

GENERAL BYLAW COMMITTEE MINUTES

March 11, 2021

Call The Meeting to Order

Due to the recent Open Meeting Law policy set forth by the Governor during the current State of Emergency the meeting will be held as a virtual meeting.

Selectman Designee Jayne Wellman called the meeting to order at 7:00 P.M. Present at the meeting were Jason Christian, Alex Lowder, Dustin Weir, and George Ferdinand. Also in attendance was Town Clerk, Denise Graffeo. The Town Manager, Richard Montuori, joined the meeting late.

1. Welcome and Introductions

Ms. Wellman introduced this as the first meeting of the General Bylaw Committee. She noted that this committee will not be reviewing the Zoning Bylaw. She then asked for members to introduce themselves.

Jason Christian described himself as an 11 year resident of Tewksbury, a firefighter for the City of Lowell, and a member of the Finance Committee. He joined this committee to give back to the community and volunteer.

Alex Lowder notes that she moved to the town in 2016 and works in the Community Development Office supporting the Planning Board, Zoning Board of Appeals, and Conservation Commission. Ms. Lowder sits on the Public Events and Celebrations Committee as Chair and volunteers with the MSPCA. Her interest in this committee was sparked by her involvement as a staff member supporting the Zoning Bylaw Committee.

Dustin Weir has been a resident of Tewksbury for the last five years. He joined the committee because he believes in participating in local government and that this is something he could be good at.

George Ferdinand has been a resident of Tewksbury since 2014. He wanted to be involved in town government right away but work commitments prevented him from doing so. He plans to retire from his profession this year and wants to dedicate more time to projects like this. Mr. Ferdinand has been interested in town politics since he was a teenager, and has always been interested in things like this.

Denise Graffeo introduced herself as the Town Clerk in Tewksbury. She wanted to join this committee as a non-voting, ex-officio member because she interacts with the general bylaws throughout her daily work. She is also responsible for submitting all bylaw changes from town meeting to the Attorney General for approval and update bylaws on the town website. Ms. Graffeo says she is very familiar with the bylaws and is looking forward to finding ways to make things better.

Jayne Wellman is a Selectman, and brought this committee to the Board and the Town Manager to start looking at the general bylaws. She doesn't plan for this to be a wholesale rewrite, but a piece by piece review of the entire document.

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2. Committee Organization

Ms. Wellman stated that the committee needed to elect officers.

MOTION: Mr. Ferdinand made a motion to nominate Jayne Wellman as Chairperson. The motion was seconded by Mr. Christian and unanimously voted 5-0.

MOTION: Mr. Christian made a motion to nominate himself, Jason Christian, as Vice Chairperson. The motion was seconded by Mr. Ferdinand and unanimously voted 5-0.

MOTION: Ms. Lowder made a motion to nominate herself, Alex Lowder, as Clerk. The motion was seconded by Mr. Ferdinand and unanimously voted 5-0.

2a. Meeting Dates

Ms. Wellman asked if everyone is available for the second Thursday of each month, and if 6:00 PM works as well. All members agreed this will be the target for all meeting dates and times.

Ms. Wellman will put together a meeting calendar using these dates and times.

2b. Agenda Topics

Ms. Wellman suggested having sections on the agenda for recommendations from town staff as well as town boards and committees. For example, the Beautification Committee plans to vote as a group what to present to the committee. In addition to staff and committees, the general public should also be able to submit recommendations for the committee to discuss. To date, Ms. Wellman noted that she has already received public interest in fence bylaws and noise bylaws.

Ms. Graffeo noted that there are times where the town bylaws mirror state bylaws, and we need to make sure changes stay consistent and not contradict state law.

2c. Methodology

Ms. Lowder suggested the best way to tackle the entire review of the bylaw is to break it up into parts to undertake before each town meeting, twice per year. This may become complicated as some sections of the bylaw are more complicated by state law or require expert review.

Mr. Montuori joined the meeting at 7:24 P.M.

Mr. Weir asked if it is part of the committee's charge to clean up language and modernize some of the bylaws to make them easier to understand. Ms. Wellman confirmed this, and noted that includes some bylaws in conflict with state law.

Ms. Lowder stated that she thinks outreach throughout the process should be included in the methodology discussion for this committee. She notes that it will be important to promote transparency and community involvement so residents feel a part of the process, and that decisions aren't being made without their input.

Ms. Wellman and Ms. Lowder discussed establishing a social media presence for the committee through town channels. Ms. Lowder also expanded on the idea of dedicated community outreach sessions outside of formal meetings. She noted the importance of going out into the community rather than always holding meetings at town hall or other municipal buildings to make the committee more accessible. Ms. Wellman stated outreach will be its own agenda item going forward.

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3. New Business

Ms. Wellman received an email from a resident regarding parking RVs and other large equipment on public roadways for an extended period of time. This resident would like a bylaw added to address this issue. Ms. Wellman noted that we will want input from public safety on this kind of bylaw. Ms. Graffeo stated that there is an overnight parking ban from November to March and Ms. Wellman said maybe this bylaw could be amended to include things like this.

4. Member Comments

Mr. Weir suggested the committee pick a target section to review ahead of the next meeting. Ms. Wellman asked Mr. Montuori and Ms. Graffeo for suggestions, and both recommended going in order. Mr. Montuori also recommended bypassing the Town Charter, and starting with the first bylaw, Title I, General Provisions. Ms. Graffeo suggested adding the second and third sections as well since the first is so short. Ms. Wellman noted this is pages 12 through 30, inclusive.

Ms. Wellman stated the next meeting date will be April 8, 2021 at 6:00 P.M.

Ms. Lowder noted keeping in mind that no matter how good some of the committee's ideas are, some residents will still be unhappy about it and not want to change things.

Ms. Wellman noted the accessibility of meetings being held virtually and broadcast online.

Adjournment

MOTION: Mr. Christian made a motion to adjourn the meeting at 7:47 PM. The motion was seconded by Mr. Weir and unanimously voted 5-0.

Approved on: April 8, 2021