

Councillor Reeves stated that he would prefer to have the City Clerk consult all the members of the committee about whether they will come when a committee meeting is scheduled.

Councillor Davis stated that she does not believe that this can happen for the Ordinance committee, which is a committee of the whole, but she is willing to do this for other committees.

Robert Winters stated that it would be a good idea to publicize the importance of significant issues.

Elie Yarden, 143 Pleasant Street, stated that all of the suggestions should be tried, just because the City Council can get stuck in the same routine. Mr. Yarden stated that the load that is being placed on City Councillors is far too great to carry. Many issues require extensive study. He suggests that each City Councillor be assigned an aide, a one-year position, a graduate student who would make \$25,000.00 - \$30,000.00.

Councillor Davis stated that she likes the idea, but twenty hours is not enough. It is a budget issue.

Robert Winters stated that he is opposed to it. The City Council is not intended to be a full-time job. If there is a need for this, perhaps it could be budgeted as a research department in the City Clerk's Office.

Elie Yarden stated that this would not provide adequate support for individual City Councillors.

Councillor Born stated that she agrees with Mr. Yarden about the difficulty of gathering information, and it could be awkward for one researcher to have to do research and supply information for legislators on opposite sides of an issue. There are also the issues of the expense, work space and the City Councillors finding time to manage these interns.

Councillor Davis stated that she would be interested in seeing a standard intern package, so that individual Councillors could find and hire interns more easily.

Councillor Triantafillou suggested focusing for now on ways to change the meeting and suggested that the City Council just pick one and try it. If the first try doesn't work, the City Council can try a different suggestion.

Councillor Russell stated that she would like to try the idea of one discussion meeting per month.

Councillor Davis said it would be worth trying having one part of a meeting used for discussion. She stated that something that makes the meeting long is the long interchanges between the City Council and the City Manager. There are political benefits to having these discussions at this time, like there are benefits to writing orders about pot holes even though there are other ways to get pot holes fixed. Perhaps a certain amount of time can be assigned for this.

Robert Winters stated that some of it is a matter of standards and practices. There is no political benefit in droning on for hours on minutia.

Councillor Born stated that she disagrees.

Councillor Reeves stated that there are individual styles.

Councillor Davis stated that Roberts Rules has rules on time. Discussion is limited to ten minutes, and no one speaks again until all have spoken.

Councillor Triantafillou stated that she believes that if the physical format of the room is changed, the meeting could be more conducive to discussion.

Councillor Reeves suggested using an oval table that was used at a Public Health Commission discussion in the Macht Center.

Councillor Davis moved that the Committee recommend that City Council change physical structure for a City Council meeting and that the City Council have a discussion meeting in the Fall. The motion passed unanimously on a voice vote.

Councillor Born noted the two different kinds of information that the City Council needs: Specific information regarding on particular issue on zoning petitions; and more general updates on what is new, what is going on.

Councillor Russell stated that she would like to have a letter sent from this committee urging City Council members to attend their committee meetings.

Councillor Russell then moved the discussion to public participation.

Councillor Born stated that she thinks that it is easier to listen to public comment at the beginning of the meeting. She also hears from citizens that it is easier for them to come at a particular hour. In general it works well. What does not work well is the public's frustration that they do not have enough time to say what they want to say. Councillor Born stated that she is in favor of keeping public participation the way it is.

Councillor Davis stated that the rule seems equitable but the switching around that takes place when people who have signed up to speak donate their time to another speaker to enable that person to exceed the time limit can be a problem.

Mr. Winters stated that his preference would be to disallow the practice of "switching" around.

Councillor Born stated that perhaps City Councillors should be limited in how long they speak on an issue.

Elie Yarden stated that to him one of the most powerful aspects of this form of government is the invitation to political participation. He is often there to ask questions. Different people have different ways of thinking and this is useful. What is harmful is that anyone can say anything and there is no opportunity for questions. This means that it is treated as meaningless.

Councillor Davis agreed that this is a problem, but stated that the problem with allowing the back and forth is that the meeting will go on for many more hours. There often is follow-up later in the meeting on issues raised by members of the public. She stated that she has problems with incorrect statements that are being made as facts and the lack of opportunity for correction.

Councillor Sullivan provided an example of a statement by a member of the public that residents of an elderly building would be evicted. He received many phone calls from frightened residents.

Councillor Davis stated that perhaps the Chair should say that these are the opinions of those who are speaking.

Mr. Winters stated that the testimony of virtually everyone, including his own, is inaccurate. There is a mechanism for elected representatives to make a point of information, and it is appropriate to use it.

Councillor Sullivan stated that for him the biggest problem is that the City Council does not get to the business on the agenda. He agreed that the Chair should not allow substitution of other speakers for those on the list.

It was agreed without objection that the Government Operations Committee will recommend to the full City Council that it continue to keep all public testimony to a two-hour maximum, even when this means reducing the time for individual speakers, and that the City Council not allow substitution and borrowing time. It was further agreed without objection that public comment should continue to be heard at the beginning of the meeting.

With regard to the fall FY2000 budget discussion, it was agreed without objection that this is the continuation of a training process to enable the City Council to develop a goal setting process that is integrated with the budget process, and thus it should be related to the previous training as closely as possible.

Councillor Reeves then explained that he had to leave and stated his support for re-appointment of the City Clerk and City Auditor. He stated that in his opinion it is not fair that the City Auditor is the only city employee required to live in Cambridge, and he stated that he would like the Auditor to have more contact with the City Council.

Councillor Russell then invited discussion on the issue of changing the way of electing the Mayor.

Councillor Davis stated that while she does not agree with the particular suggestions offered by Councillor Triantafillou, there is public concern about the process that deserves discussion.

Councillor Sullivan stated that he does not like how the process worked in the last mayoral election. However, if there is going to be a change, it should be done by the citizens.

Mr. Yarden stated that the significance of the Mayor under this form of government is a public relations matter. There is no way to legislate how people treat each other.

Councillor Triantafillou stated that there is a systemic problem with the way that the election occurs. There is a sense among the public of wanting more participation in that choice. Perhaps a non-binding referendum would be useful.

Councillor Davis stated that she believes that this kind of change should be a function of the citizens, not the City Council.

Councillor Triantafillou noted that her proposal was put forth prior to the outcome of the election. It would seem possible to have some dialogue about how candidates see the position of mayor and to give the public some idea of the basis for each Councillor's choice of Mayor.

Councillor Born stated that she has an open mind on this issue. In her time on the City Council, the process for electing the Mayor has not worked smoothly. However, she does agree with Councillor Davis that the public should decide on what changes there should be in the election of the Mayor. She welcomes discussion, but it would be an abuse of power for the City Council to dictate the change.

Mr. Winters stated that he disagrees with the notion of a single question referendum on the election of a Mayor. However, he agrees with the idea of a "mayoral forum" where candidates can "strut their stuff." He agrees that the final choice of the Chair of the City Council should rest with the City Council. Whenever anyone proposes a particular process, it is important to be aware that there is no perfect election system. In his opinion, the focus on number one votes is very flawed. He suggests gathering all the data through several methods, such as looking electronically at various selections, having a mayoral forum, and possibly other information as well.

Mr. Yarden stated that he agrees with Mr. Winters. He would add a chance for the public to express its opinion in a non-binding way.

Councillor Davis stated that she worries that this will lead towards a strong Mayor which she does not see as a constructive change.

Councillor Triantafillou stated that she had to leave and wanted to record that she fully supports the reappointment of the City Clerk and the City Auditor. She stated that she agrees with Councillor Reeves that she would like to have more contact with the City Auditor.

Councillor Davis stated that it is extremely important that the Mayor serve in the School Committee. Councillor Sullivan stated that he agrees.

Councillor Sullivan moved that the Government Operations Committee recommend that the City Council not recommend changes to the election of the Mayor. It was agreed without objection.

The Committee then moved to the issue of appointment of a City Clerk and City Auditor. Councillor Sullivan moved that the Government Operations Committee recommend to the full City Council that the City Clerk and the City Auditor be reappointed and the motion was adopted unanimously on a voice vote.

Councillor Russell asked Mr. Lindstrom if the contractual requirement of residency creates a problem for him. Mr. Lindstrom answered in the negative.

Councillor Davis asked Mr. Lindstrom about his goal to develop a role as an independent advisor to the City Council. She is not sure what the City Auditor does. She asked what kinds of reports he could offer the City Council.

Mr. Lindstrom gave the example of the Public Health Commission report, a report on the City's debt service for Councillor Triantafillou, and review of the budget to illuminate policy making issues.

He stated that if he just improves the contact with the City Council, it will be easier for him and the City Council to decide what would be the most useful.

Councillor Russell thanked all those present for their attendance.

The meeting adjourned at 6:00 p.m.

For the Committee,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Sheila Doyle Russell". The signature is fluid and cursive, with the first name "Sheila" being more prominent.

Councillor Sheila Doyle Russell
Chair



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D. MARGARET DRURY
CITY CLERK

DONNA P. LOPEZ
DEPUTY CITY CLERK

TO: Councillor Sheila Russell, Chair
Government Operations Committee

FROM: Margaret Drury, City Clerk

DATE: May 27, 1998

RE: City Council Meeting and Agenda Issues for Government Operations
Committee

Options to improve deliberation - Suggestions from 4/8/98 committee meeting

- One meeting a month when there are no votes. The meeting is informal, more like a roundtable, but still televised. It could involve experts from the community.
- One part of each meeting is structured as a circle in the center with staff participation in discussion.
- Roundtables/conferences with staff before the Council meeting. (They tend to be poorly attended, according to Roberta Miller.)
- Roundtables/ work-study sessions scheduled at other times with appropriate staff.

Public participation: Plan E Charter (Ch.43 sec.98) requires that the City Council rules provide a reasonable opportunity for residents and city employees to be heard at City Council meetings in regard to any matter considered at that meeting.

- Amount of time allowed each speaker.
- Overall functioning, e.g., speakers substituting for each other, speakers not present when their name is called, individuals signing up other speakers.
- Public comment at beginning of the meeting.

City of Cambridge

The Government Operations Committee held a public meeting on May 27, 1998, beginning at 4:40 p.m. in the Ackermann Room for the purpose of discussing possible changes to the structure of City Council meetings to enhance deliberation, the FY2000 goal discussion meeting in September, the possibility of charter reform to change the way the Mayor is elected, and the appointment of a City Clerk and City Auditor.

Present at the hearing were Councillor Sheila T. Doyle Russell, Chair of the Committee, Councillor Kathleen Leahy Born, Councillor Henrietta Davis, Councillor Kenneth E. Reeves, Councillor Michael A. Sullivan, Councillor Timothy J. Toomey, Jr., Councillor Katherine Triantafillou, and City Clerk D. Margaret Drury. Also present were City Auditor James Lindstrom, Deputy City Solicitor Donald Drisdell, Deputy City Clerk Donna Lopez, Assistant to the City Council Sandra Albano and Legal Counsel Birge Albright.

Councillor Russell convened the hearing and explained the purpose.

Councillor Russell then moved to the first item on the agenda, possible changes to the structure of City Council meetings to enhance deliberations. She distributed a memo summarizing suggestions made by Roberta Miller at the last committee meeting (Attachment A) and invited discussion.

Councillor Triantafillou stated that perhaps the City Council should try some of these suggestions. Councillor Russell stated that she would be interested in scheduling a work session as part of a regular meeting. She explained the way that a work session would occur. It would be more like a committee meeting. She noted the poor attendance at committee meetings.

Robert Winters, 366 Broadway, stated that if work sessions are televised, he suspects they will be just like other City Council meetings.

Councillor Davis gave the example of the PDTD Ordinance Committee meeting where there were very few members of the City Council present. Because changes to the proposal require discussion by all, the committee was unable to move forward on the proposal.

Councillor Triantafillou stated that perhaps attendance is low because of the time when the meeting is scheduled or because the members were not consulted about the time.

Committee Report #2

4745

A report from Councillor Russell,
Chair of the Government Operations
Committee for a meeting held on May 27,
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possible changes to the structure of
City Council meetings to enhance
deliberation, the FY2000 goal
discussion meeting in September, the
possibility of charter reform to
change the way the Mayor is elected
and the appointment of a City Clerk
and City Auditor.

In City Council June 22, 1998

Report Accepted

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