

Minutes
Culture, History and Governance (CHuG)
Sub-Committee
April 30, 2008

Present: Susan Brooks, Paul Giese, Mark Hochman, Karen Keane, Harriet Todd, Peter Sugar

We discussed the following:

- We briefly reviewed the SC meeting of yesterday:
 - There will be no public meeting in June – rather there may be one next September, before the SoTT meeting in November. We may publicize what we have been working on by posting our working papers on the web, writing a newspaper article, etc. The September meeting will be held to encourage feed-back prior to November.
 - Survey: there is now a small team in place to help Mark: Alaric Naiman, Chris Hamilton and Phyllis Mutschler. It is hoped to have the survey report complete by 17 June, to be presented to the SC and then to the Selectmen thereafter.
 - The Garden Club had written an interesting paper on an approach to the roadsides along our Scenic roads – which will be distributed to all.
- We then started our discussion on the goals as enumerated by Jack: 1. Identify actions for implementation that can make Lincoln's Town Meeting format inviting to the maximum number of citizens. We looked at a number of points/hypotheses:
 - TM attendance was 450-600 in the 90's, in the low 300's in 2005-6, near 250 in '07-08.
 - It would be interesting to compare statistics with surrounding towns (we are still waiting for some of the data from Tim and Susan B). Is the falling attendance part of a larger regional phenomenon? What can we learn from the comparisons? What are the demographics of the other towns?
 - Attendance may be influenced by subject matter: if controversial, attendance is up, if not, it is down
 - Attendance may be a group culture for some
 - Would attendance rise if TM was quicker/more efficient?
 - Are the issues/warrant articles advertised well enough?
 - Should there be summaries explaining the pros and cons of the warrant articles to inform the public and thus make them better equipped for a vote? Being user friendly?
 - A quicker, less time-consuming TM may be counterproductive: the idea is to discuss: interaction is important
 - Attendance may be influenced by the presentation: boring, the issues being discussed and the changing demographics of the town
 - Another influencing factor may be that in many families, both adults work and thus Saturday is more for the children (and thus not TM)
 - Some - mostly the 'old-timers' go because they are used to it.
 - Is the town more transient? Do the newcomers realize that town meeting is a form of governance and not just a meeting?
 - Who attends and who does not: the 'mean' of age groups? length of residence?
 - Survey respondents: what is the number distribution by various age-groups? Which/how many of these did/did not respond?
 - Reasons for non-attendance?
 - Would we do better if more items were on the consent calendar?
 - Do people subscribe to the idea that attendance is a civic duty? Is this felt by those still working? Or retired?
 - How to keep up with issues and thus have TM mean more?
 - What is the income profile of the attendees – which of these are more likely to come, and which less so?

- Mark will look at/tabulate these questions and attempt to respond based on data from the survey (critical to exclude Hanscom!)
- Next week's discussion will look at goals 7 and 2 in Jack's paper

Next meeting: We will meet on Wednesday, 5/7 at 7:30 AM at the Library (Note: Judi will come to our meeting on 14 May and not next week - it will not be a presentation: rather a discussion of the 'do nothing' scenario)