

## **Electronic Voting Study Committee Meeting Minutes January 3, 2019**

In attendance: John Covey, Bryan Moss, Donna O'Connor, Pat Convery, Beth Casavant, Sandy Wright, Chris Mehne, Neena Mohanka

Motion to approve minutes from November 8<sup>th</sup> meeting will happen at the next meeting as some committee members did not realize the minutes were in Google Drive. Meeting minutes will also be emailed to the group going forward in addition to being placed in the Drive.

### **Electronic Voting System- Vendor Presentations**

The Committee will hear presentations from 3 vendors: Option Technologies Interactive (OTI), Voatz, Turning Technologies

These presentations will provide information and a general idea of pricing. A discussion followed about how to best schedule the vendors due to the open meeting format. The majority felt that vendors would not want to present in front of competitors, so it would be best to schedule them one at a time.

John Covey has made it clear to the vendors that this committee is not authorized to purchase, but rather gathering information in order to understand the cost vs. benefit of EV.

John will try to schedule January 16, 17, 23, 24.

The committee found the video from Wayland helpful. The video addressed the glitches and small "user errors" that were happening during town meeting. Wayland also has a supply of paper ballots ready in the event that someone is unable to get their device to operate properly. The moderator from Wayland is also willing to attend one of our committee meetings to speak to us.

Bryan Moss found meeting minutes from Arlington in 2015 that show the most expensive OTI system was \$1300 to rent. John Covey cautioned the group that we are not staffed for owning these devices and leasing would be the most practical due to the strain owning would put on town resources. Pat Convery said that leasing means that we are not left with outdated technology. John Covey said that if the committee favors purchasing the devices, he would need to talk to the town manager and Michael Hale to figure out funding options and how it would fit in with our network. John Covey envisions about 6 technicians needed to run the system on town meeting nights.

Donna O' Connor noted there would be additional expenses to the Town Clerk's office such as needing to have paper ballots on hand in the event they are needed during town meeting, additional staffing, and device distribution and collection. Sandy Wright said that EV could eliminate the need for tellers at town meeting, but someone will need to be on hand to distribute and collect the devices. It may not eliminate tellers, but it could change their role during town meeting.

### **Discussion of visits to other town meetings with EV**

Neena Mohanka attended an open town meeting in Acton. Neena reported that the moderator still needed to hold voice votes on occasion and things did not seem to move along faster. Chris Mehne said that other moderators report that it does take time to work out the kinks in the beginning. Neena said that people were clearly still getting used to the EV devices and sometimes votes had to be redone. There was a screen at the meeting to show the votes. In the video from Wayland they had a test vote at the beginning of the meeting. There is also a short video that is shown at the beginning of town meeting explaining how to use the device.

The vote that Neena observed was on recreational marijuana and there was a very large turnout of over 1500 people. This is very different from the 240 town meeting members that we experience here in Shrewsbury. Donna O'Connor suggested that there may be members of town meeting with unique issues relating to the use of these devices. There is a wide variation in people's comfort level and technology can be intimidating. Bryan Moss asked if there is the ability for people to opt out of using an EV device and could still use a paper ballot somehow. A discussion took place about reasonable accommodations for people who are intimidated by the technology. We do run the risk of losing town meeting members that are unwilling to use the EV device. These are good questions to ask the vendors.

John Covey noted that there is a range with how the public interacts with technology-website, portal, see click fix. Neena added that we need to go in knowing that there will be different reactions to the technology of EV and some may be strong.

The logistical and technical challenges are not insurmountable. The decision lies in determining the value vs. the cost.

Chris Mehne will look into other towns having special town meetings that committee members can attend.

## **Discussion of Surveys**

Pat Convery is working on generating survey questions and will put a document in Google Drive for the committee to review. Bring comments to the next meeting for discussion.

Pat envisions 2 surveys- one for town meeting members and one for the general public. Donna O'Connor questioned whether a survey is even needed given the scope of the committee's work. If a survey is sent to the community and we have concerns about people being uncomfortable with technology, how will the survey be accessible to everyone? Will we do an electronic survey or paper survey? Our committee was charged to research EV, make a decision, and present a report to the Board of Selectmen who would then be charged with moving the initiative further. Pat Convery disagreed.

Bryan Moss and Pat Convery both want to put out a survey. Beth Casavant suggested that we hold off on the survey until the vendor presentations are completed. She also said that asking the general public questions about the value of having a record of how town meeting members vote, without them having an understanding of the cost and how money for the an EV system will come out of some other area of the operating budget.

There is a definite concern among some members of the committee about the cost of the EV system. Bryan Moss feels that it's our job on this committee to combine what the public thinks through the

survey and put it together with the vendor presentations and make a decision. Pat Convery will create the survey so that we can all look at the questions to see for the next meeting. We may want to tweak the questions based on the vendor presentations.

Survey monkey, website, newsletter for the survey to be sent if we decide to do it. And Sandy Wright could email to all town meeting members. You could send the paper version and also provide instructions on how to complete online. There are some town meeting members without email.

The February Meeting will be on February 7<sup>th</sup>. Meeting adjourned at 8:45.

Meeting minutes respectfully submitted by Beth Casavant