

Town Administrator
or
Town Manager?

How should Hinesburg move
forward?

Why consider a different position?

- Need to hire a new leader for Town
- Turnover – average tenure has been 3 years
6 different administrators in 16 years
- Departing TA overworked, “Jill of all trades”
- Issues have become more complex
- Selectboard involved in day to day resulting in less time on policy or vision implementation

Significant Differences

Town Administrator (Serves at will of Board)

- Can only do what Board permits them to do
- May be given hiring/firing authority, but Board often gets involved in personnel & day to day
 - takes time away from policy work
 - creates possibility of lawsuits & public knowledge of confidential personnel information
 - decisions can become political vs professional

Significant Differences

Town Manager (CEO of Community)

- State Statutes outline responsibilities
- More experience and professionalism
- Hiring, discipline and firing authority
 - Most managers check in with Board on major department head hirings +/- or have committees
- More efficient in day to day administration
- More able to hold employees accountable
- Able to align board and staff priorities/tasks

Loss of Control with Manager?

- No practical control now over some departments
 - “TA is outdated – not enough hours in a day to do all that is required. Hands are frequently tied and some issues are not dealt with consistently nor is clear, timely direction given”
- Communications need to come from one person who has vetted information
- More accountability
- Selectboard still has ultimate authority to:
 - appoint and remove manager for cause;
 - direct priorities, set salary

What is the downside?

- Town Manager may cost more
- Selectboard won't be involved in day to day
- Selectboard may not be aware of minor personnel issues
- Selectboard should communicate to personnel through manager rather than directly to staff
- There must be “just cause” and a process to terminate manager

Observations from Others

“The Board still has complete decision making authority and it guides and oversees the actions of the TM for smoother operations in the Town.”

N. Scibek, Former Colchester Selectboard Chair

“There is no perceived leader in town hall if not a strong administrator or manager. As a TA, you never know when they want you to be a manager or administrator. It is archaic if you need to move quickly, especially with personnel issues. TM allows Board to focus on policy and there is less burnout or turnover by board members when they aren’t involved in day to day.”

Area Town Administrator

“...through the manager, the organization will become familiar with becoming more effective (doing the right thing) and efficient (doing the thing right) and identifying when the reverse is approaching: doing the wrong thing very well. Lastly, Inter-department operations and communications will be facilitated and expanded”

P. Scheidel, retired TM

The Ultimate Control

“(t)he manager has the power to hire and fire most employees of the town...But the **selectmen** have the right to direct and supervise the manager...The difference is critical to an understanding of how the town manager system works – the selectmen, when there is a town manager, may not hire or fire anyone but the manager, but they may order the manager to do their bidding. The manager, of course, may refuse so long as he is willing to accept the consequences of his act.”

Former Secretary of State Paul Gilles 1993

Interesting Statistics

- 73% of cities, towns and counties over 2,500 population have managers (ICMA)
- 37 of 99 members in VTCMA are Town Administrators in 2020 (63% are TMs)
- Richmond approved Manager in 2012 (4100 pop.)
- Shelburne, Williston, Fairfax have managers
- Hinesburg 2012 vote for manager
 - 673 no and 635 yes

Why make the change?

- Frequent turnover costs \$ and resources
- Manager position attracts more experienced and professional candidates
- Less archaic, more efficient government
- Less involvement in day to day for Board
- Board has more time for visioning, policy work and implementation
- Less liability exposure with personnel issues
- Town Manager empowered to hold staff more accountable
- Improved internal and external communications

Skill set needed

- Ethical/Honest
- People person
- Non-political
- Collaborative/Team Player
- Inspirational leader
- Organized
- Open Minded (able to think 360 degrees)
- Able to delegate/align resources
- Communicator
- Financial management
- Statutes and Regulations
- Analytical
- HR laws

And...Code of Ethics

Municipal Managers must follow a code of ethics adopted by the International City Management Association and Vermont Municipal Managers Association and can be censured if they do not follow the standards of ethical conduct.

How do we get there?

At March town meeting, voters could decide on this question (following public hearing)...

“Shall the Town of Hinesburg adopt the town manager form of governance in accordance with the provisions of chapter 37 of Title 24 of the Vermont Statutes Annotated?” (Amended 2019, No. 67 Section 21.)”

Change *Can* Be Good!



“It turns out we don’t know the definition of change.”