

TMMA Executive Committee Minutes: January 11, 2006

Attendance:

TMMA Officers:

Gloria Bloom – (Chair Pct 4)
David Horton – (Vice Chair Pct 8)
Andy Friedlich – (Treasurer Pct 5)
David L. Kaufman – (Communication Officer Pct 6)
Darwin Adams – (Clerk Pct 3)

Precinct Officers:

Pct 9: Vicki Blier
Pct 7: Marsha Baker
Pct 6: Alan Lazarus, Sheldon Spector, Dawn McKenna
Pct 1: John Bartenstein, Joel Adler, Jon Cole

Guests:

Richard Canale (Pct 9)

Agenda:

Gloria called the meeting to order at 7:01 pm in room G-15 of the Town Office Building.

Communications Working Group:

John Bartenstein, representing the Communications Working Group, presented information about their position on the appropriate use of the TMMA email list. The group has been discussing the privileges which should be allowed for non-Town Meeting members on the list. These non-members include people from Town boards and committees. The proposal is that board and committee member postings be limited in scope to those issues that are directly related to their positions on the board or committee.

In the past, some non-members have been posting on a range of Town Meeting issues. Since the list is a public document and read by many Town citizens, it is appropriate to limit the discussions to those who have been elected to Town Meeting.

John proposed that “Non-Town Meeting members should limit their posts to matters related to their Town committee position.”

John asked David Kaufman to present an opposing view – partly because David opposes these restrictions and partly to assure that both sides of the discussion were represented. David felt that the email list should encourage “free speech” and the free exchange of ideas. Having ideas coming from boards and committees should enrich the conversation and assure that all sides of the issue are presented.

Vicki Blier commented that we should do as much as possible to improve the “tone” of the discussions. Sheldon Spector said he was getting tired of the bad “tone” of some of the email list discussions.

Alan Lazarus and Darwin Adams agreed with David Kaufman that we should try to keep the list an open forum and avoid restrictions.

Joel Adler suggested that we have to “draw the line” somewhere and that without some restrictions, the list might become just another general list and not a list specific to Town Meeting members. This is not an issue of free speech. There are other email lists for other groups – including one for the general public.

John Bartenstein noted that anyone in the town can submit a posting by contacting a Town Meeting member and asking them to post their comments. This policy is similar to that of Town Meeting when a Member asks the moderator to allow a citizen to present at Town Meeting. John also noted that the CWG was divided in its opinions in a similar manner to the Executive Committee.

There were some extended discussions about how to keep the tone of discourse on the list civil and how to deal with list members who “clog” the list with their postings.

The Communications Working Group presented written copies of two alternative sets of rules for the email list. The first alternative simply outlined the rules that all posters must follow. – that issues must be relevant to Town Meeting; that people be polite and respectful; and that people who are presenting on behalf of a board or committee should sign their postings so that readers know if it is their personal or committee opinion.

Andy Friedlich moved that the first version (labeled “A”) on the typewritten sheets be accepted by the Executive Committee. This motion passed unanimously.

Andy then moved that the version labeled “B” be accepted which had the following additional language:

“Non-Town Meeting members should limit their posts to matters related to their Town or Committee position.” This motion passed with 8 in favor and 3 opposed.

Joel Adler moved that the word “should” be replaced by “must”. This motion was defeated with 3 in favor and 6 opposed.

Approval of the Minutes of the December 14th Meeting:

The minutes with minor corrections were approved unanimously.

Preparation for Town Meeting Information Book:

Gloria encouraged the group to begin work on Town Meeting articles. Most of the Town sponsored articles are not yet ready. However, there are 5 citizen’s articles that have been formally submitted.

1. Starwood Hotels & Resorts is asking to rezone the Sheraton Lexington Hotel to a planned CD. This would allow the addition of two buildings on their site.
2. Scenic Byways. This article was discussed by Richard Canale at our last meeting.
3. Energy Committee. This article was discussed by Eph Weiss at our last meeting.
4. Amend the Noise Bylaw. This article is being sponsored by Brian Susnock to reduce noise in neighborhoods.
5. Improving the Battle Green sound system.

Gloria asked for volunteers to write up these articles for the Information Booklet. We will need writeups by Friday, March 10 with a reading/editing session on March 11. Andy Friedlich asked for volunteers to assist organizing the Information Booklet – 1 or 2 volunteers before our next meeting. Andy also suggested that we send an email to the TMMA list for volunteers.

David Kaufman volunteered for the sound system.
David Horton volunteered for the Starwood Hotels
Sheldon Spector volunteered for the Scenic Byways article
Darwin Adams volunteered for the Energy Committee article
Vicki Blier volunteered for the Noise Bylaw article

Andy Friedlich promised to send guidelines to the group for how to format writeups and how to send them to our editor (Jean Cole). The TMMA Informational meetings are currently scheduled for March 15th, March 21st, and March 22nd with a bus tour on March 19th.

Discussion ensued regarding how to run our informational meetings. Should we limit presentation time to 5 minutes followed by Q&A? Should we allow time after the formal meeting for less formal discussions in the lobby? Should the Planning Board re-hash their public meetings at the informational meeting – which consumes considerable time – or should TMMA members be encouraged to read the PB reports and/or attend the PB open meetings earlier in the year?

Gloria promised to discuss the Planning Board presentation with Wendy Manz.

Meeting adjourned at 8:22pm.
Submitted by Darwin Adams, Clerk