

ELECTRONIC VOTING STUDY COMMITTEE

MINUTES DECEMBER 8, 2014

Attendees: Ellen Baxendale, Jason Kauppi, Mark Haddad, Josh Degen, Becky Pine, Michael Bouchard, Brian Davis, Michael Manugian

Not Present: Finance Committee appointee

Meeting was called to order at 5:01 PM by Mr. Kauppi.

The minutes from the December 1, 2014 were approved, as amended, by unanimous vote.

Goals

A discussion of goals for this committee to evaluate electronic voting technology. Each member offered goal statements or agreed with goals as listed:

- Maintain confidence in the Town Meeting voting process
- Make a prudent financial decision
- Use technology to speed up the voting process
- Provide anonymity for voters
- Provide a reliable, verifiable and auditable system
- Use electronic voting as a tool to increase attendance at town meeting

A member asked if there was perceived confidence in today's town meeting voting process. Ms. Pine offered that she thought there was confidence in the process (Ms. Pine attends most town meetings.) Ms. Pine asked if votes taken at a representative town meeting were private. Mr. Degen responded that they were not private, and were roll call votes. Representatives are elected officials and do not have a right to vote privacy. Open town meeting attendees may be expecting vote privacy.

The Committee accepted these goals by unanimous vote.

Meeting schedule

The next three meetings for the committee will be scheduled for:

Monday	December 15, 2014	4:30 PM
Monday	December 22	4:30 PM
Monday	January 12, 2015	4:30 PM

Reports from member research with other towns

- Duxbury – Mr. Haddad stated that Duxbury piloted electronic voting at their last town meeting on a couple of articles. Jim Sullivan, chair of the electronic voting committee, said that Duxbury piloted electronic voting at their last town meeting by testing it on a couple of articles. There is an article on their March 2015 warrant to fund the voting machines. He said they were working with Option Technology for the voting machines. They are basing funding on 500 handsets. Option Technology actually attends town meetings and run the devices, etc. and will work with

moderator and town clerk throughout the town meeting. Mr. Sullivan will forward some documents to Mr. Haddad.

- Westboro – Mr. Haddad obtained a copy of their RFP soliciting electronic voting. The committee did not discuss this RFP, but Mr. Haddad thought it might be a good model to use if Groton proceeded to that point. Westboro was quoted \$34,000 per year. That is believed to cover two town meetings.
- Ipswich - Mr. Manugian reported that Ipswich was in the process of forming a committee to study electronic voting.
- Hingham – Mr. Degen reported that Hingham appointed an electronic voting study committee in 2013. It has been meeting since January, 2014. The minutes from their meetings was distributed in this meeting for our member review. These minutes are also available at http://hingham-ma.com/Committees/Electronic_Voting/index.html
- Wareham - Mr. Bouchard reported that the Town Moderator of Wareham, Claire Smith, is an advocate of electronic voting. She stated, however, that Wareham is not pursuing at this time due to the cost.
- Eastham – Mr. Bouchard reported that Eastham has 5200 registered voters and an open town meeting. They average 800 attendees. They appropriated funds at May 2014 TM for electronic voting implementation in May 2015. RFPs will go out in January. A company to add to our list is Turning Point Technology. Sue says they were verbally ball parked \$1500 for 1500 seats for (I think) a one night town meeting. She is leery of the price quote as being too low.
- Westwood – Mr. Davis reported that Westwood has chosen not to pursue electronic voting at this time due to cost. They were interested in the technology in order to increase vote privacy and attendance.

Other discussion

Mr. Kauppi announced that he will likely attend Wayland’s ELVIS committee meeting on Thursday, December 11.

Scott Harker (audience) stated addressing the goals were a good start. He asked if the committee had studied Belmont. The committee responded that it had not studied because it had a representative town meeting and it wanted to focus on open town meeting experiences.

John Gilmartin (audience) stated he was a newly attending town meetings, and appreciated the process. He opined that technology won’t speed up the process of town meeting because the time is consumed with the debate. Electronic voting probably won’t have an impact on increasing attendance. To increase participation, a smartphone voting application would be a good tool. Voting at home or by absentee ballot would also increase participation. It was pointed out by the committee that state law requires physical presence to participate in town meeting. Mr. Gilmartin also suggested an online broadcast of proceedings could help generate interest among a younger audience.

Mr. Bouchard asked if the committee could consider other solutions besides electronic voting. Mr. Kauppi felt this was beyond the charge of the committee.

Moving forward

Ask OTI for a presentation at our meeting on December 22. We'd also like to ask Turning Point Technologies, Quizcom and perhaps Meridia for presentations. Committee members should come prepared to discuss questions for the vendors at our next meeting. Ms. Pine expressed a concern about the limited sourcing of the technology. Others shared this concern. Mr. Manugian suggested that the committee should prepare a list of questions to ask all vendors prior to the first vendor visit. He also recommended that the committee develop a list of categories to be used in comparing the vendors and voting options.

Mr. Degen asked if anyone knew of other states with communities which have town meetings and using electronic voting. That could be a source of vendor information. Mr. Degen also suggested, as he had at the previous meeting, that he'd like us to explore if economies of scale could be realized by sharing the cost of electronic voting technology with other area towns.

Mr. Haddad suggested we start vendor evaluations with OTI, which appears to be the market leader. Mr. Davis will contact OTI.

Mr. Davis indicated Hingham has or is considering Meridia (company) as a vendor. This committee put that company on a list of possible vendors.

Mr. Kauppi asked the members if there was a perception that town meeting voice votes had an accuracy or credibility problem. There have been few challenges, and if challenged the moderator's call has always been upheld in the past two years. Mr. Manugian stated that voter confidence in the system was perceptual and differed from a formal analysis of the reliability, verifiability and auditability of the system – and that both were important.

Next meeting

The next meeting will be December 15 at 4:30.