

## Minutes of Electronic Communication Review Committee (ECRC) Meeting

January 9, 2020, 6:00 PM

Room 408, Brookline Town Hall

**Members Attending:** Ben Franco, Neil Gordon, Tracey Schroeder, Dennis Doughty (departed at 6:36 PM), John Doggett, C. Scott Ananian

**Guests:** Pat Ward, Town Clerk (departed following the swearing in of members)

### *Introductions*

The meeting commenced at 6:04 PM with the members introducing themselves and explaining why they expressed interest in serving on the committee.

### *Swearing-In of Members*

The Town Clerk swore all the members of the committee in, and the membership completed the necessary appointment paperwork.

### *Administrative Business*

Ben Franco reviewed the Electronic Communication Review Committee's charge from the Select Board. Ben highlighted the need to comply with the Open Meeting Law and briefly reviewed the requirements of the Open Meeting. He also reminded all the members of the need to attend a conflict of interest training.

The committee next discussed its meeting schedule. The group decided it will meet on the 2<sup>nd</sup> Thursday of the month for 90 minutes beginning at 6:00 PM. Upcoming meetings are scheduled for: February 13, March 12, and April 9.

### *Discussion of the Charge and Work Plan*

The committee returned to a conversation about its charge. The discussion began with a presentation by Neil Gordon and John Doggett about how the ECRC came to be created (the passage of Warrant Article 33 at the Fall 2018 Town Meeting) and why Neil and John (as two of the three petitioners of WA 33) became interested in the topic.

The committee then reviewed its charge, again, and began to develop a work plan. The group agreed that the charge contemplates two different types of work – improving communication with the public generally about matters before town government and improving emergency communication. It was observed that the Town government has made efforts to address both parts of the charge, recently, but that adoption has not been uniform across departments and implementation has been uneven. It was also observed that the Public Schools of Brookline, generally, have more fully adopted electronic communication with its constituents.

The committee discussed the appropriate starting point for its work. There were some who thought the committee should begin by discussing how the Town should begin collecting email addresses and where it should store them. Others thought that the focus should be on determining how communications with those the Town regularly communicates could be transitioned from paper mail to electronic communications – specifically it was suggested that the Town target making communication with Town Meeting Members electronic. After discussion there was consensus that the appropriate next step would be to develop a list of all mail communications that are currently distributed by the Town - Ben Franco agreed to take a first-pass at developing this list - and that Kevin Stokes (Brookline's CIO) should

be invited to come to the ECRC's next meeting to discuss where Brookline is with adoption of systems to transition communication to electronic format.

Several committee members noted that there have been past efforts to push a transition from mailed to electronic communications. Ben Franco specifically noted pushes to distribute the Financial Plan to Town Meeting Members electronically and to push residents and property owners to pay their bills online. There has been little uptick with the former and more success with the latter. It was agreed that anything the committee recommends be done must recognize: the need to overcome institutional and resident inertia to continue the status quo, the need to continually communicate about the availability of electronic communication, and the need to educate individuals about how to access/use electronic communication tools.

The committee concluded its meeting by discussing next steps. There was agreement that Kevin Stokes should be invited to attend the committee's next meeting. There was agreement that the committee should develop a statement of principle to guide its discussions and to help the group think through not only what communications it wants to transition away from being exclusively done via mail but also how it wants that transition to occur. There was also agreement that at future meetings conversations about the following should occur: legal notice requirements and legal issues the committee must keep in mind, the details of how the Town conducts emergency communications with residents, property owners, and business owners, and what non-mail communications tools are currently being utilized by the Town and what functionality/systems are available to the Town today.

The meeting concluded at 7:35 PM.

Materials Reviewed:

- ECRC Warrant Article 33 Presentation prepared by Neil Gordon, John Doggett, and Dennis Doughty
- Warrant Article 33 Fact Sheet prepared by John Doggett
- Brookline Board/Commission Appointment Paperwork