ELECTRONIC VOTING STUDY COMMITTEE

MINUTES DECEMBER 15, 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 4:35 PM by Mr. Kauppi.

The minutes from the December 8, 2014 were approved and accepted as amended, by unanimous vote. Mr. Bouchard was not present for this vote.

Mr. Davis arranged for an electronic voting vendor, Option Technologies (OTI), to give the committee a demonstration of their system at our meeting on December 22. We expect that OTI will demonstrate setup and voting and explain the process.

Mr. Manugian delivered a "trip report" on his and Mr. Kauppi's attendance at Wayland's ELVIS Committee meeting. His report is appended to these minutes. Mr. Manugian related that:
- Wayland uses electronic voting for all votes.
- each vote takes approximately one minute which includes 15 seconds for vote announcement, 30 seconds for voting and 15 seconds for announcement of the result
- vendor (OTI) has a barcoded list of voters which is linked to assigned scanners in a "second" check-in process
- if the participant leaves the room temporarily, the handset is left in place
- handsets seldom fail
- proxy voting could be a concern although Wayland doesn't believe it's been an issue
- costs include a three year contract for 500 handsets, 5 dispensing stations and "dead days". Wayland has a 5 consecutive night meeting in the spring and a one night meeting in the fall.
- only one person has ever requested to be hand counted and this was due to the person's concern about the effect of wireless on a pacemaker
- audits have been conducted, using a random selection of handsets. No audit failures to date.

Wayland has recently issued an RFQ for a new three year contract for an electronic voting system. They received bids from three companies. Two of the companies did not have good solutions. They highlighted that the bidding process requires that the lowest qualified bidder be accepted. The RFQ needs to be worded to reflect exactly what Groton would be looking for.

Wayland has worked a lot with OTI on system requirements. They were willing to work with other vendors to increase competition. Their system went live in 2011, but were working with OTI before that. Wayland entered a new contract with OTI, their second 3 year contract with them.

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Mr. Kauppi added that Wayland thought their town meeting voters are supportive of the system and felt it was better than counting votes. He further explained that the physical facility in which Wayland's town meeting is held (the Field House) is not conducive to acoustics or visual presentations. Voice votes are hard to discern. Speakers with microphones are not well heard in some sections of the building. When counting votes, their practice had been to "divide the room" with yeas and nays, which took some time. Wayland's ELVIS Committee further recommended that an implementation committee, should Groton proceed that far should have technically competent members.

Mr. Degen inquired as to the attendance of a Finance Committee member. Mr. Bacon has communicated that he was not available at the Committee's meeting time on a regular basis. Mr. Kauppi will follow up with the Finance Committee.

The Committee formulated questions to be asked of vendors:
1. How many town meetings have you supported? How long have you been in business? In what states and towns have you been involved?
2. How many failures or breakdowns have you experienced?
3. How do you ensure system security? How do you deal with Wi-Fi hotspots?
4. How do you determine pricing?
5. How does a random audit work? What if it fails?
6. Do you have to erase data after a vote? Can the system keep the vote log? How long?
7. How would you support a town meeting that goes three consecutive Mondays?
8. How would you propose to do a pilot? How much would that cost?
9. How could we prevent proxy voting?
10. If we ran out of handsets for a meeting, how would hand counting work? Who would handle "hand count" voters?
11. What has been their experience with lost units? Who is responsible?
12. Can we save costs with regionalization?
13. How does a simultaneous "yes and no" vote (meaning if a voter pressed "yes" and "no" together) affect the system and the particular vote?
14. What are the pre-meeting administration and setup requirements?
15. How much time is required to set-up?
16. Can your staff be CORI-checked?
17. How many vendor and town staff are required at town meeting? What do they do?
18. Why should Groton go with OTI?
19. What else does OTI do?
20. What happens if a voter can't vote during the voting window?

The Committee then discussed criteria upon which to evaluate vendors:
1. Cost, including the cost of the pilot
2. Vendor experience
3. Security of the system
4. Reliability of the system / solution
5. Support

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6. Ease of use
7. Time savings
8. What bylaws would need to be changed?
9. Privacy
10. Auditability
11. Training
12. Setup

Ms. Pine suggested that not all criteria should be ranked equally. There was a general consensus that criteria 1 through 4 were the most important. Mr. Manugian thought we ought to rank what we are doing now to these criteria. "If things play out, we are probably going to be comparing OTI to what we are doing now." There was general consensus that OTI appeared to be the clear leader in this field.

Mr. Manugian asked that all documents form the Committee include a header or footer with title, date and page numbers.

Mr. Kauppi reminded that the purpose of the committee was not to select a vendor but rather to recommend a technology choice to town meeting. He felt we did not have to meet with all four vendors who we know are in this business. Mr. Degen said that he would like to look at a second vendor on January 12, 2015 so we would have time to evaluate before town meeting. Ms. Pine asked if we only wanted to deal with vendors with town meeting experience. Mr. Davis stated that we are asking OTI to demo the technology, and that we are not choosing a vendor. He felt we don't need to view another vendor at this time. Mr. Manugian questioned whether town meeting would accept a recommendation if we only looked at one vendor. Mr. Degen agreed that we should look at a second vendor.

Mr. Kauppi asked if we could get the responses to Wayland's recent RFQ so we could decide if we needed to see a second vendor. The RFQ responses could help us figure out vendor differences.

Mr. Bouchard asked if the committee could debrief the OTI presentation earlier than the next meeting on January 12. Debrief will be done on December 22.

The meeting was adjourned at 6:00 PM.

Respectfully,

Michael Bouchard

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Visit to the Wayland Electronic Town Meeting Voting Committee

Jason Kauppi and Mike Manugian attended the meeting of the Wayland Electronic Town Meeting Voting Committee scheduled for Thursday, Dec 11, 2014 at 7:30 pm in the Wayland Town Building.

Background

A little background on the way Wayland handles its Town Meeting may be helpful.

Wayland holds its TM in a building they refer to as a field house. Apparently, it does not have good acoustics, making voice votes problematical. Wayland does not have a projection or display screen system to present warrant articles, motions or presentations to attendees. Apparently, this is all done verbally. Although the committee referred to a screen in the field house where they held town meeting, they also said that there were only a limited number of people who could see it. Also, they do not assign the presentation of each warrant article motion prior to the meeting. So the moderator must ask for a person to make each motion. His impression was that people presenting motions weren't prepared. The presentations weren't very clear. Also, time was spent during town meeting adjusting the wording of individual motions before they could be made. He said that he once had to wait about 3 minutes for a person to volunteer to make a particular motion.

Wayland holds its TM on consecutive days. The last TM took 5 days.

The Meeting

They had just signed a new three year contract with OTI. The purpose of this meeting was to try to encourage other vendors to become credible competitors to OTI, to look into other ways to use technology in town meeting and to come up with ways to encourage more town meeting participation.

They were very happy with OTI, but wished there other choices for the usual reasons: provide a backup in case OTI became unsatisfactory, stimulate competition to improve capabilities and reduce prices. Although two other vendors had submitted bids for the recently signed contract term, neither of them met the base qualification for consideration. It was clear that Wayland had spent a lot of time with OTI over the last couple of years to get their system to the point where it performed the way Wayland wanted it for their open town meeting. The Wayland committee was happy to spend time with other vendors to educate them, but were struggling with ways to get other vendors involved.

The committee decided to seek bids for a system to display articles, motions and presentations which could be viewed by all participants.

They also discussed the possible future use of a computer-based system for checking in voters.

Questions We Asked the Committee

The chair of the committee, David Bernstein was very gracious. He and other members stayed after the end of their regular meeting to answer our questions.

Mr. Manugian spoke with the committee and learned the following. Note that Wayland has negotiated a specific contract with OTI and a specific mode of operation which may or may not work for Groton.

Voting

Wayland uses electronic voting for all votes, including amendments and calling the question. The only exceptions are ceremonial votes where, for example, the town may vote to honor an individual for service. They estimate that each vote takes one minute. This includes the 30 second window where attendees are allowed to vote or change their vote. They now use a 3-button system: yes, no, cancel. Citizens are not required to vote on any motion.

They feel that participants like electronic voting.

Dispensing Handsets

They print a list of voters with a barcode for each voter. The dispensing table then scans a voter and remote barcode to link the voter to the remote. Participants leave their handsets in place if they leave the meeting temporarily. The voter-barcode link is used only to contact people to retrieve their remote if they accidentally leave without turning it in.

Handset Failure

The rate of failure is very low and has been taken care of within the meeting.

Proxy Voting

Participants are warned against proxy voting. The committee feels that this has not been a problem.

Cost

The three-year contract they are just starting provides 500 remotes and 5 dispensing stations. The price for the first day of TM is $17K. Each subsequent TM day is $7K. Each dead day is $1K. Wayland's TM starts on a Monday and runs for 3-5 consecutive days. If, for example, they met on Mon, Tue, Wed, skipped Thu (dead day) and met Fri, the cost would be $17K, $7K, $7K, $1K, $7K or $39K for that TM. Wayland said that their last TM took 5 days, but their second

TM typically finishes in one day. Assuming no dead days the cost would be $45K for the first TM and $17K for the second for a total of $62K.

Wi-fi and Hot Spots.

There is no problem with cell phone use. However, the vendor has indicated that the use of wi-fi hotspots can interfere with the remotes. This could result in the necessity for repeated or incorrect transmissions from remotes. Therefore, the use of wi-fi hotspots is prohibited. An announcement is made and they use equipment to check.

Manual Voting

There was only one person (the same person) in the last two town meetings who requested manual voting.

Auditing

Wayland deletes all voting information once each individual vote is certified by the moderator.

Before each vote is certified, if the moderator or 7 or more voters request an audit, the moderator selects 20-30 voters at random. They come forward and the moderator asks them each to press the yes or no button on their remote. The serial number of the remote and the vote are displayed on the moderator's console. They have not yet had an audit failure.

Questions we Asked the Moderator

Mr. Kauppi spoke with the Town Moderator, Mr. Dennis Barry, and learned the following.

- Voters have expressed overwhelming support for electronic voting and have confidence in the system and the votes.
- Meetings are quieter and less stressful, some have observed, because voters are not shouting for their vote to be heard in the large field house.
- With 500 voters in the field house, there was concern about accurately judging a voice vote.
- Counted votes were previously done by "dividing the room" with the Yeas moving to one side and the Nays to another. The count could take 30 minutes.
- Electronic voting solved the issue of correctly calling voice votes and counting votes.
- There have been very few problems with voters using the system or the system correctly counting the votes.
- Rather than seven voters challenging the ruling of the chair on a voice vote (as allowed for in state law), seven voters may request an audit of the handsets to see if they are working properly.
- Wayland Town Meeting can last up to five nights; Mr. Barry was interested in learning how Groton prepares motions in advance and displays information for voters to see during the meeting.

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