

Town of Harwinton Four-Year Term Taskforce

Minutes: May 12, 2010

Attendance: Chairman Tom Schoenemann, Christina Emery, Andy Kasznay, Judith Pleau, Gary Schaff, Myrna Watanabe and Jon Fauver. Guest: Michael Rybak

1. Call to Order

Tom Schoenemann called the meeting to order at 7:00 PM in the Selectman's Conference Room.

2. Adoption of Agenda

The Committee adopted the agenda.

3. Minutes

Upon motion by Andy Kasznay, seconded by Gary Schaff, the Committee approved the April 14th minutes.

4. Presentation by Michael Rybak

Town Attorney, Michael Rybak, gave a presentation on the history and legal requirements of the Board of Selectmen. The legislature codified the Office of First Selectman in 1869, with the job of "superintending the concerns of the town." Selectmen have a delegated authority, a Town Meeting, with 20 signatures, can override a decision made by the Board.

Under the current State Statute, the following changes are allowed:

1. An ordinance can be changed so that the losing First Selectman candidate cannot stay on the Board of Selectmen.
2. An ordinance can change terms for town officials from two to four years per CGS 9-187(a).

Harwinton's Board must be three members due to its population under 10,000. (CGS 9-188). Of three members, only two can be of the same political party. The First Selectman and other Selectmen must have the same term. A recall provision is not allowed in Connecticut. The only recourse is action by the 3-member Board, or a Town Meeting petitioned by 20 individuals.

The process to change the ordinance would be:

1. Committee makes a recommendation to the Board of Selectmen
2. The Board of Selectmen would vote on creating an ordinance
3. Town Meeting

4. Referendum – Can either be set by the Board of Selectmen or required with 200 signatures.

There is a cutoff date in May on the election calendar for changing terms, offices, etc.

5. General Discussion

The list of issues with rankings by Committee members was distributed and reviewed. The Committee may have an online survey regarding these issues.

Judy Pleau will research other towns that also have populations under 10,000 that have four-year terms.

Jon Fauver requested that we look at the turnout rate among residents; are people more or less transient now?

Myrna Watanabe will continue to look at the experiences of other towns.

6. Future Meetings

The next meeting is scheduled for Wednesday, June 9th at 7 PM. Frank Chiaramonte and Marie Knudsen will be invited to attend to share their experiences as First Selectmen.

7. Public Participation

No one from the public was present.

8. Adjournment

With no further business, the meeting was adjourned at 8:30 PM.

Respectfully Submitted,

Christina Emery
Recording Secretary