

Hopkinton Charter Commission
Meeting Minutes – January 5, 2005

The meeting was called to order at 5:30 p.m. in Room 211 at Hopkinton Town Hall. Present: Doris Carver, Nancy Clark, Gary Daugherty, Marie Eldridge, Tom Irvin, Bruce Karlin, Bill McRobert and Mary Pratt.

Member of town's financial team were also present: Executive Secretary Ted Kozak; Assessor Bob Bushway; Board of Assessors, John Duffy; School Business Manager Geoff MacDonald; Appropriations Committee, Stuart Cowart, Ron Eldridge; Capital Improvements, Ken Allor, Fin Perry.

The commission and financial team held a discussion about Hopkinton's current budget and financial planning processes. Comments included:

Ted Kozak is not part of any documented process now. The Appropriations Committee currently decides the budget format. Ted prepares the Board of Selectmen's budget and also handles areas such as FICA, pensions, insurance, etc. Other departments with personnel submit their budget to Ted, who shares them with the BOS and submits them to Appropriations.

The financial group concentrates on compiling revenue numbers (accountant, assessor, treasurer, sometimes school business manager). The three-year financial planning cycle includes the above personnel and others who work to prepare the town financially for the future.

What's missing? Policy decisions about how money is allocated. It's a fragmented process that needs more integration. The budget is now event driven. The town needs someone to drive the process, to look at the big picture. Can't ask part-time people, like Appropriations, to do so much. Need a full-time position to deal with the budget on a daily and year-round basis. We do not have a strong structure providing direction now.

Capital Improvements is a long-range financial planning group. The group is now planning equipment replacement, but needs to plug into the three-year plan.

The budget is only one part of the town's finances. We need to form a strategic financial plan and execute it.

Our financial group is unique in Massachusetts. It's a good structure. We need to develop a mechanism to perpetuate it and the three-year financial planning group. We need to ensure that this collaboration continues because this system works well.

We are recording and reporting finances now. We need to manage finances.

Financial management has many aspects: support revenue generation, capital improvements, budgets, etc.

Suggest from financial team: codify what works now, consider establishing position of financial officer to help set objectives, determine how to execute plan, measure progress, update plan periodically and tie the budget to long-term objectives.

The commission voted unanimously to include the position of town manager and a financial office in the charter proposal.

Need to determine if we can phase in changes (e.g. town manager in first year, financial office later). Marie agreed to contact Marilyn Contreas at the Office of Housing and Community Development.

Board agreed to consider Saturday meetings to continue discussion of charter template.

No questions from the public.

Meeting was adjourned at 8 p.m.