

**HYBRID TOWN MEETING REVIEW COMMITTEE
THURSDAY, JANUARY 4TH, 2024
TRUSTEE’S ROOM, SOUTH HADLEY PUBLIC LIBRARY – 6:30 P.M.
MEETING MINUTES**

Present and in person were John Hine, Jim Everett, Ira Brezinsky, Meghan Bristol, Michael Davis, Nicole Casolari, and David Solender. Present virtually was Rudy Ternbach and Carlene Hamlin. Absent was Larry Dixon.

1. CALL TO ORDER

Chair John Hine called the meeting to order at 6:31 p.m.

2. DISCUSSION ON JOINT PUBLIC FORUM WITH KNOW YOUR TOWN

Hine provided an update that the joint public forum with Know Your Town will be Thursday, February 29th at 6:30 p.m. in the Community Room in the Library.

3. CONTINUE DISCUSSIONS ON [TOWN MEETING MEMBER SURVEY RESPONSES \(attached\)](#)

Question 9:

The general consensus from the Committee members was that the comments from this question provide a great deal of input regarding improvements that have been made and further suggestions to better the communication of information. Some of these suggestions involved having more time with the information being provided prior to Town Meeting to better understand the material, ask questions, and discuss with Town officials as well as constituents. It was also noted that several respondents continue to want more information and reasoning behind the recommendations and decisions being brought forward to Town Meeting.

Question 10:

Everett noted questions regarding our current form of government, which he did not believe was under the TMRC’s purview. He also noted questions regarding the tabulators / “clickers” having a third option of “abstain” in addition to “yes” and “no”. In the discussion regarding a third option, the committee also discussed potential technology issues that arise and how to deal with those difficulties as well as what Town Meeting members and the public can see during and after Town Meeting regarding voting. It became apparent that watching on SHCTV-15 viewers can see the results of each vote, but from different places in the High School Auditorium it is difficult to see the screen.

Hamlin found it interesting that several respondents asked about the Town’s current form of government, but disagreed with Everett regarding this being under the Committee’s purview, as she feels the report should include what TMMs are asking regarding our government.

Ternbach agreed with Everett regarding the questions about the current form of government. He noted that there were several suggestions for improving communication with and for Town Meeting Members as well as guidelines for newly elected TMMs.

Casolari agreed with Hamlin and noted that all findings do not need to be a recommendation. She added that several responses referred to the timeliness of information being shared.

Bristol highlighted questions regarding information being provided to TMMs as well as the public and how to engage the public more effectively.

Davis agreed with Bristol and noted questions regarding communication with non-TMMs and wondered about communication between the Town and residents as well as the ability for TMMs to communicate with their constituents.

Solender wondered whether providing more information regarding the roles and responsibilities of Town Meeting prior to a candidate submitting nomination papers made more sense than after an election. He also noted that although TMMs asked the question of whether the current form of government was working, the Committee should not assume that the answer to this question would necessarily be, “no.”

Brezinsky noticed questions regarding the size and form of government.

Hamlin shared the information that has been provided to candidates when nomination papers were pulled in the past, including the Citizen’s Guide to Town Meeting.

Question 11:

Casolari noticed that members want to be more involved in Town business and decisions being made.

Solender appreciated the suggestion of an orientation session for new TMMs.

Brezinsky noticed recommendations regarding the roles of the Bylaw Review Committee and shared that the Bylaw regarding the Bylaw Review Committee is currently being reviewed.

Ternbach suggested an appendix to the report that would include the survey responses.

Hamlin noticed that, under the Acts of 2012, some of the suggestions being made by senior members of Town Meeting are not necessarily feasible.

4. CONTINUING DISCUSSIONS ON SURVEYING GENERAL PUBLIC

Hine reminded the Committee of the joint forum with KYT that would be taking place on February 29th and opened discussion for other means of surveying the general public.

The Committee discussed other forum options as well as the standing “Public Comment” Agenda Item during all of the TMRC meetings that is available for any member of the public to share their thoughts.

Hamlin suggested having a questionnaire that the Committee can ask voters to complete at the Election on March 5th so that data can be collected. The Committee generally agreed with the idea of surveying the public and using the Elections as a good venue to solicit a high number of residents while ensuring that only South Hadley residents are responding. The Committee discussed the logistics of what the questionnaire would include, advertising the Questionnaire, and details of how the questionnaire might be presented to residents and how the Committee will review and use the results.

Hine asked the Committee for their opinions on having an event to solicit input for residents at the Senior Center. The logistics of what this would entail, how the information would be gathered, and what would be included in the Report were discussed.

Brezinsky suggested that the Committee hold one public forum hosted by KYT, that a public survey be conducted at the time of the Election on March 5th, and that the Committee extend its self-imposed deadline from the start of April to the start of May. The Committee further discussed how the Report would be developed. Brezinsky made the suggestion into a motion. Hamlin Everett seconded the motion. Roll Call Vote:

Everett: Aye
Davis: Aye
Hine: Aye
Brezinsky: Aye
Solender: Nay
Bristol: Aye
Casolari: Aye
Hamlin: Aye
Ternbach: Aye

Majority in favor. The motion passed.

Hine stated that in upcoming meetings, the Committee will need to discuss a plan for the forum as well as for the questionnaire.

Bristol asked about there being a time for Committee members to share recommendations that have not yet been presented in the conversations surrounding the survey results and public forums. It was determined that these would be discussed in an upcoming meeting, after details of the public forum and questionnaire were finalized.

5. OLD BUSINESS

Casolari will be contacting the Senior Center and Library to reserve a room for the next meeting.

Casolari asked if Committee members had any input for the update she would be giving at the next Selectboard meeting. She stated that she would share the plans for a public forum and questionnaire.

Solender shared that he received fifteen years of TMM write-in information as well as a spreadsheet of tenure for current TMMs. He stated that he would share this information with the Committee at the next meeting.

Casolari asked if the Chair and/or Vice Chair had heard from Town Counsel after they had reached out. Hine stated that they had not. Hamlin suggested attempting to have a conversation with Town Counsel again as the Committee is putting together its recommendations. Ternbach requested that communications with Town Counsel be included in TMRC meeting materials and minutes.

6. NEW BUSINESS

Brezinsky suggested that Bristol's idea of committee members bringing their own recommendations to the next meeting should be included in the agenda.

7. ADJOURN

Everett moved to adjourn the meeting. Davis seconded the motion. Roll Call Vote:

Everett: Aye

Davis: Aye

Hine: Aye

Brezinsky: Aye

Solender: Aye

Bristol: Aye

Casolari: Aye

Hamlin: Aye

Ternbach: Aye

All in favor. Unanimous. The meeting adjourned at 8:09 p.m.

A full recording of the January 4th, 2024 Town Meeting Review Committee can be viewed at: <https://vimeo.com/channels/shctv15/900216561>.

**Respectfully submitted,
Nicole Casolari, Clerk
Town Meeting Review Committee**