

## Select Board/Town Manager Special Act

### Frequently Asked Questions (FAQS)

1-4-2021

#### General questions on why change and what changes

- **Why are we doing this at all?** The Board of Selectmen wants to bring Wayland's organization into the 21<sup>st</sup> century. The purpose of the Special Act is to professionalize the structure of Wayland's government; coordinate administrative, operational, and financial functions; provide a consistent approach for efficiency, effectiveness, and transparency across all departments and boards; use resources effectively; improve legal and regulatory compliance; and maintain volunteer opportunities.
- **Why now?** We might ask, why not 30 years ago? Wayland has looked at its structure three times over the last 30 years. The Town's Charter Commission (1989), The Maximus Group (2002), and The Collins Center for Public Management (2018) have all told us the same thing: Wayland's financial management is severely fragmented and the executive function needs to be strengthened.

With the opportunity to hire two Town Administrators in the past 6 years, the Board has received direct feedback that Wayland's organizational structure is unwieldy and unusually flat. We've heard this from the prior Town Administrator and our hiring consultant. Our organizational structure is viewed as a challenge.

Wayland's organization was developed when times were simpler. Wayland was a small town with few professional staff and many volunteers who did much of the work. Wayland is now analogous to a \$95 million diversified company in a highly regulated and public service environment requiring a stronger centralized management structure.

Over the decades there have been changes in the complexity of municipal government with increased regulations, financial requirements, and public scrutiny. The level of volunteer work cannot and should not be sustained. Wayland has a reputation for being difficult to manage, which translates into difficulty in hiring people into management positions. Previous Town Administrators have reported that their position has all the responsibility, but not the necessary authority and accountability for many departments.

- **Why can't we accomplish these goals with the current Town Administrator position?** In 2004 the Town made some improvements by changing from an Executive Secretary to a Town Administrator (TA) form of government. However many department heads continue to report to elected boards and committees, not up through a single executive. This makes it difficult to manage workload, set

priorities that cross departmental lines, and ensure that laws and regulations are met. The current TA has 20 direct reports – an unsustainable number. There is no flexibility to organize a deeper structure of departments when some departments are not under the TA's direct management.

- **What changes are being proposed to current code?** With passage of the Special Act, the Town Code will be updated for two chapters: Board of Selectmen, Chapter 58 (being replaced); Town Administrator, Chapter 60 (being replaced). One section of Town Code will be updated at a future Town Meeting: Personnel, Chapter 43, section B (3) responsibility for negotiations, which will go to the Town Manager. In summary, the function will move to the Town Manager and the Personnel Code will be revised later.
- **Why not make this change through a Charter?** The Town tried a charter in 1989. It did not pass. A charter is a total rewrite of Town Code that follows a specific two-year process. The Board of Selectmen thinks it is more manageable to address the needed changes in parts, addressing the professional organization first. In the future the Town can choose to address financial and committee structure.
- **Why not make recommendations on consolidating or removing committees?** The volunteer spirit is very strong in Wayland and will continue through over 40 elected and appointed boards/committees. All currently elected boards/committees remain elected. The number of appointed boards/committees remains the same. Looking at committees is for a future reform.

## Organizational Structure

- **What will the organization look like?** The goal is to take a very flat organization with over 20 direct reports and create functional groupings with existing staff in organizational roles. In the public discussions, the Board shared sample organizational charts from similar towns to show groupings of human services, land services, administrative support work, and public safety services.
- **Why can't we see exactly what the staff organization chart will be?** No determination has been made on an exact organization for Wayland. We can offer a couple of examples of what it might look like. However, discussions with union staff may require contract negotiation for potential changes in responsibility or reporting structure. Also, to manage staff and resident expectations and avoid unnecessary apprehension, no decision on structure will be made until passage of the Special Act.
- **Will all department groupings have a staff manager?** Functional groupings may have a leader named to facilitate communication and workload. It is not anticipated that additional staff will be hired to head these functional groups. A shift in work responsibilities should be able to accommodate the change.

- **How are Boards/Committees/Commissions changing under this act?** There are no changes to the number of boards/committees/commissions. There are no suggested changes to the selection process (elected vs. appointed), the purpose and mission statements, or the number of volunteers.
- **Do volunteers' roles change? Why is it difficult to appoint volunteers?** Committee/board volunteers will continue to have regulatory and policy responsibility. However, it is anticipated that the daily work will move to staff. Examples of this include but are not limited to regulatory mailings, implementing contracts for services. It can be difficult to attract volunteers given the amount of work required on some committees.
- **Will all boards/committees have a staff contact?** Each board/committee will have a staff contact. Now, there are some committees that report directly to the Town Administrator, for example, Historical Commission, Surface Water Quality Commission and Historic District Commission. The staff contact can assist with posting agendas, maintaining information on the website, regulatory mailings and similar responsibilities.
- **Why is the Library not also under the Town Manager? Is there an explicit law?** The Library is governed by a state statute giving the Library Trustees regulatory authority over collections, programming and its building, among other responsibilities. These areas are not changed by passage of the Special Act. However, parts of the Library function require coordination with other Town staff and as such do fall under the proposed Town Manager. For instance, Facilities budgeting and work, IT for technology, Human Resources support for hiring and benefits, Finance support for payroll and expenses, and outside maintenance done by the DPW all require coordination. The Library union contract also assigns rights to the Town Administrator now and those would continue with the Town Manager.
- **Why are department heads in a union? Can we change that?** Most department heads are in the AFSCME I union; most other Town Building staff are either in the AFSCME I or AFSCME II union. Department Heads in AFSCME may not hire, discipline or review a staff member in the same union. This affects the Conservation, Council on Aging, Planning, Health, Treasury, Assessing, and Building Departments. Department heads unionized decades ago most likely for salary reasons. If the Town wishes to change the union status of any position, it must be negotiated.

## Financial Cost

- **What is the financial cost of this act? What are the savings?** The Board of Selectman does not anticipate any particular costs specific to implementation of the Special Act. Concerning savings, we anticipate that passage of the Special Act will allow the Town to use its resources more effectively. Whether it be personnel, use of time, or financial, it is anticipated that the act will streamline certain processes, which will result in some savings. Savings are anticipated also through coordination of administrative, operational and financial functions.
- **Does this act require new staff, more staff, or less staff?** It is anticipated that the Special Act will not change total staffing needs town-wide. However, it is anticipated that responsibilities for

administrative, financial, or operational functions may change, subject to negotiations with the Town's unions. As the Special Act is implemented, personnel resources will be used more effectively to deliver town services.

- **If the Town's linear reporting structure changes with the passage of this act, will there be a need for a new level of staff and bureaucracy?** It is not anticipated there will be a need for a new level of staff and added bureaucracy, if the Special Act passes. In fact, we anticipate the effect will be just the opposite. We anticipate that there will be greater efficiency, and effectiveness with the passage of this act. There will be more effective use of personnel, time and money. Based on our observations of the many other peer communities who have established a Town Manager position, staffing needs have not increased as a result of the change.

## Checks and Balances

- **What are the checks and balances around the TM being CFO? COO?** The underlying check on the authority of the Town Manager in his/her role as Chief Financial Officer and Chief Operating Officer (as well as other roles he/she plays) is the Select Board, which directly oversees the Town Manager. Policy decisions are made and/or ratified by the Select Board, and, as such, the Town Manager is required to take direction from the Select Board. Further, as an elected body of officials the Select Board is accountable to the residents of the Town who may vote to replace individual members at the conclusion of their terms.
- **Is it typical for the Town Manager to be Chief Financial Officer?** Yes. Most towns operate under a charter or special act that authorizes the Town Manager to appoint the CFO or Finance Director, or expect the Town Manager to perform the functions of a CFO. This person is ultimately responsible for budgets and capital outlay recommendations and making sure that once those recommendations are approved by the legislative body, they are carried out.
- **Is it legal for the Select Board, a group of citizens, to be Chief Executive Officer in a town?** Yes. Massachusetts General Laws Chapter 4, Section 7 includes various definitions to be used in statutory construction. When a statute refers to "chief executive officer" used in the context of municipal government, the term refers to a Board of Selectmen in a town. In Wayland's case, the Special Act serves as a local charter and names the Select Board as CEO. If the Special Act didn't exist, the default would be the Board of Selectmen.
- **Should the Finance Committee be appointed by the moderator or a hybrid group (moderator, Select Board member, Finance Committee member, others) as proposed by Collins?** The determination to amend the current process as to who appoints the members of the Finance Committee is one that entails considerable ramifications, and should thus be studied in some depth in order to present residents with the pros and cons of each option. There are a number of sections within Chapter 19 of the Town Code that could potentially use clarification and improvement, and could benefit from a rewrite, which would incorporate this question about appointment of members of the Finance Committee. Instead of addressing issues within the chapter in a piecemeal fashion, it makes more sense to consider a rewrite for the entire chapter.

- **What is the role of the Finance Committee?** The Finance Committee's role is unchanged. It will still be responsible for bringing a budget to Town Meeting. The Finance Committee's stated mission is "to recommend a fiscally responsible operating budget and capital spending plan that balances the demand and need for services and infrastructure with the impact on taxpayers across a broad financial spectrum. To fulfill this mission, the Finance Committee outlines a financial strategy and provides factual and relevant information to residents so they can make informed decisions at town meeting." The Finance Committee also prepares a formal report on the budget and finances of the Town at Town Meeting as well as an annual report.
- **Will the boards/committees be involved in hiring, firing, evaluating of staff?** The Town's boards and committees will still have the opportunity to provide substantive input regarding the hiring, removal, and evaluation of town staff, but will not be directly responsible for any of those personnel-related actions.
- **Who does a board go to if there is disagreement between Town Manager and department head on budget or other things?** In the event of a disagreement involving a policy-related issue that cannot be resolved at the staff level, members of a board or committee may involve the Select Board who can subsequently determine if its involvement is necessary to seek a resolution.

### Role of the Town Manager

- **How can the Town Manager possibly know and manage the intricacies of every department?** The Town Manager cannot know the intricacies of every department, yet s/he can still manage the Town well. The manager of an orchestra is unlikely to be able to play every instrument but s/he knows what to do to motivate and support the performers to produce beautiful music. In the same way a manager's job is to hire well-qualified staff, oversee employees, departments, even volunteers to ensure that they carry out their duties and meet the town's goals. The Town Manager also serves as a support system for the staff and ensures the best use of town resources, both people and financial. Manager and staff work together as a mutually interdependent team for the benefit of the Town.
- **What is the definition of "be responsible for" as it relates to the Town Manager?** To say the Town Manager (TM) is "responsible for" something (see: 3.1.b: managing, supervising, and executing; 3.1.e: the management of all financial, administrative, and operational affairs; 3.4.a: the construction, reconstruction, restoration, rehabilitation, repair and maintenance) means being **accountable** for ensuring the work is completed successfully and in a timely manner. This can be accomplished by working with staff to set goals, establishing policies, ensuring necessary resources, providing training and support, problem solving, brainstorming solutions, respecting staff knowledge and skills, and even staying out of the way. It is the TM's job to make sure the job gets done.
- **What is the Town Manager's motivation to serve the public?** One becomes a town manager because s/he is dedicated to serving the public. The pay isn't bad, but the hours are terrible—all those night meetings! And public scrutiny is just a TV screen or email away.

The Special Act ensures that the Town Manager is accountable to and overseen by the Select Board, which in turn is responsible to the voters. The position is the chief administrative and operating officer of the Town, a very public position, particularly in a community like Wayland with many very active volunteers. The TM's three major responsibilities, fiscal, personnel, and facilities, have boards, committees, and constituencies concerned with the outcome of the work: Why hasn't that bill been paid? When will I get my building permit? Why isn't that project that was approved at last Town Meeting completed? The TM is accountable to the staff, the volunteers, the public, state and federal laws—hundreds if not thousands of people poised to critique, criticize, complain, and—we hope—commend the TM on doing the job well. If not, there will be a phone call or email or article before s/he goes home after the fifth meeting of the day.

- **If the department head decides to rule against issuing a permit for good reason, will there be political pressure from the new Town Manager to intervene?** Permit decisions are made by the regulatory committee. If the department head is ruling on a permit, it is only because the committee has designated that authority and the committee/board has the ultimate responsibility on regulatory permits. While there could be exceptions, generally the TM's role is not political and is to enact the will of the regulatory boards. In a smooth running organization, a department head would discuss controversial issues with the TM in advance of having to make a difficult decision. However, if there are legal or procurement improprieties, if there is new information, if the permit conflicts with a decision of another board, or puts the Town in jeopardy, we would want the TM to intercede.
- **How “down in the weeds” would the Town Manager get in the plans laid out by a board?** Typically the TM would not get into the weeds of board/committee work. The town hires well-qualified and knowledgeable staff who understand their jobs and how to complete the work of their department; the department heads remain the primary staff contact for their respective boards/committees. However municipal governments have gotten more complex; rules change; new laws are passed; technology advances and procedures that once worked may no longer be correct or effective. Generally, the TM sets the direction and encourages the staff to make the necessary changes, but occasionally the TM may need to delve into the “weeds”.
- **How will the Act improve a board's ability to accomplish its work and how will the board/Town Manager/department head really work?** The Special Act gives the TM the authority commensurate with the responsibilities of the job. This is a major improvement. The Special Act clarifies the TM's role and responsibilities as well as that person's relationship with department heads. Using the orchestra metaphor again, we would not expect high quality music if only half the musicians followed the conductor and the other half marched to a different beat. The TM cannot manage efficiently and well when there is no reporting relationship with half the staff and when some committees operate independently of Town goals. The Special Act establishes clear lines of authority. With approval of the Select Board, it gives the TM the capacity to streamline and reorganize departments to improve operations and reporting structures; coordinate and communicate; supervise, facilitate, and support all department heads—but not set town policy or exercise policy-making authority as provided by state law. Boards and committees continue their policy-making and permitting functions.

## Measures of Success

- **Is there a way to analyze success after the new structure is implemented?** The structure change will not happen immediately; it will evolve over time. Consideration of staff strengths, upcoming retirements, union negotiations in some cases, will all come into play. It will be important to set goals and measure progress every year.
- **Will we initially see more bottlenecks? How is this more efficient?** Bottlenecks happen for different reasons now. When there is a new regulation or procedure, there is a learning curve. Bottlenecks also happen now because 20 direct reports result in a difficult management structure with varying priorities. As the organization becomes deeper (less flat), grouped departments, such as a Finance Department, will improve delegation of decision-making and will improve efficiency, which should result in a better product from the same staff.
- **How does a department/board get help from IT or Facilities? Whom do they call?** Department heads will still call the IT hotline for system issues and use Facilities scheduling software for standard repairs. More detailed questions will not be answered by this act, but rather through policy and procedure.
- **Will this act improve coordination of all participating departments/boards/committees to figure out a strategy and bring forward better projects?** That is the goal. The Town Manager working with department heads will channel projects to the right regulatory board in the right order. This should result in fewer continuances due to missing information or approvals taken out of order. This will be a significant saving of staff and volunteer time.
- **Does this act improve the setting of priorities as a Town?** Setting of major town-wide priorities resides with the voters and with their direction, the Board of Selectmen. Implementing these priorities requires the input of staff on resources, feasibility, and schedule. A Town Manager will have the responsibility and authority to facilitate the implementation of priorities, as set by the Board of Selectmen.
- **Do we still have to go to Town Meeting to vote on budgets?** Yes. Nothing about Town Meeting is changed with the passage of the act.