are Selectmen communicating with staff and the public? What is the status of information technology? Are volunteers being adequately supported by the Selectmen's office?
8. **Volunteers**: How effectively does the Selectmen's recruit and use volunteers? Could the Town benefit from stronger connections with training organizations such as the Mass Municipal Association, Small Town Administrators, University programs in public administration, etc. etc.

The committee agreed that they should develop a list of questions to use in interviewing current and former Selectmen and current and former Administrative Assistants and Town Administrators, as directed in the Committee Charge. Mary Beth Harrity, Kevin Erkkila and Peter O'Connell volunteered to draft questions based on the categories and questions above and to seek feedback from the other committee members. The Committee felt that it would be very informative to interview Donna Neylon and to invite a small town administrator at its next meeting. Mr. O'Connell volunteered to invite Donna Neylon and a member of the Small Town Administrators leadership group.

Each Committee member agreed to talk with either a current and former Selectman about their assessment of Town needs and the possible need to upgrade the administrative assistant position to a Town Administrator:

Rudy Heller – Chantal Hirtle	Bev Lund – Clarence Snyder
Stephen Comtois – Kevin Erkkila	Joe Klimavich – Mary Lou Knight
Robert Phillips – Mary Beth Harrity	Mike Seery – Cindy Mundell (?)

The Committee decided that it would develop an on-line survey to solicit input from staff members about town needs and the possible need for a Town Administrator. Mary Beth Harrity and Kevin Erkkila agreed to draft questions using the following categories or others:

1. What are the biggest needs of the Town (listing various needs and requesting rankings in importance from 1-5)
2. What are your department's biggest priorities with respect to the Selectmen's Office?

3. If the Town were to hire a Town Administrator, please rank each of the following in importance as areas that the Town Administrator should work on first.
4. Please indicate whether you agree or disagree with the following statements:

Election of Committee Leadership: Mary Beth Harrity volunteered to serve as Chair. There being no other volunteers or nominations, Kevin Erkkila moved and Clarence Snyder seconded a motion to elect Mary Beth Harrity as Chair by acclamation. So voted. Clarence Snyder moved to nominate Kevin Erkkila as Vice Chair and Mary Lou Knight as Clerk. The motion was seconded by Mary Beth Harrity. There being no other volunteers or nominations the motion passed unanimously.

Next Meeting: The committee set the next meeting for Tuesday, April 17th at 7 PM at a site to be determined. Mr. O'Connell agreed to have Donna Neylon determine the meeting place and to post the meeting.

Adjournment: Kevin Erkkila moved and Clarence Snyder seconded the motion to adjourn the meeting at 8:32. So voted.

Respectfully submitted,

Peter S. O'Connell, Acting Chair