10.15.25

The Swansea Governance Committee discussed various administrative matters including party invitations, resignations, and the publication of meeting minutes. The group explored questions about town meeting implementation and absentee voting, while also addressing concerns about public engagement and the promotion of different governance options. The committee planned community forums and informational campaigns to educate residents about the transition from SB2 to traditional town meetings, including the creation of promotional materials and social media content to reach various demographics.

Swanzey Governance Committee 10.15.25

Call to order 5:01
Present - Ann Heffernon, Mike York, Richard Lane, Scott Self, Eric May, Ben Tilton, Jessica Ramsey-Sanchez, Mark Labelle, Bruce Tatro, Lee Dunham
Approval of minutes from 10.6 25, Motion to accept, Self, seconded York all in favor.

Swansea Christmas Party and Resignations

The committee discussed the Swansea Christmas party invitation for volunteers, employees, and elected officials. They addressed two resignations, with Kathy citing personal commitments and Francis citing time constraints. The minutes from the previous meeting were approved with a suggestion to hold Forum meetings every two to three months instead of once or twice a month.

Meeting Minutes and Voting Procedures

The board discussed the publication of meeting minutes, agreeing that draft minutes should be published within 5 days of the meeting rather than waiting for approval. They also explored questions about absentee voting, particularly in relation to potential changes from SB2 to traditional town meetings, and decided to consult with town lawyer Cornell to clarify the legal requirements regarding officer elections and zoning issues.

Enhancing Public Engagement in Meetings

The group discussed the implementation of town meetings and the need to increase public engagement. Ann expressed concern about putting too much focus on logistics before the vote, suggesting that the main goal should be to encourage more participation. The committee agreed to create a concise recommendation for the warrant, but also provide ideas for attracting more people to meetings such as daycare and mobile food concessions. They decided to compile a list of potential volunteers and organizations that could help implement the changes, but emphasized that detailed planning should be left to future committees if the proposal passes.

Town Meeting vs SB2 Education Forums

The committee discussed the promotion of town meeting versus SB2, with Ann expressing concern about presenting only one side of the story. They agreed to hold forums and hearings to educate the public about the differences between the two options. The committee also addressed issues with meeting participation and the need for more people to understand the process. They noted that they currently have 12 active members on the committee, which is sufficient for decision-making purposes. May notes that 35% of our voting population is a younger demographic which we need to pay attention to.

Community Forums Planning Initiative

The group discussed organizing community forums to gather input on town matters. They identified potential venues including the Grange, church halls, and the Swanzey Community House, with plans to hold both evening and Saturday sessions in early November. The team agreed to create concise flyers to distribute through various channels like the Town Hall, post office, restaurants, and community events, while also exploring opportunities to reach people at the local dump and through senior coffee meetings. They decided to start with three forums, including one at the Grange, to test attendance and engagement before potentially organizing larger events.

Governance Forum Promotion Strategies

The group discussed strategies for promoting a governance committee forum and increasing community engagement. Ann suggested using email lists from elected officials and town committees, but noted the need for permission and proper disclaimer usage. They explored the possibility of collaborating with local organizations like the gardening club and youth groups to spread the word. The conversation also touched on the committee's potential to have a budget, which would require approval from the selectboard.

Enhancing Town Engagement Strategies

The Swanzey Governance Committee discussed strategies to increase town engagement, particularly focusing on reaching younger demographics. They explored creating social media content, including a potential video comparing SB2 and town meeting formats, with a small group planning to collaborate on this project. The committee also addressed challenges with managing social media accounts and the need for clear disclaimers when content is not officially town-sponsored. They emphasized the importance of maintaining an informational, rather than promotional, approach in their communications.

Transition to Town Meeting

The committee discussed transitioning from SB2 to a traditional town meeting form of government. They agreed to create a short informational flyer and record a video explaining the differences between the two systems. The group planned to meet on Wednesday to film the video and attend a coffee event. They also considered the possibility of collecting signatures for a petition if the select board does not support the change. The committee decided to skip Monday's meeting and focus on disseminating information about the town meeting proposal to the public.

Next steps

- Ben to talk to Eileen about the committee presenting at the senior coffee meeting on Wednesday at 9 AM at the Swansea Center Church.
- Scott to create a concise one-page flyer about the committee's work, SB2 vs town meeting information, and request for public feedback.
- Ann to cancel Monday's meeting.
- Ann to contact Katie about printing flyers for distribution at town hall.
- Ann to prepare questions for the video recording.
- Eric, Scott, Jessica, and Ann to meet on Wednesday to record an informational video about SB2 vs town meeting. Mike will join us as well.
- Ann to reserve a small room at town hall for the video recording.
- Jessica to research how to create an online poll for public feedback.
- Ben to talk to Christina Apter about presenting to the gardening club. This is a task for Mike not Ben

- Jessica to talk to Ashley about potentially having an informational table at the Trunk or Treat event on the 25th. This is not Jessica's task. Ann can follow up or Mark?