



Town of Simsbury

933 HOPMEADOW STREET

SIMSBURY, CONNECTICUT 06070

Review of Appointment Process of Unaffiliated Voters Workgroup

Monday, June 18th, 2018

Engineering Conference Room, Town Hall, 933 Hopmeadow Street

MINUTES – “Subject to Approval”

Members Present: First Selectman Eric Wellman, Mike Paine

Staff Present: Maria Capriola, Ericka Butler, Tom Fitzgerald

Guest Present: Tom Frank, Paul Henault, Alan Needham, Elaine Lang

The meeting was called to order at 5:34 pm



Review of Minutes:

Motion to approve the minutes from April 16th special meeting made by Selectman Mike Paine, the motion was seconded by First Selectman Eric Wellman. All were in favor, motion passed.

1) Guests: Discussion with Town Committees Regarding Current Appointment Process.

Guest Alan Needham led off by addressing the difficulty to find qualified candidates for some boards due to the knowledge needed or due to Charter restrictions. He noted that the current process is for the Town Committees to interview potential candidates, then the parties vote on the potential candidates, and ultimately nominees are forwarded to the Board of Selectmen for appointment. It was discussed that currently the preference is to give a spot to a member of their respective political party, but that at times the political parties have recommended unaffiliated voters for appointment.

Guest Tom Frank expressed an interest in the Town finding a way to get the Boards more diversified between “R’s”, “D’s” and “U’s”. He also wants the Town to have a more active process to recruit qualified unaffiliated voters for public service on the boards and commissions. The willingness to serve was stressed as a key quality needed when recruiting someone for a Board or Commission. Mr. Frank also recommended an annual mailing to notify the public, regardless of party, what seats are vacant and how to get involved.

Guest Paul Henault echoed the difficulty in finding qualified candidates for all openings on Boards, and the time commitment to recruit and vet potential candidates. All speakers mentioned that U’s have been asked if they are okay with switching to a party when they have expressed an interest in serving; some are and some are not.

2) Discussion on Research and Benchmarking Results Regarding appointment Process

Based on the results of the research and benchmarking conducted, staff highlighted the model utilized by the Town of Windsor, CT and noted components to their process that may be able to be used in Simsbury. Topics discussed included:

- A cover page on the website explaining the steps of getting involved. Another strength liked by staff was the convenient location of contact information in the Windsor model. On the front page it lists contacts for the Democratic Town Chair, Republican Town Chair, Town Manager Email and phone number, as well as a link to the online application. This was liked because it would give “D’s”, “R’s” and “U’s” information on who to contact when they want to volunteer and get involved.
- The Town Clerk stated the strengths she saw in the Windsor model especially the cover page of each board having the members listed, staff contact, the meeting schedule, the duties of each board and a summary of what the board is meant to do. It was noted Simsbury has some of this information but it would be beneficial to standardize it for every Board and Commission.
- The Windsor model also states the differences between a vacancy, expired term, and a soon to expire term. It was said this could help Simsbury by allowing people interested in serving on a board to see if that open seat can be given to anyone or has to go to a specific party due to the Town Charter. The Town Clerk mentioned that Simsbury’s current program has capabilities to assist but it isn’t currently being used to its full potential.
- The Town Clerk explained that at the expiration of a term, any political party or a “U” can be appointed to a seat. It was emphasized that this was at the end of an appointed term and not the case if a resignation happens in the middle of a term. It was noted by Selectman Paine that he would like to see the date of expiring terms to change to January 31st to give the Board of Selectmen proper review time of nominees.

3) Next Steps

First Selectman Eric Wellman stated he would like to pick up with agenda item #4 “BOS Agenda Submission Forms Regarding Attachments for Appointment Recommendations, i.e. Bios, Volunteer Submission Forms, etc.” at a future meeting.

The meeting adjourned at 6:53pm.

Respectfully Submitted,
Thomas S. Fitzgerald
Graduate Student Intern to the Town Manager’s Office
Town of Simsbury