



TOWN OF ELLINGTON

Ad Hoc Government Study Committee

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Town of Ellington
Board of Selectmen Members
55 Main Street
Ellington, CT 06029

Dear Board of Selectmen Members,

The Ad Hoc Government Study Committee is pleased to provide you with additional details to the previously submitted report.

The Ad Hoc Government Study Committee held their first meeting in June of 2020. The Committee began discussing the recommendations from the 1993 government study and the differences between a Town Manager and a Town Administrator position. They also researched forms of government in the surrounding towns and the job descriptions for their current Town Administrators and Town Managers including contracts and their respective Town's Charter.

The Committee discussed conducting a town survey; however, it was not cost effective.

Michael Purcaro, Town Administrator of Vernon, was the first guest speaker to present to the Committee and provided some insight on the benefits of having a Town Administrator in Ellington. Mr. Purcaro shared that in his experience the Town Administrator position brings coherence and consistency to the Town. In his contracted position he is able to offer his valuable experience, expertise, guidance and advice to assist the First Selectman and Board of Selectmen in decision

making. The community greatly benefits from the guarantee that the day to day expectations and daily operations will not change from elected official to elected official. He also added that a Town Administrator and First Selectman in Ellington's case would work closely as a team in important decisions being made, but the First Selectman would ultimately have the final say on new hires, disciplinary actions and setting budgets. Mr. Purcaro said that having a Town Administrator position allows the elected official more time to focus on the platform they based their campaign on, knowing the Town Administrator is consistently handling the day to day operations to the high level of expectation that tax payers expect. The benefit of adding a Town Administrator is that there is a commitment to the sustainability of the operations regardless of the political party.

Mr. Purcaro addressed citizens' concerns of the Town Administrator entering contracts, signing grants or any other legal documents. He clarified that the position could be allowed to sign these types of documents through the Board of Selectmen and have authority to sign these as delegated by the First Selectman and/or Board of Selectmen. Mr. Purcaro supports that any approvals by the Town Administrator be made by the First Selectman AND the Board of Selectmen, which was very important to the residents in attendance. Mr. Purcaro said the whole point of having a Town Administrator would be to bring some efficiency to the Town's policies and processes.

John Elsesser, Town Manager in Coventry, joined as a guest speaker sharing his experience in his role. He sees the greatest advantage to having a Town Manager form of government is continuity. He stated that the form of government doesn't always guarantee success; it's about the people and it's about the team. His role as Town Manager is to be part of a team and to respect the electoral process. He added that in his experience, some professional staff members such as Finance Directors, Town Planners, Police Chiefs and others chose to only work for non-political people so they aren't involved in the political swings. As Town Manager he is in control of the staffing including hiring, firing and union negotiations, grants, budget preparation for review, as well as the day to day operation of the Town. He also prepares the agendas for the Council Chairman to review and approve, acting as staff to the Council.

Mr. Elsesser has an indefinite contract and the Council can vote to remove him with a five (5) out of seven (7) member vote. He also has a severance package and there is a residency requirement, which he is not in favor of because it can eliminate quality candidates who live elsewhere. Committee members requested information regarding the plan of action if Mr. Elsesser was to leave. He said that the Council will vet his replacement and there are many current employees who would step up in the interim. Mr. Elsesser has been very successful at obtaining grant money. Coventry has no Board of Finance; the Finance Committee of the Council monitors everything including borrowing and the capital improvement plan. He feels that with a good financial system, a Board of Finance complicates things and there is no need to have one.

Michael Rosen, Town Manager of Tolland, accepted the invitation to speak and share what he currently does in his role as Town Manager. Mr. Rosen was asked what he felt was the biggest difference between a Town Administrator form of government and a Town Manager form of government. He replied that it varies by town and their Charter, but generally if you have a Town Administrator you will also have a Chief Elected Officer such as a First Selectman; therefore, the Town Administrator does not have all of the authority, giving power to the other elected officials as well. With a Town Manager there is no Chief Elected Official to work with; they usually don't have a First Selectman to report to but instead report to the majority of their Board. Mr. Rosen added that he as well as other Town Administrators and Town Managers all follow the International City Managers Association (ICMA) Code of Ethics which includes "Thou Shall Not Be a Politician" as a rule.

Mr. Rosen shared that Tolland runs on a Council/Manager form of government with a Town Manager who the Charter delegates specific authorities to, including the hiring, bonding and insurance and financial aspects. The Town Manager reports directly to the Council, in turn having more authority than a Town Administrator would. Tolland does not have a Board of Finance; however, a few members of the Council have a financial background and he works very closely with the Finance Director. In Mr. Rosen's opinion, he feels it would be helpful for any First Selectman to have a consistent and knowledgeable professional who is paid to keep up with trends and be held accountable for their work. He feels that in his experience it is best to leave the duties of grants, hiring and payroll to the hired employee so that the elected official can concentrate on the goals and

priorities they campaigned on, leaving administrative tasks to the hired Manager or Administrator. Mr. Rosen responded to residents' questions regarding who makes decisions for the Town; the Town Manager or the Town Council members. He stated that the Town Charter in each town will dictate exactly what responsibilities the professional has for administrative decisions. He does not bother the Chair with simple issues; however, there are some items that he will consult with leadership or Council if they would like an item on the agenda for discussion.

Mr. Rosen added that a residency requirement is not in the Charter but it does state that each Council member has the right to decide whether the Town Manager needs to be a resident. His contract states that the Council recommends he relocate to Tolland within a reasonable amount of time, noting the Council also has the ability to amend his contract on a yearly basis.

Joshua Kelly, Town Administrator in Bolton, was the final guest speaker. Mr. Kelly has experience working with both forms of government and feels there are pros and cons to each. He, like the other guest speakers, provided informational handouts which were very helpful, including his current job description and a copy of his contract. He stated that the responsibilities of the position will vary depending on the comfort level the Board has with the Town Administrator. A Town Administrator can be rendered somewhat useless if the Board decides they want to act on their own and not assign as many duties and responsibilities to the Town Administrator.

Mr. Kelly stated he is always present at Board meetings and occasionally when there is a special meeting or a sub-committee meeting, he takes the minutes. He is the overall person in the office day to day, acting in the First Selectman's place, comparable to Mr. Rosen's position in Tolland. Mr. Kelly has had experience working in Windsor and said his opinion of a Town Manager is very much like a school Superintendent, where it is not the Board of Education's responsibility to micromanage the day to day operations of the schools; that responsibility falls on the Superintendent. He feels that having a hired position helps to keep the politics out of the decision making, so it's more bipartisan.

Our Committee members asked Mr. Kelly if the position and term in Bolton is full-time, to which he answered that the First Selectman position is currently a part-

time, two year term and he acts on her behalf on a day-to-day basis. His position as Town Administrator started as a one-year contract, moving to a two-year contract that runs with the fiscal year. He also stated that the State Police answer to the First Selectman; if she is not available they answer to him. For reference, Mr. Kelly's current salary is \$110, 000 annually and the First Selectman's part-time salary is roughly \$16,000.

Mr. Kelly noted that when researching the state statutes he found there to be many different responsibilities that fall on the Chief Executive Officer or their designee. Mr. Kelly is responsible for purchasing decisions, making recommendations and sending out bids. The Board will direct him to go out and bid, handle union negotiations and participate in salary surveys, as well as present the findings to the Board and set up Town Meetings to potentially approve contracts. In his opinion, there is nothing preventing Ellington from creating a position description to specifically fit the needs of the Town.

Mr. Kelly also added that there were no restrictions when he took the position in regard to residency. He would love to live in the community in which he works; however, he can also see how others feel like this is a place of work and some individuals would like to keep things professional and separate. He believes there is some merit either way.

The members found each of the presentations interesting, insightful, educational and helpful in determining what would best work in Ellington. As the guest speakers commenced the Committee gathered separate lists of advantages to having a Town Manager and advantages to having a Town Administrator.

Advantages to having a Town Manager:

- Consistency of Government – a non-political position. This individual will maintain the day-to-day operations during transitions of Board and Commissions.
- Professionally trained in Government Administration and will provide leadership to town government.
- Manages strategic short and long-term planning and development for the Town.
- Specific knowledge of state labor laws and grant writing.

- Provides administrative direction to all department heads in accordance with established town policies and procedures and state statutes.
- Less money to be spent on consultants and attorneys.
- Prepares annual budget and oversees Capital Improvement projects.
- Professionally trained in Human Resources administration, compensation and wage analysis, benefits, employee relations, labor relations, organizational and employee development as well as employee recruitment.

Advantages to having a Town Administrator:

- Consistency of Government – a non-political position. This individual will maintain the day-to-day operations during transitions of First Selectman/Elected Officials
- Less change to current form of government. All boards and commissions remain active as established by the Town Charter.
- Professionally trained in Government Administration and will provide leadership to town government.
- Manages strategic short and long-term planning and development for the Town.
- Specific knowledge of state labor laws and grant writing.
- Provides administrative direction to all department heads in accordance with established town policies and procedures and state statutes.
- Assists the First Selectman in managing the affairs of the Town.
- Less money spent on consultants and attorneys.
- Coordinates program information and data to assist the First Selectman in the review and preparation of the annual budget and capital improvement program recommendations.
- Professionally trained in Human Resources administration, compensation and wage analysis, benefits, employee relations, labor relations, organizational and employee development as well as employee recruitment.

As previously reported, the Committee agrees that it is time to add a Town Administrator to the Town's current highly capable management team, while continuing the current form of government. The First Selectman position, elected

by the people of Ellington, would remain the person in authority, as a part-time position. The Town Administrator would hold a bachelor's degree in public administration or equivalent and would assume responsibility for the efficient administration of the Town, under the supervision of the First Selectman, and the Board of Selectmen, who would continue to retain statutory authority.

Ellington has grown and the duties, the complexities, and the responsibilities of running the Town, including local, state and federal requirements, have increased tremendously. The First Selectman, as well as the Selectmen, are called upon often to make many very important decisions as they manage the affairs of the Town.

A Town Administrator would, first and foremost, add consistency and stability to the Town's top office. The office of the First Selectman and the Selectmen have the potential to change every two years, with each municipal election. It takes a new First Selectman time to get acclimated to the duties and responsibilities and in no time, the term is up for re-election. Having a position in place that is not subject to the election process provides the Town, the Town's management team and the staff members with a steadiness that cannot be offered through the ever-changing elected official process.

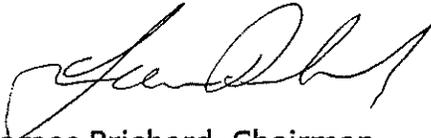
A Town Administrator would be responsible for providing administrative direction and would act as a resource to all department heads, oversee the daily operations and services of the Town and ensure that processes and procedures run efficiently and effectively.

In addition the Committee found that it would be beneficial to have a Town Administrator in place with experience in specific areas such as grant research and preparation, risk management, public communication, Human Resources management including recruitment, labor relations, as well as other general government functions of the Town.

This position would also allow for the Town to maintain its excellent history of short term and long-range strategic planning of Town services and development. Additionally, this position would participate in and work along with the Finance Officer/Treasurer with the preparation of the general budget, Capital Improvements budgets and debt services budget.

The Ad Hoc Government Study Committee highly recommends to the Board of Selectmen their consideration of hiring a full-time Town Administrator, as well as transition the First Selectman's elected official position to a part-time position.

Respectfully Submitted,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'James Prichard', written in a cursive style.

James Prichard, Chairman
Ad Hoc Government Study Committee