

Telephone conference with Ed Basile 2/18/2015

Participating by telephone:

Robert Brooks

Robert Parks

Jeff Kew

Brian Dudack

Bobbie Kling

After some preliminary conversation thanking Ed for making himself available just prior to his travel plans which prevented his attendance at the regular meeting, the conversation started with Ed giving his view of the proposed changes to the Treasurer's office.

Ed stated that state statute does not require a Town Treasurer and that there was an opportunity to change the charter to say that the Town "may" elect a Treasurer.

He also thought that there could be some economies if the Town had a CFO who could handle day to day supervision. Also, there may be economies if there was a way to combine the payroll Departments within the town.

Ed stated that he has always favored a Treasurer or similar position that are our "eyes and ears on our (Town's) money." He likes having someone who has a vested interest in the Town to be CFO who is local and elected. The counterpoint to this is that with an elected Treasurer/CFO you do not always get the right person as it tends to be a popularity contest.

Ed went on to state that if you appoint a Treasurer it would have to be based on qualifications and not a political appointee. Mr. Brooks noted that if we required that an appointee be a resident of the Town that that would shrink the available pool of candidates.

Mr. Brooks then asked Ed how should a CFO be appointed; by the Board of Selectmen (BOS), Board of Finance (BOF), or First Selectman?

Ed thought that it should not be by any one person but a committee comprised of some members of both the BOF and BOS. Possibly two people from each party with one R and one D from each board.

The question of whether the CFO has to be in the charter was brought up again as a way to gain flexibility in the position.

Jeff Kew asked about hiring and firing a CFO. Ed stated that although a CFO should report to the First Selectman because someone needs to do annual and 6 month reviews, also if there are too many stipulations on who hires, fires and supervises a CFO, it will be an impediment to attracting the right candidate. Jeff then asked about the finance part of the Board of Ed. and whether it could be combined with a CFO function. Ed thought that the CFO would be a higher level function but that you could combine the "backroom" functions without jeopardizing in any way the independence of the Board of Ed.

Ed also thought that a CFO would help the continuity in Town Government, particularly with the budget cycle being very tight and that it would level the playing field for finance across the Town.

The conversation digressed temporarily when Ed was asked about having the Board of Ed members appointed by the BOS. Ed thought that when vacancies were filled by the boards themselves that the current members might choose a friend or associate and then constitute a mini majority within the board. Also, filling the vacancy should not be a popularity contest but that as long as there is a process in place he is OK with it.

Jeff Kew then asked about whether it would be possible to fill a CFO position at a typical Town Salary and there followed a discussion about possible salary levels for a Town CFO and where one might recruit a Town CFO. Ed thought that we might end up with a former Town auditor or a local CPA for this position.

The conversation ended with the members of the CRC thanking Ed for making time to give them the benefit of his knowledge on these subjects.