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Updated: January , 2017

1. Introduction

Unlike some other offices in colonial America, the office of selectman was not imported from England but evolved here. Early in the history of the Commonwealth, towns had no regularly elected town officials. Town meetings would periodically “select” prominent citizens to perform the business of the town between town meetings. The board of selectmen operates as a collective decision-making body. An individual member of the board may act independently only if specifically authorized by the board. One example of this is the chair, who often acts on behalf of the board on routine matters between meetings (such as setting appointments and scheduling). The chair of the board of selectmen and clerk are chosen by the selectmen themselves for a one-year term at the first meeting following the local election.

2. Selectmen Roles and Responsibilities

Selectmen represent all the citizens of Hamilton. We communicate regularly with our many volunteer boards and committees, solicit new volunteers, listen to and read a large amount of input before deliberating and making decisions in public meetings. We develop an effective working relationship with our Town Manager through meetings, phone calls, development of his/her annual goals as well as meeting with and providing his/her annual review. Our citizens are essentially the legislature of our town, voting at our annual town meeting in the spring and special town meeting in the fall, on warrant articles (e.g., town budget, CPC spending, zoning by laws, etc.). The Selectmen are responsible for policy while the Town Manager is responsible for working with the Board of Selectmen and all elected and



appointed officers, boards and commissions to ensure appropriate coordination in the implementation of town policy. Selectmen review and approve policies based upon best practices review with other similarly sized towns as well as the implications on productivity and cost of our town's services.

2.1. Bylaws

Chapter III of our town's bylaws (see website) authorize the Selectmen to "provide for general direction and management of the Town". We have a Town Manager form of government so the Act (Senate bill 2084, see Town Manager roles and responsibilities below) is critical to being an effective selectman and to form an effective working relationship with the Town Manager. Important bylaw sections include acquisition and sale of property, appointing boards and committees, and the appointment of a Town Manager, who in turn with Selectmen approval, appoints department leaders with the approval of the Selectmen (note: in total, we employ about 70 people). The town also has zoning bylaws to control by authority of the use of land and of the buildings (see website).

2.2. Code of Conduct

Annually the Selectmen review and adopt a code of conduct (see website) requiring us to solicit and listen carefully to all inputs before collectively making decisions to which we all abide and support. Our conduct with the community, Town Manager & staff, as well as each other are guided by our code.

2.3. Open Meeting Law

Each year all Selectmen review the Commonwealth's open meeting law (see State's website), take online training and provide our certifications to the Town Clerk. Key elements include: posting agendas with the Town Clerk at least 48 hours in advance of our meetings; agendas list the topics that the chair reasonably anticipates will be discussed at the meeting be adequate detail to cover the topic under discussion from the public's perspective, not just the perspective of the board; if anyone wishes to audiotape or videotape the meeting, then they may do so, but they must inform the chair and the chair must announce that the meeting is being taped; encourage the Clerk of the Selectmen to prepare minutes and to have our board approve them in a timely fashion; and, not engage in deliberation with a majority of the Board outside of posted meetings, including social and email.

2.4. Liaison Roles and Appointed Board and Committees

Selectmen liaisons (see website) often attends meetings to listen, help answer questions and to help prepare for joint meetings with the BoS and other boards. The role can also help the BoS by communicating information among its members. The liaison role should not be interpreted as the only communication path with the BoS but it is the primary means to help with interaction amongst the Town's boards & committees. Coordination and cooperation is needed among the town's boards, committees and commissions to: set and implement consistently, town wide goals and priorities; Identify and anticipate major problems and then work together towards their resolution; collaborate on long-range planning understanding that long-range capital planning is the authority of the Town Manager; and, work cooperatively toward revenue generation. Liaison roles are updated annually after each election and are assigned by the chairman.



2.5. Town Meetings

The Selectmen help prepare the warrant for town meeting by: calling for warrant articles that may include spending, capital, community preservation (housing, recreation, open space), zoning by laws, and citizen petitions; holding a warrant hearing with the Town Moderator and Finance and Advisory Committee to obtain citizen input on the articles; and, taking a position (e.g., recommend favorable action, recommend unfavorable action) on each article before the town meeting. Since the Selectmen have before town meeting, deliberated and reported a position on each article, if any individual selectman want to speak in opposition to the board’s decision, s/he speaks as an individual from the floor of town meeting.

2.6. Press Relations

Relations with the press are to share public information and public meeting decisions and/or deliberations that may not reach enough voters via public meetings, including those of appointed boards and committee. The goals are to represent the entire town, provide facts and reduce any apprehension and/or miscommunications. Operational and emergency items are primarily discussed by Town Manger while political topics are handled by selectmen, the chairman or someone s/he designates because of a particular expertise.

3. Typical Selectmen Calendar

Many items that need deliberation and decisions have a regular recurring cadence, including financial planning, tax rates, town meetings as well as updates from other boards and committees as well as town departments. The follow example calendar, represented both by topic and by order in the year are many of the regular recurring items:

Items by Date	Example Date	Notes
Board of Selectmen meetings		1st and 3rd Monday's each month
Recreation Department 1st bi-annual report	18-Jan	3rd Monday in January
Budget Development Workshop, annual	23-Jan	3rd Saturday in January
Annual Town (ATM) call for warrant articles	1-Feb	2 months before ATM
Affordable Housing 3rd quarter review	6-Feb	1st Monday in February
DPW 1st bi-annual report	15-Feb	3rd Monday in February
Current Fiscal Year 2nd quarter report	20-Feb	3rd Monday in February, with FinCom
ATM Warrant Hearing	21-Mar	3rd Monday in March
Public Safety Department 1st bi-annual report	21-Mar	3rd Monday in March
Annual Town Meeting	2-Apr	First Saturday in April
Affordable Housing 4th quarter report	4-Apr	1st Monday in April
Current Fiscal Year 3rd quarter report	18-Apr	3rd Monday in April, with FinCom
Council on Aging 1st bi-annual report	18-Apr	3rd Monday in April
Planning Board joint annual goal setting	2-May	1st Monday in May, with PB
School Committee qualitative requests	7-May	1st Saturday in May, with FinCom
Town Manager goals workshop	7-May	1st Saturday in May
Hamilton Development Corporation 1st bi-annual report	16-May	3rd Monday in May



**Board of Selectmen
Handbook and Orientation**

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Items by Date	Example Date	Notes
Recreation Department 2nd bi-annual report	2-Jun	3rd Monday in June
Appoint members to Boards & Committees	6-Jun	1st Monday in June
Patton Homestead BoD 1st bi-annual report	20-Jun	3rd Monday in June
Affordable Housing Trust 1st quarter report	1-Aug	1st Monday in August
Current Fiscal Year 4th quarter report	15-Aug	3rd Monday in August with FinCom
DPW Department 2nd bi-annual report	15-Aug	3rd Monday in August
Call for Special Town Meeting (STM) warrant articles	22-Aug	2 months before STM
School Committee quantitative requests	10-Sep	2nd Saturday in September, with FinCom
3-Year Financial Forecast Workshop	10-Sep	2nd Saturday in September, with FinCom
Annual Town Report (prior fiscal year)	5 Sep	1 st Monday in September
Town Audit report from Auditors	19-Sep	3rd Monday in September
Public Safety Department 2nd bi-annual report	19-Sep	3rd Monday in September
STM Warrant Hearing	3-Oct	1st Monday in October
Affordable Housing Trust 2nd quarter report	3-Oct	1st Monday in October
Special Town Meeting	17-Oct	3rd Monday in October
Senior Tax Exemption review	17-Oct	3rd Monday in October, with Assessors
Current Fiscal Year 1st quarter report	17-Oct	3rd Monday in October, with FinCom
Council on Aging 2nd bi-annual report	17-Oct	3rd Monday in October
Property Classification Hearing	21-Nov	3rd Monday in November, with Assessors
Hamilton Development Corporation annual report	21-Nov	3rd Monday in November
Patton Homestead BoD 2nd bi-annual report	19-Dec	3rd Monday in December
Hamilton Foundation annual report	?	?

Items by type of work	Example Date	Notes
Affordable Housing 3rd quarter review	6-Feb	1st Monday in February
Affordable Housing 4th quarter report	4-Apr	1st Monday in April
Affordable Housing Trust 1st quarter report	1-Aug	1st Monday in August
Affordable Housing Trust 2nd quarter report	3-Oct	1st Monday in October
Annual Town (ATM) call for warrant articles	1-Feb	2 months before ATM
DPW Department 2nd bi-annual report	15-Aug	3rd Monday in August
Recreation Department 1st bi-annual report	18-Jan	3rd Monday in January
Town Audit annual report	19-Sep	3rd Monday in September
3-Year Financial Forecast Workshop	10-Sep	2nd Saturday in September, with FinCom
Annual Town Meeting	2-Apr	First Saturday in April
Appoint members to Boards & Committees	6-Jun	1st Monday in June
ATM Warrant Hearing	21-Mar	3rd Monday in March
Board of Selectmen meetings		1st and 3rd Monday's each month
Budget Development Workshop, annual	23-Jan	3rd Saturday in January
Call for Special Town Meeting (STM) warrant articles	22-Aug	2 months before STM
Council on Aging 1st bi-annual report	18-Apr	3rd Monday in April



Items by type of work	Example Date	Notes
Council on Aging 2nd bi-annual report	17-Oct	3rd Monday in October
Current Fiscal Year 1st quarter report	17-Oct	3rd Monday in October, with FinCom
Current Fiscal Year 2nd quarter report	20-Feb	3rd Monday in February, with FinCom
Current Fiscal Year 3rd quarter report	18-Apr	3rd Monday in April, with FinCom
Current Fiscal Year 4th quarter report	15-Aug	3rd Monday in August with FinCom
DPW 1st bi-annual report	15-Feb	3rd Monday in February
Hamilton Development Corporation 1st bi-annual report	16-May	3rd Monday in May
Hamilton Development Corporation annual report	21-Nov	3rd Monday in November
Hamilton Foundation annual report	?	?
Patton Homestead BoD 1st bi-annual report	20-Jun	3rd Monday in June
Patton Homestead BoD 2nd bi-annual report	19-Dec	3rd Monday in December
Planning Board joint annual goal setting	2-May	1st Monday in May, with PB
Property Classification Hearing	21-Nov	3rd Monday in November, with Assessors
Public Safety Department 1st bi-annual report	21-Mar	3rd Monday in March
Public Safety Department 2nd bi-annual report	19-Sep	3rd Monday in September
Recreation Department 2nd bi-annual report	2-Jun	3rd Monday in June
School Committee qualitative requests	7-May	1st Saturday in May, with FinCom
School Committee quantitative requests	10-Sep	2nd Saturday in September, with FinCom
Senior Tax Exemption review	17-Oct	3rd Monday in October, with Assessors
Special Town Meeting	17-Oct	3rd Monday in October
STM Warrant Hearing	3-Oct	1st Monday in October
Town Manager goals workshop	7-May	1st Saturday in May

4. [Town Manager Roles and Responsibilities](#)

The Senate and House of Representatives in General Court of The Commonwealth of Massachusetts enacted Senate bill 2084 in 2009. The Town Manager, reporting to and accountable to the Board of Selectmen, shall be the chief administrative and operating officer of the town of Hamilton. The town manager shall not set town policy but shall ensure appropriate coordination in the implementation of town policy, working with the Board of Selectmen and all elected and appointed officers, boards and commissions. The Town Manager shall supervise and manage the day-to-day activities of all town departments and employees under the jurisdiction of the Board of Selectmen and shall coordinate their activities with those of all other departments and employees. S/he shall appoint and may remove all department heads and officers, subordinates, and employees under the jurisdiction of the board of selectmen. Appointments and removals of department heads by the town manager shall be subject to confirmation by the board of selectmen. All other appointments shall be made in consultation with the respective department head, board, commission, or committee. S/he shall be appointed by the board of selectmen on the basis of executive and administrative qualifications and experience. The Town Manager shall be a person especially suited by education, training and professional experience to perform the duties of the office. The position of Town Manager is a fulltime commitment and the Town Manager shall not engage in any other business or occupation without the prior approval of the Board of Selectmen. The Town Manager shall be appointed for a term of three or less years, and shall be evaluated annually by the board of selectmen. The board of selectmen shall enter into an



employment contract with the town manager. In addition, the town manager shall be responsible and accountable to the 23 board of selectmen, for the proper execution of the following powers and duties:

- a. implement all policies of the Board of Selectmen, to attend annual and special town meetings and respond to questions concerning all warrant articles, to implement and report progress on implementing actions taken by the town meeting, and to oversee preparation of all town reports including the annual report;
- b. attend meetings of the Board of Selectmen and have the right to address all matters coming before the board, to prepare agendas and research, collect, and disseminate information to enable the Board of Selectmen to make policy decisions, to inform the board of selectmen on implementation of policy decisions through regular reporting, and to inform the Board of Selectmen of important developments in the operation of town departments, fiscal affairs, personnel matters, procurement, and town compliance with federal, state, and local laws, rules, and regulations;
- c. oversee administration and implementation of all town fiscal actions, to oversee all town actions about municipal borrowing, to prepare and present detailed annual and interim operating and capital budgets to the Board of Selectmen, finance committee, and town meeting, to provide 41 regular, current analysis of performance relative to budget, to develop, present, and implement a long-range capital plan;
- d. serve as the town's personnel director, to administer the town's personnel policies, compensation plans, and employee benefit programs, to serve as the town's pension administrator, to serve as the town's coordinator for compliance with the Americans with Disabilities Act, to serve as the town's affirmative action officer, to prepare and implement job descriptions for town department heads and employees, to review personnel performance at least annually and recommend salary and benefit adjustments, to negotiate all collective bargaining agreements on behalf of the town, for which the town manager may seek the assistance of labor counsel as deemed necessary and which final agreement must be approved by the board of selectmen, and to establish compensation agreements for all town employees not subject to a collective bargaining agreement, which final agreement must be approved by the board of selectmen;
- e. serve as the town's chief procurement officer for the purchase and sale of equipment, materials, supplies, and services of all town departments, to supervise and coordinate all town construction projects and activities including design, construction and construction management, to coordinate preparation of information for bidders and proposers and all design and construction documentation, to review bids, award contracts and manage all claims activity, to oversee and report on construction progress and contractual compliance, to review and act upon all bills and payment requests, and to maintain all procurement and construction records;
- f. contract for and administer the town's insurance policies and programs and to file, prosecute, and settle all insurance claims;
- g. manage and oversee maintenance of all town property, real and personal, to act upon all requests for rental and use of town property, and to make recommendations regarding all requests for licenses and permits made to the board of selectmen



- h. coordinate with Town Counsel on all legal matters affecting town government, compliance, claims, litigation and administrative proceedings and to oversee prosecuting, defense, and settlement of all claims and actions;
- i. oversee and coordinate computer operations of town departments to ensure efficiency, economy, and currency, to serve as procurement officer for purchase of hardware and software and maintenance and repair services, to oversee training of personnel, and to implement and oversee maintenance of the town website;
- j. serve as the town's liaison with residents, the media, and the general public, to cultivate and maintain effective relations with the citizens of the town, and to maintain cordial and effective relationships with governmental officials at all levels including those of neighboring towns.

5. Polices

The Selectmen are responsible for policy while the Town Manager is responsible for working with the Board of Selectmen and all elected and appointed officers, boards and commissions to ensure appropriate coordination in the implementation of town policy. Selectmen review and approve polices based upon best practices review with other similarly sized towns as well as the implications on productivity and cost of our town's services. Town polices are published on the town's website and include: Personnel; Board of Selectmen Code of Conduct; Land Acquisition; Citizens Petitions; and, Building Use.

6. Mass Municipal Association Training and Handbook

All selectmen should be members of the MMA's Selectman's Association. Professional networking, training and advice are available from the Selectman's including seminars for budgeting best practices; capital planning; open meeting and public records law, town communications and other topics. The MMA has an extensive website with a member sections for advocacy, resources and events and publishes the Mass Municipal Guide (directory of towns, regional/state/federal agencies, State House/Senate directory) and the Handbook for Massachusetts Selectmen (260 pages covering virtually all aspects of being a selectman).