



Town of Adams Massachusetts 01220-2087

GENERAL GOVERNMENT REVIEW COMMITTEE

**TOWN HALL BUILDING
8 PARK STREET**

Tuesday, September 20, 2022, 3:00 p.m.

**TOWN HALL, 8 PARK STREET, ADAMS, MA 01220
1st Floor, Sun Room**

CALL TO ORDER: On the above date, the General Government Review Committee held a meeting at 3:00 at the Adams Town Hall. Chairman Don Sommer opened the meeting. Present were General Government Review Committee Chairman Don Sommer; Members Virginia Duval, Carol Cushenette, Leah Thompson, Carrie Burnett, Tim Burdick, and Jonathan Butler. *Members George Haddad, and Jeff Grandchamp were absent.* Also present were Brian Rhodes, iBerkshires; John Duval, Howard Rosenberg, and Joe Nowak, Board of Selectmen; Jay Green, Town Administrator; Bri Hantman, Recording Secretary; Bernie Lynch, Government Review Consultant; and David Rhodes, Board of Health.

APPROVAL OF MINUTES

The July 19, 2022 Meeting Minutes were submitted for approval.

Motion made by Virginia Duval to table the approval of the minutes. No specific changes to the minutes were suggested or made at this time. ***Chairman Sommer seconded the motion. Motion to table the July 19th, 2022 Meeting Minutes passed unanimously.***

STRUCTURE OF FINANCE COMMITTEE

Town Meeting Action: *Jay Green, Town Administrator* noted that there is an opportunity for there to be a special Town Meeting in November. Chairman Duval of the Adams Board of Selectmen asked if the Government Review Committee would be agreeable to this.

Chairman Sommer asked for clarification on why the Town would downsize the finance committee from 15 people to 9 people. He also asked what some of the differences were between special acts and bylaws. Bylaws can be amended by Town Meeting. Special Acts can only be amended by the legislature.

The process of downsizing the Finance Committee is going to be complicated but necessary at this time. Bernie suggested that a subcommittee be formed.

Motion made by Member Cushenette to recommend changing the number of Finance Committee members from 15 to 9 and to create a subcommittee to recommend the process to make that change. Motion is seconded by Member Thompson. Motion passes unanimously.

Bernie Lynch asked if it makes sense to have May be when Town Meeting members are voted in. ***Motion made by Member Butler to change the end date of terms from May 1st to June 30th so that terms are in accordance with fiscal year. Motion is seconded by Member Cushenette. Motion passes unanimously.***

Currently, Finance Committee is bound by bylaws that set a maximum age restriction on members, which limits potential participation.

Motion made by Member Cushenette to remove Paragraph B from the regulations of the Finance Committee. This paragraph includes an age restriction. Motion is seconded by Member Thompson. Motion passes unanimously.

Establishment of a subcommittee responsible for changing the number of Finance

Committee Members: *Chairman Sommer* appointed *Member Burdick*, *Member Cushenette*, and *Member Burnett* to the subcommittee responsible defining and recommending the process by which the finance committee will be downsized. *Member Burdick* asked *Chairman Sommer* if he is comfortable with the fact that all three members are also members of the Finance Committee. As such, they are responsible for the process by which the finance committee will sunset members to achieve the number of 9 rather than 15.

DISCUSSION OF TOPICS RELATED TO THE EXECUTIVE FUNCTION OF TOWN GOVERNMENT

Bernie: Currently, the Board of Selectmen serve as an essential board of directors. They represent the values of the community. They help make policies and goals regarding the Town Government. The Board of Selectmen tell the Town Administrator direction they would like the Town to move in. The Town Administrator makes the decisions regarding how the town gets there. You assume that the town Administrator has skills and expertise to get the town to where it should be. The Town Administrator is a non-political position and therefore should be impartial.

Chairman Sommer would like to consider making some changes to strengthen the Town Administrator. It is important to consider the Board's opinion and the TA's opinion on how that should be done moving forward.

Member Burdick asked if it would make sense to have the Board of Selectmen answer yes or no to a number of the questions on the worksheet that was provided (attached to this document).

Bernie: Appointment Authority is a large topic that other towns are shifting over to Town Administrator. Adams Town Charter says that you need majority approval of appointment (ratification) and that once a name is put forward, the board has 15 days to approve.

Chairman Sommer asked if that all appointments needed to be shifted to the TA or if the Board of Selectmen should be able to keep the appointment of the Police Chief.

Jay Green clarified that even if you keep that language in there, there is other language that is permissive that will allow the Town Administrator to make staffing changes.

Chairman Sommer would like for the General Government Review committee to invite the BOS members in to answer the questions.

Member Thompson suggested that the BOS be surveyed rather than inviting them all in.

Bernie and Chairman Sommer asked if they needed to form a subcommittee to get this information? A subcommittee would interview individual members of the BOS. There would be no deliberation and no quorum and as such, would not need to be a posted meeting regarding these interviews.

Motion made by Member Cushenette for the General Government Review Committee to form a subcommittee to interview the BOS members individually as well as the TA regarding the 10 questions. Motion is seconded by member Burnett. Motion passes Unanimously Chairman Sommer appointed himself, Member Butler, and Member Duval. Bernie will participate via Zoom. Selectmen will come in one at a time.

SET NEXT MEETING DATE(S)

October 25th is the date of the next meeting.

Jay Green suggested that the GGRC as a whole makes a recommendation regarding the number of individuals desired on the Finance Committee. ***GGRC recommends the reduction to 9 individuals. As each term expires, the moderator will be instructed not to reappoint a member or appoint new members until that number of members on the committee drops to nine.*** Bernie and Jay can draft the language and present it to the General Government Review Committee. Honorary members will also be removed from the Finance Committee. Following this information and agreement, Bernie suggested that the Finance Committee Subcommittee dissolve itself as it is no longer needed.

Member Cushenette makes the motion to dissolve the subcommittee. Member Burnette seconds the motion. Motion passes unanimously. Finance Committee Subcommittee is dissolved.

Member Cushenette wanted to determine what modes of appointment and election are appropriate. Bernie clarified that generally, you elect people based on their values and appoint people based on skills.

ADJOURNMENT

Motion to adjourn is made by member Cushenette. Motion is seconded by Member Thompson. The meeting adjourned at 4:19pm.

Respectfully submitted, Bri Hantman, Recording Secretary.