

Town of Northbridge
Bylaw Review Committee Meeting Minutes

April 17, 2017 at 6:00PM

Northbridge Town Hall

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NORTHBIDGE TOWN CLERK
BOREEN A. CEDRONE

In attendance: Denis Latour, Henry Lane and Mark Key. Absent: James Marzec & Lisa Ferguson. From the public, Harold Gould and Jeanne Gould attended.

The meeting was called to order by Chair Denis Latour at 6:12pm.

The minutes from the 3/9/17 meeting were unanimously approved on a motion made by Mr. Lane with a second by Mr. Key.

Mr. Latour welcomed Mr. Gould and asked him to speak on the role of the moderator, now and in the future.

Mr. Gould described the appointing authority currently held by the Moderator:

- Finance Committee – appoints 5
- Town Manager Screening Committee – appoints 2 of 5
- Building, Planning & Construction Committee – appoints 3
- Bylaw Review Committee – appoints 2 of 5
- Charter Review Committee – appoints 2 of 5

Of these, Mr. Gould believes the most important is the Finance Committee, as this committee is the financial advisor to the body (Town Meeting), and Town Meeting is the legislative body of the town. In his opinion, the Moderator should appoint members of the Finance Committee. Mrs. Gould pointed out that Fincom serves only in an advisory capacity; neither their opinions nor recommendations are binding.

Mr. Latour asked if the Moderator's authority is governed by state regulations. Mr. Gould responded that the Moderator's power comes from both statutory and local customs of the town.

Mr. Key asked if allowing more appointing authority to other entities (e.g. boards, etc.) potentially broaden the pool of candidates, thus making the job of filling vacancies somewhat easier. Mr. Gould responded that, while filling vacancies can be challenging, he has denied appointments when he felt a candidate would not represent the town as a whole. The ensuing conversation revolved around the need for balance where an appointing authority might have an opportunity to "stack" a board.

Mr. Latour brought up a question raised by the Town Clerk: should Northbridge change the way residents are notified about the Town Meeting Warrant? One example is sending a postcard with the information that leads the public to an electronic version of the warrant.

Mr. Latour asked Mr. Gould if there are any bylaws needing revision. Mr. Gould commented that the Building, Planning and Construction Committee might be better served if 1 seat is filled by the School Committee. Further, the seat which must be filled by an attorney (by Charter) may be a good idea,

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though the attorney probably needs public sector construction experience to be effective. Mr. Gould suggested removing this requirement. Mr. Gould then addressed the Town Manager Screening Committee, which features 2 appointees by the Moderator and 1 each by the Planning Board, School Committee and the Personnel Board. According to the Charter, the Moderator should appoint 3 members of the committee; reconciling the appointment authority with the Charter is recommended. Mr. Gould then read language from the Charter that says committees may appoint residents other than members of said committee.

Mr. Key brought up the opportunity to examine the Mullin Rule at the next meeting.

With no further business, Mr. Latour thanked Mr. and Mrs. Gould for attending and helping the committee with the role of the Moderator. With all business concluded, the meeting adjourned at 7:15pm.

Respectfully Submitted

Mark Key

Clerk

Doris R. Tom
Chairman