

Final Report and Recommendation of the Ad Hoc Government Study Committee

North Attleborough, Massachusetts

May 21, 2000

1.0 Introduction

The Ad Hoc Government Study Committee was formed in July 1998 as a result of the April 1998 town election when a majority of the voters of North Attleborough requested a committee to study possible changes in town government. As a result the Board of Selectman created a nine-person committee. Upon appointment we were given the following mission statement:

"To study and assess the municipality's present form of government, manner of operations and organizational structure. The committee will develop, and conduct a survey of local residents to access the views and concerns of the residents and evaluate the results. The committee will also collect information regarding other forms of local government currently in use. The committee will provide periodic progress reports and submit a final written report and recommendations to the board of Selectman within a time period established by the Board of Selectman."

The reality that we as residents must face, is that the Town of North Attleborough has made significant changes since our existing RTM form of government was implemented twenty eight years ago. The town is now growing commercially and residentially at a record rate. Our town budget has inflated to approximately one million dollars per week. Our schools are being filled as fast as we can build them. The Town of North Attleborough now employs over 1,000 people making our town government the largest employer in North Attleborough. However, there is no one person in charge. Our town executives, the Board of Selectman, have no authority over the Board of Public Works, Planning Board, Board of Health, Board of Assessors, Town Treasurer, Town Clerk / Tax Collector, Park Commission, Library, or Housing Authority. We feel in order to achieve efficiency and accountability, a structured chain of command must be implemented.

Therefore we determined that there are two basic ideals that are the backbone of an efficient town. These ideals are ACCOUNTABILITY and FISCAL RESPONSIBILITY.

The following discussion will describe in detail, the steps that we took to arrive at our recommendation that the town's government structure be reorganized. The Government Study Committee is aware that the changes we are recommending are not minor. We also realize that if the town remains frozen in time while changes continue to occur all around us, we will quickly fall behind and become obsolete. By accepting the recommendations of the Government Study Committee, we believe the town will run much more efficiently and there will be accountability at every level. It will be very clear where the responsibilities of different boards and departments start and end.

2.0 Existing Government Structure

Our current style of government (See Figures 1 and 2) is comprised of a Board of Selectman (BOS - Executive Branch) and Representative Town Meeting or RTM (Legislative Branch). The Board of Selectmen has a Town Administrator (who reports to the BOS) and oversees the daily activities of the Town. The Legislative Branch has limited legislative power and only meets two to four times per year.

With the town having a budget of over \$1,000,000 per week, our current form of government has outgrown itself. There needs to be a more responsive form of government with centralization and accountability.

With this in mind, one of the committee's foremost goals was to establish a system of checks and balances. In fact, currently RTM is made up partially of selectmen, elected officials, teachers, firemen, and other town employees. Under the current system, these people can vote on issues directly related to their boards or positions. This is not illegal, but it is a weakness. There are no checks and balances.

3.0 Massachusetts Town Charter Reviews

One of our first tasks was to determine what was being done among other Massachusetts cities and towns. We chose several cities and towns, similar in both size and budget to our own, and divided them amongst the group. Each member was tasked to obtain certain town's (or city's) charter as well as other information (particularly expenditures and annual reports). These towns included Agawam, Amesbury, Barnstable, Chelmsford, Dedham, Franklin, Methuen, Southbridge, Watertown, Weymouth and others. The scope of towns included all facets of government, from Open Town Meeting/Board of Selectmen to a Mayor / City Council (see Table 1).

Each member researched and evaluated their town (or city) and over the next several weeks we evaluated each town's financial and organizational information and discussed the advantages and disadvantages of each. This discussion merged into Section 5.0 below, where it is discussed in more detail.

4.0 Survey

As part of our mission from you, the Board of Selectmen, we were charged with conducting a survey of town residents to access their views and concerns. The questionnaire that we developed (Attachment 1) included questions on which positions should be elected versus appointed and whether any should be eliminated. It also asked opinions on whether we should maintain the existing form of government or change to another style. There was even a comment section where residents offered suggestions as to how the government should be changed, if at all.

Our mission statement included circulating a survey to all of the residents. In December 1998, the Government Study Committee formulated a survey to be sent to all residents in North Attleborough. By February we had completed our final draft of the survey, a two-sided self-addressed insert in the Free Press. The survey was developed to give the residents a chance to voice their opinion on how our government should be structured. On March 8 we met before the Board of Selectman requesting \$2,000 to enable us to send our surveys to the residents. The Board of Selectman transferred \$2,000 from the Lyons fund to pay for the surveys. The cost breakdown was \$640.00 to print 16,000 surveys, \$785.00 for a full-page advertisement in the Free Press (explaining the survey and showing organizational charts) and \$458.00 for inserting 15,560 surveys. The total money spent was \$1,883.00. The surveys were delivered to the residents as an insert in the Free Press on March 31, 1999. On March 27 members of the Government Study Committee appeared on the channel 27 cable TV show "Light on the Community" to discuss the survey and urge residents to voice their opinions. We also appeared on cable TV's "Hart and Duggan Live" on March 31 to answer any questions the residents might have.

In spite of all of our efforts on April 15 when all of the surveys were due we had received 386 returns. This is less than a 4% return. In other words, we did not receive the opinions of approximately 96% of the residents of North Attleborough. Attached you will find a copy of the survey results Table 2.

The National Municipal League suggests that government study committees/charter commissions not conduct surveys, particularly opinion polls, as they are inconclusive. The League further suggests that more effort be placed into research. As has been discussed previously, we did both a survey and research.

5.0 Interviews

All of our sessions have been open to the public and to the media. We have tried, to the best of our ability, to keep everyone informed of our decisions on a regular basis. As such, the following outlines some of the discussions we have had with various people.

Our first of many guests to appear at a committee meeting was Bruce Babcock, former member of the BPW and was employed full time for the Town of Franklin as their Engineer. His insight into both government forms provided the need for a clear organizational chart and how his position saves considerable sums over the course of several years for capital planning projects.

On October 6, 1998 Jay Moynihan provided insight into the current government form and stressed the need for better communication between the various elected boards and the school administration. On November 19, 1998 we met with Clerk/Tax Collector William Moffitt as he discussed with us the need for a Financial Director, combining the Clerk and Elections/Census departments, and combining all monetary collections into one area (taxes/fees/fines/water/sewer/trash, etc). In December 1998, HR Director Mark Williamson met and discussed the current HR situation and the need for centralization of hiring and performance reviews of all town employees.

In January 1999, Henry McDeed (BOS Chairman at the time) provided insight from his years in the School Department, School Committee and Board of Selectmen. He indicated the School department is autonomous and did not see how anything could be done about that in light of the Education Reform Act. In general, he felt the Town was running well, but indicated the need for cohesion between departments, he recommended a scaled down RTM and centralization of the financial departments. On January 28, 1999, Tony Calcia was present and provided background with Parks and Recreation as well as his experience on the School Committee and RTM. He also stressed the need for financial accountability and cohesion between departments.

On June 22, 1999, Tom Simms (BOS) advised us that, in general, those boards, which are appointed, have better communication with the Selectmen than those, which are elected. He felt the town would be better served if the following was implemented: a Town Engineer, taxes and fees collected in one central location, placing one member of the Selectmen on the School Committee, a full time building committee and, internal consolidation of departments and personnel. Ray Stack of the BPW met with us on July 2, 1999 and advised of the problems with the prior elected charter commission in which many members could not agree on the issues and ended up writing against acceptance of the proposed changes. He felt the need for a Mayor and Town Council form, disbanding the RTM, appointed boards versus elected ones, and better accountability and centralization.

On August 26, 1999 Mark Fisher (BOS) came to the meeting and advised of problems with various elected boards, lack of communication between same, "turf" battles between boards and noted that one Board had initiated litigation -lawsuit - against another town board. He noted that most, if not all, department heads are professionals working full time but the elected board members are part-time seats not necessarily filled with profession backgrounds. He noted the need for a Financial Director/Department, eliminating the Personnel Board (now that we have a full time HR Director), the need for a Facilities Department, merging Elections with the Clerk's office, having one central location for paying all taxes/bills/fees. He felt we should look for reform from a citizen's and business point of view.

On October 13, 1999 Marilyn Contreas of the Commonwealth of Massachusetts' Department of Communities and Housing met and gave us insight as to the forms of government allowed under Mass General Laws. She advised further that to abolish certain boards, such as the BPW, a charter would be required and submitted to the legislature. She advised that if a Mayor-Council form is our recommendation, it should be "date-positive" rather than a "phase in" method. She noted the law or libraries must have trustees, divisible by 3, but the mayor can appoint them. In addition any board or commission can be eliminated provided that their function is performed by someone else as prescribed by Massachusetts General Laws.

We have met many times with the residents of the town in open public forums and have listened to their needs for reform. We have also listened to the insights provided by John Burke of the By-Law Study Committee; Charles Legg, who is a long time member of the RTM; Debbie Kohl, current Chairperson of the Finance Committee; Ray Payson, current Finance Committee member and former Director of Public Works; Brian Geoghegan, who is on the School Committee; and various other members of the RTM and the public.

5.0 Discussion/Evaluation of Options

Maintain Existing Government Structure

As was discussed in Sections 1.0 and 2.0, the Board of Selectman/Representative Town Meeting is no longer adequate for North Attleborough. Therefore, we need change. For one, the voters requested it (from which this committee was formed). Second, the survey, although inconclusive, indicated that some change is necessary. Third, there is no one person in charge and no system of checks and balances.

The committee at first discussed making small changes (we also reviewed the previous charter) such as paying all bills in one location and reducing of the size of the RTM. We also talked about implementing many small changes over a period of time to ultimately achieve our goals. However, it was determined that this will not work, as it does not solve the problem at hand, accountability and fiscal responsibility. It would only be a "Band-Aid" and not a permanent solution. Our existing form is too decentralized and uncoordinated (the "picket fence syndrome"). Therefore, we narrowed down the options to two, Town Manager/Town Council and Mayor/Town Council.

In addition, there are problems with the legislative form. For one they only meet a few times a year, at each of the Annual Town Meeting, semi-annual town meetings and at special town meetings. Even then it is difficult to get all members to show up. Do you realize that of the 126 members, the average attendance is 92 members (73%)? With this only 47 members (37%) is needed for a majority vote (with a true majority being 64). Not only that but conflicts of interest are prevalent.

Although once adequate, this is no longer enough to maintain fiscal responsibility in a town our current size and budget. There needs to be more frequent meetings. Town expenditures and other decisions cannot be discussed only three to four times a year.

Town Manager/Town Council

This form would essentially combine both legislative and executive branches of government. The RTM would be eliminated and the Town Council would appoint the Town Manager. With a manager running the town, you do not have a system of checks and balances because there is essentially only one branch of government. This is representative of what we would have now if RTM were to be eliminated. In addition this is also a city-form of government, where the manager is hired and fired by the council; therefore, the manager's primary allegiance is to the council, additionally a town manager is not required to be a resident of the town. Again, there would be no checks and balances.

Mayor/Town Council

This form separates the executive branch (mayor) from the legislative (town council). There is a system of checks and balances in that what the mayor proposes financially is subject to the approval of the council. Most importantly, there is only one person in charge of the executive branch. If the voters are unhappy, the mayor may not be re-elected. With the Town Manager/Town Council system there are no checks and balances as the town manager reports directly to the town council and is not likely to be objective to any council actions.

With this in mind, the Committee held several open public forums throughout town. The discussions focused on the latter two options. In other words, people in this town have indicated that they want change. After these discussions, most people agreed that our recommendations are what is needed in town.

The most common distinction made concerning the position of mayor is "strong" or "weak". A weak mayor consists of a mayor with an: elected town council with committees delving into details of town's administration, and which has the approval over most appointments; separately elected department heads; administrative boards elected or appointed for overlapping terms. This form lends itself to political manipulation, does not successfully provide for competent department heads (or other personnel), lacks a unifying responsible single executive head and authority.

The strong mayor form has been more successful than the weak mayor form. A strong mayor has the authority to hire and fire most department heads, may veto council actions (an override of the mayor's veto requires more than a simple majority vote), prepare and submit a budget for council action, and administer the budget after its adoption.

The council's job is legislation and policymaking, the mayor's job is administration and leadership, through the power to recommend measures and to veto council actions. As such, our proposed new government will incorporate the strong mayor form.

6.0 Selection of Government Structure

Consequently, the Committee voted unanimously to recommend replacing our existing form of government with the Mayor/Town Council form (see Figure 3). We considered changing the government through minor changes as discussed above. However, minor changes would not address the actual problem. As a result of the towns increase population and budget; we need accountability and fiscal responsibility more than ever. Therefore, we decided to recommend changing the structure of the existing form of government. Although we will have the accountability and fiscal responsibility of a Mayor/Town Council, we will remain a Town.

The proposed form will consist of a Mayor who appoints and is responsible for several Departments (see Section 7.0). There is a Town Council, which is the Legislative Branch. This form of government will allow financial decisions to be made more frequently than our current form (RTM).

Our proposal elects four district councilors and five at-large councilors. This representation ensures that all geographic areas of the town are represented and that the town as a whole would have a controlling voice. A voter would not only choose their district councilor, but five at-large councilors, giving each voter the power to elect six of the nine councilors.

The Town Council will be comprised of a President, Vice-President and Clerk. The Council will also appoint a Town Auditor who will provide the audit function for the Council. This is separate from an outside audit to be conducted annually by the Town. Within the Town Counsel there will be the Finance Committee.

There will continue to be a Board of Electric Commissioners, as this Board has not had any historic problems with respect to our goals.

7.0 Departmental Reorganization

Changes that are proposed on the attached Figure 3 are our recommendations based on our research and discussion (Table 3 indicates what boards/commissions should be eliminated). This has not been included in our Draft Special Act Charter. The reason for this is that our proposal should not be too detailed (as recommended by Marilyn Contreas Senior Program and Policy Analyst for the Commonwealth of Mass and from Attorney Michael Curran, who has represented over 50 city and town charters). To make any changes would involve a similar process as we are currently going through to change the existing form. It is recommended that the new mayor and town council take our recommendations and incorporate them through ordinance.

School Committee

One board that has become autonomous in recent years is the school committee. Even with the Education Reform Act, the school committee comprises the largest budget within the town's budget. As such, there needs to be more coordination between the committee and town officials. In other words, there should be complete communication and mutual understanding relative to financial matters. As such, we have proposed that the newly elected mayor be a voting member of the school committee.

Finance Department

The Committee feels that if the town is going to improve, there needs to be a strong financial base and a strong plan for the future. Our proposed structure consolidates the town's financial responsibilities by establishing a Department of Finance reporting directly to the Mayor. This consolidates and coordinates the town treasurer, accountant, tax collector, and assessors. It also provides for a Chief Procurement Officer.

8.0 Implementation

Special Act Charter

As you already know, our committee has decided that the best time for these changes to be put forth to the voters is in November of this year. The reasoning behind this is that this is a Presidential Election year, which historically has the largest voter turnout.

This being the case, we anticipated submitting our Special Act Charter to you by the end of April (which we have already done). Upon your review, we would then request that a Special Town Meeting be called for the middle of June 2000 to ask Representative Town Meeting (RTM) to put a binding question on the ballot in November. This ballot question would determine whether or not the Voters of North Attleborough choose to change the existing form of government to a Mayor/Town Council form. If this is approved by RTM, we would then petition the Massachusetts Legislature to approve our Draft Special Act Charter and allow it to be put on the November Ballot.

To keep all options open, we decided to put forth an article for the June 5 Special Town Meeting (STM) as the committee does not feel that there would be a great turnout for a second STM in June, additionally the time frame for the committee to either get an article for the June 5 STM or another STM in June was quickly diminishing.

Government Transition

Upon voter acceptance of the referendum to change from the current form of government to a Mayor – Town Council, there will be a period of time between the November election and the Annual Town Meeting (April 2001) in which those persons interested in running for the office of the Mayor and Town Council will need to obtain nomination papers and submit them to the Election Dept. The mayor and Town Council will be elected in the April town election and will take office on July 1, 2001.

Additionally, during this interim period, the regular business of the town will be administered by the Board of Selectmen, Town Administrator elected boards and departments, Finance Committee as usual. It will be incumbent on the financial “team” to begin preparations for a smooth transition both politically and in terms of the budget. The RTM will convene as usual for the Annual Town Meeting and will conduct its normal legislative business knowing that the new government structure will take place on July 1, 2001. At the Annual Town Meeting the members of the RTM will be aware of the new mayor and Town Council members elected during the first week of April. If needed, the town will hold a Special Town Meeting in early June to complete the transition process and budget. As of July 1, 2001 the Mayor and Town Council will be sworn in by the Town Clerk (or local magistrate) and will begin the business of organizing and administering the Town of North Attleborough.

9.0 Economic Impact

As you can see from Table 4, the transitional cost from the existing to proposed form of government is relatively equal. Personnel within existing departments may be reorganized under the proposed departments. Some boards/commissions that are now eliminated (e.g., Board of Public Works) carried a small stipend that is insignificant relative the overall structure.

The four positions that are now under contract (Town Administrator, Fire Chief, Police Chief, Director of Public Works) are expected to be rolled over into the proposed structure. If the newly elected mayor decides to eliminate or replace one or more of these positions, then the town would have to buy out those contracts. However, this is a worst-case scenario and is not expected to occur.

Four new departments would be created: the Department of Planning and Community Development, the Inspection Department, Municipal Services Department, and Finance Department. Of these, the Mayor would head up the Municipal Services Department. The remaining three would have new directors. However, these departments are likely to be filled by personnel within the existing government (Planning – Town Planner, Inspection – Building Inspector, Finance – Treasurer).

We have also considered unions and collective bargaining agreements (CBAs). This will not be a problem as re-organization of town government supercedes CBAs.

No union job will be affected, as our proposed government restructuring is more of centralization. In other words, personnel may end up reporting to a different supervisor in another department but their job classification will not change.

In regards to the financial impact of transitional government, the newly elected mayor and town council will be paid from April to June (25% of their proposed annual salary) as they work with the existing form of government during the transition. This is a one-time cost.

11.0 Conclusions

Our proposed Draft Special Act Charter will make local government more responsive to the needs of its citizens in the following manner:

- Quicker response to citizens' petitions to the Town Council and School Committee.
- Easier implementation of further change by citizens via initiative measures.
- One-stop shopping for all permits and licenses.
- Quicker action on proposed new budget by the Mayor and Town Council.
- Management Audits of all town departments strictly enforced.
- Easier to reward or penalize officials and employees who are performing above or below standard.

We have proposed a more efficient government by streamlining the organization of our town, there will only be ten major departments reporting directly to the Mayor:

1. Finance Department
2. Human Resources Department
3. Department of Inspectional Services
4. Department of Public Works
9. Police Services
6. Fire Services
7. Department of Planning & Community Development
8. Department of Legal Services
9. Department of Municipal Services
10. Department of Parks and Recreation

The members of our committee believe our town will benefit from the suggested further consolidations of functions. We believe that programs and services can be delivered to voters and taxpayers more efficiently and economically as a result of the consolidation of town agencies and functions we are proposing.

We believe that we have been scrupulous in our efforts to insure that our proposed new system has built in checks and balances between the Executive and Legislative branches of our government. We want our Mayor to be strong enough to govern effectively, but not so powerful that the Executive Branch dominates the power structure.

In order to be effective, the Town Council should be responsible for the auditing function of town government. The Council needs a Finance Committee to carry out those responsibilities, to also monitor legislative enactments and to carefully scrutinize the financial essence of our local government--the budget. Our budget is approximately \$52 Million and climbing. If the Town Council is going to play a cogent role in the budgetary process, it needs a Finance Committee, which can save the taxpayers of our town from costly, unnecessary expenditures.

Summary

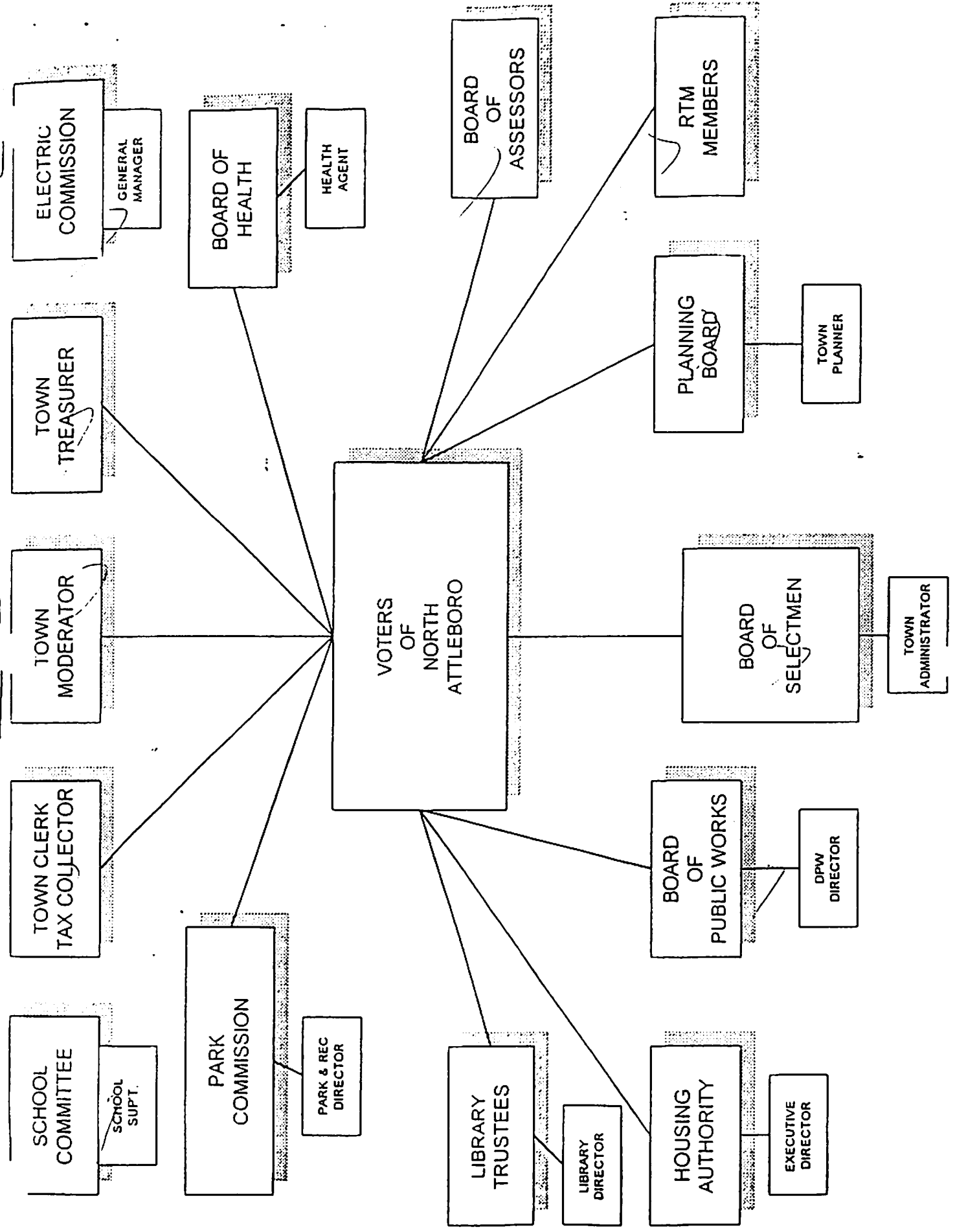
The Draft Special Act Charter that the Ad Hoc Government Study Committee is proposing for adoption is the combined product of many hours of thoughtful labor by the nine people who were appointed by the Board of Selectmen. We also owe a debt of gratitude to Leonard Pierce, who, as past Chairman, put in a great deal of effort into the final product and, due to prior commitments could not remain on the committee to the end. We have not been compensated for our efforts, beyond the satisfaction we receive from helping our community to prosper. We ask for your sincere and deliberate attention to our Special Act Charter. We are very proud of the document we are submitting for the Special Town Meeting. Please read it carefully. The future of our town is in all of our hands.

Respectfully,

Mark C. Roberts, Chairman
Donald Baker, Vice Chairman
James Wood, Secretary
Richard Chamberlain
John Donahue
Christopher Martin
Bruce McCaffrey

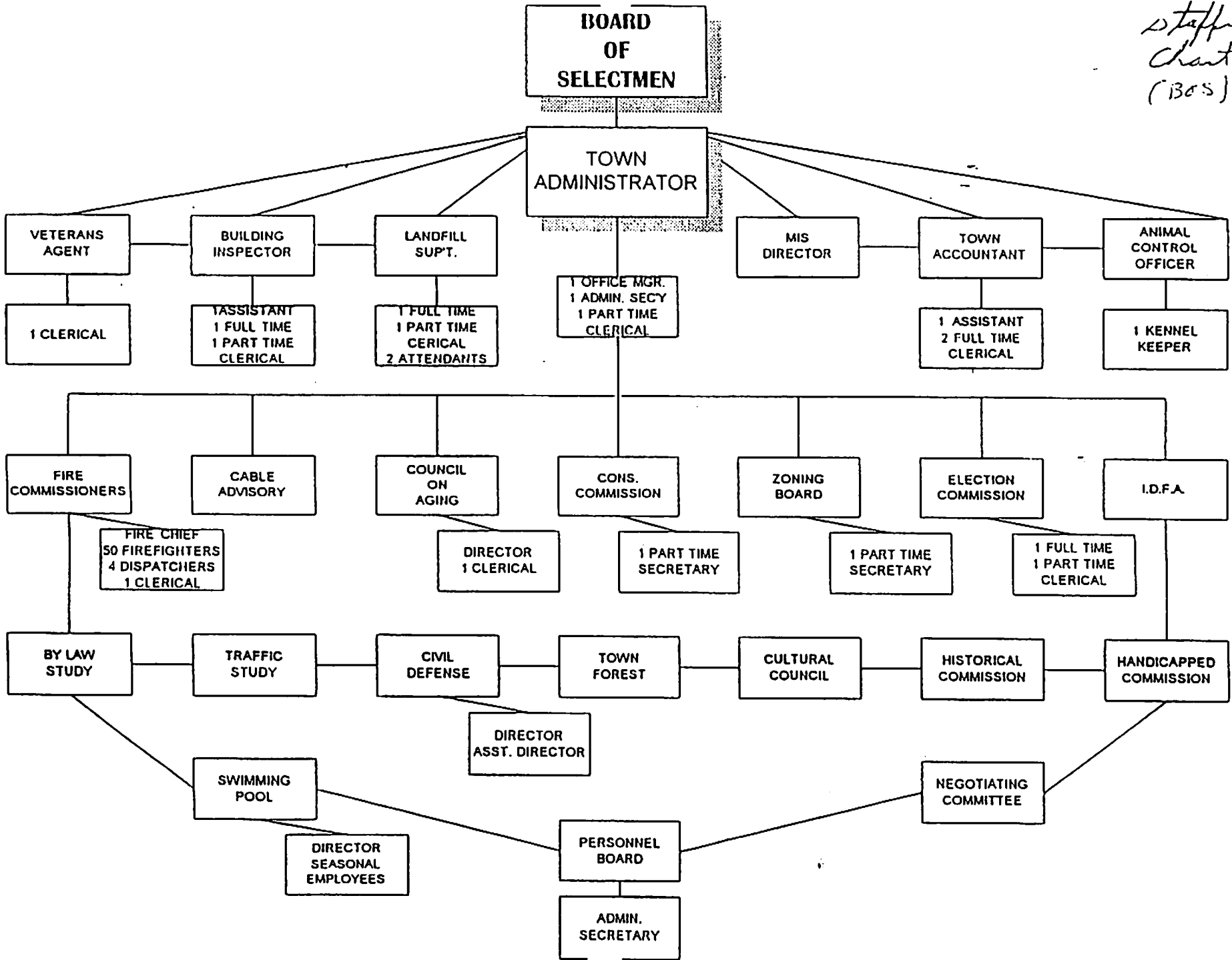
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Ad Hoc Government Study Committee Recommendations

North Attleborough Mass

May 22, 2000

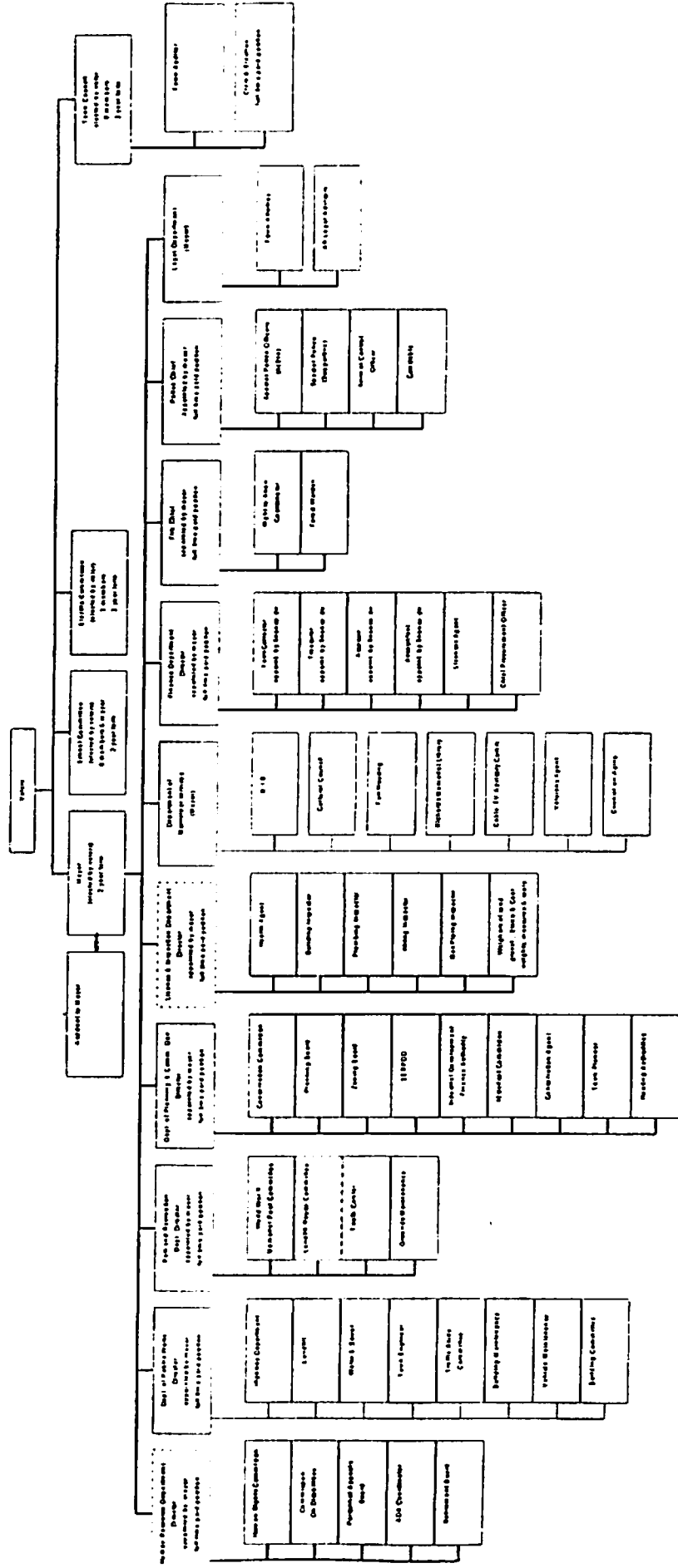


FIGURE 2

NORTH ATTLEBOROUGH AD HOC GOVERNMENT STUDY SURVEY

The Ad hoc Government Study Committee was formed in July 1998. It was formed as a result of the April 98 town election when a majority of the voters of North Attleborough requested a committee to study possible changes in town government.

As part of our study, we would appreciate input from as many residents as possible. Please fill out this survey and return it to us by April 14. If you have any additional recommendations that are not covered by this survey, please send them to us at the address on the reverse side.

The prime focus of the committee is accountability. Our current government structure has two different levels of accountability. One is for appointed boards, commissions and employees. The other is for elected boards, commissions and employees.

In an appointed position the supervisor holds you accountable for your actions and the top level of supervision is the Board of Selectmen whom the voters elect. If an appointed employee is not performing their job as required they can be fired and replaced. The accountability and structure of an appointed position is very similar to that of most companies.

In an elected position there are no supervisors to hold you accountable for your actions. The Board of Selectmen do not have any authority over them. If an elected employee is not performing their job as required they cannot be fired. At the end of their term (often a three-year term) the voters will have the opportunity to elect a new employee.

1.) Below is a chart listing several boards, commissions and employees. They were selected for our survey because they make significant decisions that affect North Attleborough's finances and growth. Some are presently elected positions and some are presently appointed positions. With the above in mind, please indicate how you would suggest that the following offices and committees be chosen.

PLEASE CHECK THE BOX INDICATING YOUR CHOICE

	APPOINTED	ELECTED
TOWN ACCOUNTANT		
SCHOOL COMMITTEE		
TREASURER		
TOWN ADMINISTRATOR		
TAX COLLECTOR		
TOWN CLERK		
ASSESSORS		
BOARD OF PUBLIC WORKS		
BOARD OF HEALTH		
HUMAN RESOURCES DIRECTOR		
PERSONNEL BOARD		
PLANNING BOARD		
ELECTION COMMISSION		
PARK AND REC COMMISSION		
FIRE COMMISSION		
CONSERVATION COMMISSION		
ZONING BOARD		
FINANCE COMMITTEE		
LIBRARY TRUSTEES		

The following positions must be elected according to Mass. General Laws: School Committee, Selectmen, and Town Moderator. (Some municipalities have been able to change this through legislative action.)

) Presently town taxes and fees are paid to different places and handled by different people. Would you like to have one central place to pay all your taxes, water bills, trash fees, licenses etc.? Yes ___ No ___

Please turn over to complete questionnaire

3.) Are you content with the existing executive form of government (Town Administrator/Selectmen)?
Yes___ No___ If no, what changes/form do you suggest? _____

4.) Are you content with the existing legislative form of government (RTM) (Representative at Town Meeting)?
Yes___ No___ If no, should it be increased, decreased, or replaced? _____

5.) Do you feel that RTM members should be able to vote on issues that affect them financially? Yes___ No___

6.) Do you feel that any Boards or Commissions are no longer needed and should be eliminated?
Yes___ No___ If yes, which one(s)? _____

7.) Additional Comments: _____

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Ad Hoc Government Study Committee
43 South Washington Street
North Attleborough, MA 02760

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TABLE 1

AMESBURY		
BOARD OF SELECTMAN RTM		MAYOR TOWN COUNCIL (9 MEMBERS, 3 AT LARGE, 6 FROM DISTRICTS)
<hr/>		
AGAWAM		
BOARD OF SELECTMAN RTM		TOWN COUNCIL TOWN MANAGER (15 MEMBERS, 3 AT LARGE, 2 FROM 3 PREC)
IN 1989 AGAWAM		REPLACED TOWN MANAGER WITH A MAYOR
<hr/>		
BARNSTABLE		
BOARD OF SELECTMAN RTM		TOWN COUNCIL 18 MEMBERS (2 FROM EACH PRECINTS) TOWN MANAGER
<hr/>		
CHELMSFORD		
OPEN TOWN MEETING		BOARD OF SELECTMEN (5 MEMBERS) TOWN MANAGER RTM (162 MEMBERS, 9 PRECINTS)
<hr/>		
EAST HAMPTON		
BOARD OF SELECTMAN RTM		TOWN COUNCIL MAYOR
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FRANKLIN		
TOWN COUNCIL PRECINCT-AT-LARGE TOWN ADMINISTRATOR		TOWN COUNCIL (9 MEMBERS AT LARGE) TOWN ADMINISTRATOR
<hr/>		
METHUEN		
TOWN COUNCIL (21 MEMBERS) TOWN ADMINISTRATOR		TOWN COUNCIL (9 MEMBERS: 3 AT LARGE, 2 FROM EACH DISTRICT) TOWN MANAGER
<hr/>		
SOUTHBRIDGE		
BOARD OF SELECTMAN RTM		TOWN COUNCIL (13 MEMBER, 3 AT LARGE, 2 FROM EACH DISTRICT) TOWN MANAGER
<hr/>		
WATERTOWN		
BOARD OF SELECTMAN RTM		TOWN COUNCIL (9 MEMBERS: 4 AT LARGE, 4 FROM EACH PREC) (1 CHAIR ELECTED AT LARGE) TOWN MANAGER
<hr/>		

WEST SPRINGFIELD

BOARD OF SELECTMAN
RTM



MAYOR
TOWN COUNCIL

WEYMOUTH

BOARD OF SELECTMAN
RTM



MAYOR
TOWN COUNCIL

(11 MEMBER, 5 AT LARGE, 6 DISTRICTS)

THE OTHER TOWNS THAT WE INVESTIGATED
WITH POPULATIONS BETWEEN 20000 + 35000 WERE:

ATTLEBORO
NORTHAMPTON
MILFORD
DEDHAM
NEEDHAM
NORWOOD
READING
MANSFIELD
MARSHFIELD
PLYMOUTH

TABLE 2

Survey Results, Questions 2 through 6

	Yes	No
# 2	275 (88%)	38 (12%)
# 3	209 (52%)	191 (48%)
# 4	169 (43%)	222 (57%)
# 5	100 (25%)	286 (75%)
# 6	167 (53%)	147 (47%)

What Form Of Government Do You Suggest? (question # 3)

Mayor	74 (43%)
City Council	42 (24%)
Town Council	46 (46%)
Open Town Meeting	9 (5%)

4% of the surveys mailed out were returned. This list is a total of all of the returned surveys.

T
Departmental Reorganization

Current System			Proposed Changes	
Town Administrator-3 yr term	appointed		Mayor - 2 year term	elected
Board of Selectmen-3 yr term	elected		Town Council - 2 year term	elected
RTM	elected		Deleted (Replaced by Town Council)	
Moderator	elected		Deleted	
Finance Committee	appointed		Subcommittee of Town Council	
Board of Assessors	elected		To be appointed by finance director	appointed
Board of Electric Comm	elected		Board of Electric Com	elected
School Committee	elected		School Committee	elected
Board of Public Works	elected		Dept. of Public Works Director	appointed
Park Commissioners	elected		Dept. of Parks/Rec Director	appointed
Town Clerk	elected		Work under Town Council	appointed
Board of Elections Comm	appointed		Town Clerk function assumption	
Planning Board	elected		Work under Planning Director	appointed
Housing Authorities	elected		Housing Authorities	elected
Board of Health	elected		Health Agent	appointed
Public Library Trustees	elected		Public Library Trustees	appointed
Tax Collector	elected		Function under Finance Dept.	appointed
Town Accountant	appointed		Function under Finance Dept.	appointed
Town Treasurer	elected		Function under Finance Dept.	appointed
Town Auditor			Function under Finance Dept.	appointed
Building Inspector	appointed		Work under Town Council	appointed
Plumbing Inspector	appointed		Work under Inspection Dept Dir	appointed
Wiring Inspector	appointed		Work under Inspection Dept Dir	appointed
Building/Vehicle Maintenance	appointed		Work under Inspection Dept Dir	appointed
Grounds Maintenance	appointed		Work under DPW Director	appointed
Town Engineer/Water and Sewer	appointed		Work under Parks/Rec Director	appointed
Highway/Landfill	appointed		Work under DPW Director	appointed
Landfill Reuse Committee	appointed		Work under DPW Director	appointed
Conservation Commission	appointed		Work under Parks/Rec Director	appointed
Personnel Board/Appeals Board	appointed		Work under Planning Director	appointed
Zoning Board	appointed		Duties to be assumed by HRD	appointed
Historical Commission	appointed		Work under Planning Director	appointed
			Work under Planning Director	appointed

TABLE 4
FINANCIAL IMPACT

1999 TOWN REPORT

TOWN ADMINISTRATOR	\$67,816
ASSIST TO TOWN ADMIN	\$26,654
M. FISCHER (BOS)	\$1,000
H. MCDEED (BOS)	\$1,067
M. KRASKOUSKAS (BOS)	\$1,000
B. PLANTE (BOS)	\$1,133
T. SIMMS (BOS)	\$997
RTM COORD COMM	\$726
PERSONNEL BOARD	\$28,241

TOTAL \$128,633

PROJECTED MAYOR~COUNCIL

MAYOR	\$68,097
ASSIST TO MAYOR	\$30,000
TOWN COUNCIL (8 mem)	\$16,000
TOWN COUNCIL CHAIR	\$2,500
SCHOOL COMM (5 mem)	\$10,000
(Mayor will be on sch. comm., unpaid for this position)	
SCHOOL COMM CHAIR	\$2,500

TOTAL \$129,097



The following discussion will describe in detail, the steps that we took to arrive at our recommendation that the town's government structure be reorganized. The Government Study Committee is aware that the changes we are recommending are not minor. We also realize that if the town remains frozen in time while changes continue to occur all around us, we will quickly fall behind and become obsolete. By accepting the recommendations of the Government Study Committee, we believe the town will run much more efficiently and there will be accountability at every level. It will be very clear where the responsibilities of different boards and departments start and end.

2.0 Existing Government Structure

Our current style of government (See Figures 1 and 2) is comprised of a Board of Selectman (BOS - Executive Branch) and Representative Town Meeting or RTM (Legislative Branch). The Board of Selectmen has a Town Administrator (who reports to the BOS) and oversees the daily activities of the Town. The Legislative Branch has limited legislative power and only meets two to four times per year.

With the town having a budget of over \$1,000,000 per week, our current form of government has outgrown itself. There needs to be a more responsive form of government with centralization and accountability.

With this in mind, one of the committee's foremost goals was to establish a system of checks and balances. In fact, currently RTM is made up partially of selectmen, elected officials, teachers, firemen, and other town employees. Under the current system, these people can vote on issues directly related to their boards or positions. This is not illegal, but it is a weakness. There are no checks and balances.

3.0 Massachusetts Town Charter Reviews

One of our first tasks was to determine what was being done among other Massachusetts cities and towns. We chose several cities and towns, similar in both size and budget to our own, and divided them amongst the group. Each member was tasked to obtain certain town's (or city's) charter as well as other information (particularly expenditures and annual reports). These towns included Agawam, Amesbury, Barnstable, Chelmsford, Dedham, Franklin, Methuen, Southbridge, Watertown, Weymouth and others. The scope of towns included all facets of government, from Open Town Meeting/Board of Selectmen to a Mayor / City Council (see Table 1).

Each member researched and evaluated their town (or city) and over the next several weeks we evaluated each town's financial and organizational information and discussed