

February 14, 1997

Selectmen
Town of Bow
10 Grandview Road
Bow, NH 03304

RE: Town Government Study Committee

Gentlemen:

On behalf of the Bow Town Government Study Committee, I herewith enclose the Final Report of the Committee and the research materials we analyzed during the study period. The Committee is willing to meet with the Selectmen in the event that the Selectmen feel that such a meeting is necessary. In addition, the Committee would make itself available to meet with any professional consultant the Town may decide to engage for the purposes set forth in the Final Report.

On behalf of the Committee, I'd like to thank you for placing your confidence in us for this important study and hope that we have satisfied our obligation under your charge. It is a terrific Committee which worked very well together and enjoyed serving the Town.

Very truly yours,



Dom S. D'Ambruoso, Chairman
Bow Town Government Study Committee

DSD/ng

Enclosure

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REPORT OF THE BOW TOWN GOVERNMENT STUDY COMMITTEE

I. INTRODUCTION AND BACKGROUND

On September 9, 1996, the Town of Bow, Board of Selectmen invited a group of its citizens to review the present form of municipal government, its characteristics, and potential changes. On September 9, 1996, the Selectmen issued a preliminary charge to the Committee (Attachment A). The Selectmen held a meeting on October 14, 1996 with the members of the Study Committee. After that meeting, the Selectmen issued a revised charge to the Committee and directed them to:

"review the present town manager form of government currently operating in said town and for the purpose of making recommendations regarding modifications and adjustments if any, to that present form of government. The committee shall report its findings to the selectmen by June 1, 1997". (For full text of the October 15th charge to the Committee, see Attachment B).

II. THE COMMITTEE

The Committee held an organizational meeting on September 24, 1996, and held further meetings on October 8th, October 14th, October 21st, December 2nd, January 13, and February 11th, to discuss the charge of the Committee and to conduct the investigation relative to the Committee charge and to issue this final report. All meetings were conducted in accordance with the Right-To-Know-Law, including appropriate notices of all meetings prior to the actual meetings being held.

Initially, the Study Committee was divided into three subcommittees for purposes of conducting interviews and gathering information regarding the present form of town government and whether there was any need to modify or adjust the present form of government. One subcommittee interviewed the following:

The Town Manager
The Administrative Assistant to the Town Manager
Town Clerk/Tax Collector
The Deputy Town Clerk/Tax Collector
Bookkeeper
Treasurer
The Three Current Selectmen
Four Former Selectmen

Another subcommittee interviewed representatives of other towns as follows:

Town Administrator - Town of Hooksett
Town Manager - Town of Raymond
Town Administrator - Town of Goffstown
Town Administrator - Town of Gilford

Another subcommittee interviewed representatives of various town boards as follows:

Chairman of the Zoning Board
Chairman of the Planning Board
Chairman of the School Board
Chairman of the Budget Committee
Fire Chief
Road Agent

The Study Committee also met with John Andrews of the New Hampshire Municipal Association to gather information regarding the different forms of government in the various cities and towns in the State of New Hampshire, and also reviewed numerous statutes and other research materials (Attachment C).

ALL INTERVIEWS WERE CONDUCTED IN STRICT CONFIDENTIALITY.
The findings and recommendations of the Committee are based upon the evidence obtained in the interview and document research process. None of the findings or recommendations will be attributed to any particular individuals who were interviewed.

Pursuant to a duly published public notice, the Study Committee held a public meeting on January 13, 1997, for the express purpose of soliciting public input on the question before the Study Committee. No member of the public appeared to give any testimony.

III. SUMMARY OF FINDINGS

GENERAL COMMENTS:

Bow's town government is not perfect but appears to operate satisfactorily in dealing with the issues of growth and economic development as well as the myriad of other issues which arise. Like any organization, it can learn from prior experience and change where necessary to achieve greater functional efficiency. Based upon all of the evidence obtained in the interview process, after examining certain documentary evidence including State statutory provisions and data gathered from the New Hampshire Municipal Association, the Committee finds that there is no need to change the present form of town government in Bow. However, there could be some improvements made in the way Bow conducts its governmental business. Based upon the interviews and evidence gathered, the Committee finds that:

FINDINGS:

The vast majority of individuals interviewed indicated that the present form and structure of town government (i.e., 3 Selectmen and a Town Manager) was adequate and acceptable for our Town in its present circumstances. The vast majority of individuals interviewed felt that the town manager form of government should be continued, and there was little support for creating a new position of Assistant Town Manager. Any criticism that was heard was directed toward the "execution" of governmental business rather than the structure of the government itself.

IV. RECOMMENDATIONS

The Study Committee recommends that:

- the Town of Bow continue with its present Selectmen/Town Manager form of government (RSA 37),
- the Town of Bow consider improving the manner in which the present form of government now is executed,
- the Town of Bow consider engaging a consultant to work with the present system to achieve greater efficiencies, and
- the Town of Bow subject itself periodically to similar reviews.

Respectfully submitted,

Dated: February 14, 1997

Dom S. D'Ambruoso, Chairman
Beth Titus, Secretary
George Hamilton
Gini Deragon
Bob Fennerty
Susan Hatem
Kevin Stone

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A.

MEMORANDUM

Date: September 9, 1996

Memo to: Town Government Study Committee

From: Town of Bow
Board of Selectmen

Reference: Charge of Committee

Committee Members:

Thank you for accepting the invitation to review our organization. The board of selectmen has assembled, in our opinion, the best group of accomplished citizens to examine the Town of Bow's present form of municipal government, its characteristics and potential changes. We ask the committee to provide our board, by December 31, 1996, with a report of its findings along with recommendations based upon the following objectives:

1. Review appropriate NH State RSA's concerning forms of town government.
2. Review the present Town Manager form of government (RSA 37) with three selectpersons.
3. Examine the present Town Manager form of government (RSA 37) with five selectpersons (RSA 41:8-a-e).
4. Review the present management staffing and suggest changes. (e.g. Town Assessor, Assistant Town Manager, Business Manager, Town CPA, etc.)
5. Investigate Town Council/Town Manager form of government (RSA 49-D)
6. Review the Town of Bow's recent school board progression from three members to five members.
7. Review other NH communities who have made changes in selectperson sizes and/or transitioned to council forms of government.
8. Conduct interviews, if desired, with present and/or former staff and/or selectpersons.

Like all public committees and/or boards, it will be necessary to post meetings at least 24 hours in advance in two public places, prepare minutes and follow the what is commonly known as the "right to know law". (RSA 91-A -- a copy is herewith attached)

Good luck and again we thank you for your participation.

Town of Bow
Board of Selectmen

B.

MEMORANDUM

Date: October 15, 1996

Memo to: Town Government Study Committee

From: Town of Bow
Board of Selectmen

Reference: Charge of Committee

Committee Members:

Pursuant to the discussion at our October 14, 1996 joint meeting, please find the following revised Committee charge:

The Selectmen of the Town of Bow, New Hampshire (the "Selectmen") hereby constitute and appoint the "1996 Town Government Study Committee" (the "Committee") for the purpose of reviewing the present Town Manager form of government currently operating in said Town and for the purpose of making recommendations regarding modifications and adjustments if any, to that present form of government. The Committee shall report its findings to the Selectmen by June 1, 1997.

The above said charge supersedes the previously directed charge of September 9, 1996.

Town of Bow
Board of Selectmen

BOW GOVERNMENT STUDY COMMITTEE

D R A F T - REVISED (27 October, 1996)

Sampling of questions for Selectmen, Town Manager, Staff:

1. How long have you served in this capacity?
2. In an average week, how many hours do you spend on the job?
3. If the workload is seasonably erratic, how so?
4. What is your perception of the Selectmen/Town Manager relationship here in Bow?
5. Are the Selectmen overworked?
6. Is the Town Manager overworked? If so, does he need a full-time assistant?
7. Where do you see bottlenecks occurring?
8. What controls do you use to check progress during the year?
9. Do you favor a structural change in Bow town government?
10. It has been said that sometimes on a three-person Board of Selectmen, one strong personality can dominate Board decisions, thus strengthening the case for a five-person Board. Do you agree and please state your reasons for your position.
11. In connection with question #8, do you feel that a town manager should be able to mitigate such a situation should it develop?
12. Are you familiar with the various types of town government available to New Hampshire communities?
13. Do you interact with county, state or other non-Town officials for assistance? Which?
14. Should Bow continue with its present structure, Board of Selectmen/Town Meeting, or consider a different one, or at least move to a five-person Board?

BOW AD HOC TOWN GOVERNMENT STUDY COMMITTEE