

Governance Committee Meeting Minutes

April 24, 2025

Members present: Candace Morgan, Brian Sheldon, Marcus Certa, Gabrielle Smith, Marlon Verasamy, Steve Eustis, Deb McAdoo

Members absent: Elaine Haney, Thomas Coen

Staff present: Brad Luck

Steve opened the meeting at 6:32 p.m.

No change in the agenda.

No public were present to be heard today.

Motion to accept minutes - Gabrielle moved to approve minutes as is. Brian Sheldon seconded, unanimously accepted.

Committee reviewed responses to the survey questions that were circulated ahead of the meeting.

Question 5: At-large elections or wards, or some combination?

- Discussion generally leaning towards keeping it as at-large. Some interest in evaluating a ward structure - some potential benefits to diversify the voices involved depending on how they could be structured/distributed.
- Brian brought up number of constituents a city councilor has (11,000) compared to to a Vermont State Rep (4,100 or 8,200 in a two-member district).
- What would wards solve?
- Discussion of wards probably made more sense when we were still attached to the town. Potentially beneficial for focused communication in areas, but still on balance at-large seems to be preference overall.

Question 6: Councilor compensation. Currently at \$2,500/year.

- Should be some amount of compensation that covers child care, other logistics to cover the time of service.
- What are other communities doing? How to keep it updated overtime - indexing to inflation, etc.?

- Might be a good question to ask community if compensation amount is a barrier to serving - would additional \$\$ help incentivize participation? To cover child care and other things around amount of work needed at and ahead of meetings perhaps about \$5,000?
- Same amount for all of council or should President receive a higher stipend?
- Consideration of a time study and calculation based on number of hours? Balance of money not being a motivator. Other way to compensation (i.e. discount on property taxes)?
- Councilor compensation should include a consideration for equity and reasonable compensation for responsibility and time

Question 7: Neighborhood Assemblies.

- How do we define neighborhoods? What are we trying to solve for? Does it create arbitrary divisions?
- Community engagement? Or more official city business for review of zoning or similar decisions? Important to consider set-up, role, frequency, etc. if we do set something up so it doesn't just become something without follow through or engagement.
- Does it create a more accessible point of entry to city government outside of city council meetings? Both safety and language barriers of speaking at a bigger more formal meeting.
- What are we trying to address and once defined, are neighborhood assemblies the right solution?
- Broader discussion of community engagement and what that can look like - within scope of this group to be so specific about prescribing or considering what we should think about in this space.

Question 8: Voting date - March or April?

- Broad consensus about moving to March, understanding there are some considerations and process associated with aligning with school board (Spring 2027)
- Aligning with March Town Meeting Day vote will help with voter turnout.
- All largely in favor of making this move, but with school board in spring 2027

Discussion of Current/Former City Councilors

- Results were sent to group ahead of the meeting, will discuss further at next meeting.

Discuss Next Steps:

- Review of councilor feedback

- How do we plan to engage with the identified communities in Vermont?

Deb moved to adjourn at 8:01; Gabrielle seconded. Passed unanimously.

Meeting adjourned at 8:01 pm.

Respectfully submitted by Candace Morgan.