

Minutes  
Culture, History and Governance (CHuG)  
Sub-Committee  
July 14, 2008

Present:

BOS: Sara Mattes, Sarah Canon-Holden, Gary Taylor, Deborah Parkhurst (staff)

CHuG: Paul Giese, Mark Hochman, Jack MacLean, Karen Keane, Bill Stason, Harriet Todd, Peter Sugar

The meeting was a continuation of an earlier meeting with the BOS (3/26/08). We discussed the following:

- Introduction: CHuG reiterated its current goals. We also reviewed progress on the Governance paper (first draft has been returned to COG with comments – note: request the COG footnote its sources for some of their assertions). We spoke of our intended work-plan going forward (interviewing selectmen from some of the surrounding towns, setting up focus groups in September, moving onto our final paper and then SoTT).
- We discussed the fact that attendance at TM is down. It is understood that this is an on-going problem. There is also the perception that decision making is carried out by a ‘clique’ of insiders
- There is the possibility that old and new residents perceive the Town in different terms. For some it is beyond their current capability to participate
- There is a need to look for people and get them involved in town affairs
- There is the possibility – in some people’s eyes – that TM may disappear. We need to ensure that people realize the significance of TM and the role it plays in Lincoln. We cannot just ignore the attendance issue
- We/the people need the opportunity for interaction. One of the problems is that institutions which helped in bringing the issues in front of the citizenry no longer exist (e.g. the LWV). Thus there is no strategy to address the problem
- We discussed communication: which is now conducted differently. Blogs are one of the current tools – but again, these need to be established and properly funded. At this time there is only one person at town hall overseeing electronics!
- Blogs should not be town sponsored, they should be well mannered and there probably ought to be a moderator to ensure that this happens.
- BOS is looking to CHuG for some good recommendations
- Note that SoTT grew out of the earlier Governance Committee recommendations - it became a kind of ‘one-stop shopping’ opportunity – but the question needs to be asked as to whether it encourages citizen participation in the discussion
- SoTT is a better forum for discussion than TM, which has its constraints due to the (legal) way it has to be run
- Volunteers are more difficult to find due to time commitments which have become more onerous. The board survey seems to bear out some of this though the findings are by no means absolutely clear
- Are we able to spread the burden, by having more people take on the responsibility?
- We spoke of the desirability of having a Volunteer Bank. In our final report we need to lay out the mechanism as to how to put this into operation
- SoTT could be utilized to lay out a road map for the town - for the year, and for the long term. It then could serve to get the town’s feed-back. Again the question: is this the right way for SoTT? If not, then what?
- We need to find a way for building relationships with the citizens in order for them to show up. Further, how to engage their interest, once we get them into the room?
- BOS expressed a strong interest in getting CHuG’s ideas on this matter.
- Efficiency is not the issue: if it were, we could get this done through an executive, but there has to be a broader perspective
- Is there any data from past TM’s as to attendance and its relationship to the issues which were discussed at the time? (It probably exists, but no one has compiled it!)
- What are the issues which should be brought to TM to encourage people’s attendance

- The role of the Moderator ought to be enhanced – he/she could attend other boards' meetings and talk to the issues for the TM agenda; also to educate the citizens to what Lincoln stands for – there was a booklet about this in the past and it ought to be resuscitated
- The Moderator could also assist in the drive for volunteers, by attending meetings of boards which are televised and putting out an appeal to the public
- It was agreed that to get people to step up to the larger boards, they have to be asked. This may also be done through current members looking for their potential successors
- Finally we all agreed that the implementation of the Master Plan will need a strong follow-up