

**Village of Arden, Governance Task Force
Meeting Minutes: January 26, 2023**

Attendance:

John Scheflen, Barbara Macklem, Beverly Clendening, Kate Threefoot, Steve Benigni, Lynda Kolski (via Zoom)

Meeting called to order 7:33 PM.

Minutes from meeting November 2022 approved with minor revisions.

Minutes for Public Meeting were distributed. There are some missing pieces of information, specifically the insurance aspect and the role of the Civic Committee in terms of trees in the rights-of-way. Bev will revise these minutes and submit them for approval at the February GTF meeting.

Ordinance and Policy Sub-Task Force

Recommendations for all ordinances except Ordinance 14 and 15 have been posted to the Arden Webpage. Work on Ordinance 14 is still in progress. Steve B. shared that Rick Farrell would like to have input into Ordinance 14. It was recommended that Rick post comments in the webpage or attend an Ordinance and Policy SubTF meeting.

John sent out a questionnaire too all committee Chairs and to the officers. The committee is waiting for responses. The committee began discussion of policies received (Forest Committee and Audit Committee). John shared the workflow table shown below for the sub-Task Force's handling of policies.

REVIEW OF POLICIES AND PROCEDURES

Step 1 – Gather existing policies and procedures

Website

Questionnaires

Step 2 - Review them

Consistent with charter

Do not conflict with other policies and procedures

Consistent with how we do things

Step 3 – Recommendations

To existing policies and procedures

For new policies and procedures

For ways to make policies known to leaseholders

Meet with Committees and officers to discuss recommendations

Step 4 – Guidelines

Encouragement to write policies and procedures where appropriate

Benefits of policies and procedures – compliance, transparency, consistency

Content and form

Town Assembly approval

Periodic review and updating

A question was raised about the meaning of “Content and form” in Step 4. John did not necessarily mean paper or electronic forms related to policies that would need to be completed. In some cases, forms, including those already in use, would be appropriate. It was suggested that, in the future, all forms should be available electronically.

John also suggested that we need a “Policy on policies” that would provide guidance concerning the types of actions by committees, officers or other officials that should be governed by a written policy. This policy would also indicate what types of policies should be approved by the Village. The policy would also provide guidelines for frequency of policy review for potential revision. The reasons for having a policy on policies are to encourage compliance, transparency, and consistency and to ensure continuity when members of committees and offices change.

The sub-TF will consider sources other than committee input for policies. They will look at the webpage, Arden book and the Red Book.

The sub-TF has spent a great deal of time discussing mechanisms for making policies known to Arden residents. Kate suggested that there be a regular column in Page devoted to Policies. Each month one or two policies could be presented. Details of the policy as well as the rationale for the policy could be presented. This begs the question of who would write these columns.

Charter Sub-Task Force

The Sub-TF on Ordinances and Policy requested a summary of the work done to date by the Charter Sub-TF. This discussion is summarized below.

- Preamble was added. This was thought to be important because a preamble is a reasonably standard feature of a Municipal Charter. Considering the unique nature of Arden and the unique structure of the Village, a preamble seemed important.
- The Sub-TF has dealt with parts of the Charter non-sequentially.
- It is recommended that the title of Section 6 be changed from Committees of the Town Meeting to Committees and Officials. Officials are officers and other persons acting in an official capacity for the Village.
- Section 7: Board of Assessors. Changes were recommended in this section to align the schedule for assessment to the State and County schedule for assessment of taxes and other fees.
- A change to the oath taken by the assessors was also recommended. Change “...I will as nearly as possible assess the full rental value of Arden lands...” to “...I will as nearly as possible assess the full rental value of Arden lands or the community standard of living...”
- There has been a continuing discussion concerning what needs to be in a charter and what should be left out. There are two camps:
 1. The Charter should contain details about governance.
 2. Governance details, which are not in the current Charter and whose absence have not caused a problem to date, should be left out; keep the Charter on a

broad scale and add specifics if needed. The argument here is that if details need to be changed, they are easier to change if in an Ordinance and not in the Charter. The Charter is the framework; the details are in the ordinances, policies, and procedures. The Charter can give TA, committees, and officials the power to make changes as needed.

- The attorney retained by the Village has provided an opinion concerning the budget approval process that required further discussion. The budget issues of interest concern: 1) spending authority for sources of income that are not a part of the regular budgetary process, 2) whether a surfeit in one committee budget can be used to balance a deficit in another committee budget.
- It was suggested that a summary of what the Charter sub-committee has done be posted in the GTF webpage. The Charter Sub-TF thought that this would be difficult. The information is in the minutes and the changes are minor and hard to summarize. None of the changes will really change how we do things in the village. The changes will clarify what is already being done. It was suggested that the Charter sub-TF generate a Status Report like the one kept by John for the Ordinance and Policy Sub-TF.
- A question about the List of Officers and their duties was raised. Our Charter defines the duties of the Secretary and Chair of TA. The offices of Treasurer and Chair of Advisory Committee and their duties were established by a vote of the Town Assembly; they are not in the Charter.
- The sub-TF is discussing which types of decisions should go to referendum. For example, does the expenditure of a gift need to go to referendum or can be decided by TA.
- The question about voting right for non-resident leaseholder was raised. The subTF will not include this in their recommendations.
- A big task for the Charter Sub-TF is to determine how to present the recommendations to the village succinctly. Ordinances can be easily handled in a piecemeal fashion; recommendations for ordinances can be done in batches. It was suggested that the recommendations for the Charter should be done all at once with highlighting of changes.

Adjourned at 8:46