

March 31, 2025

Dear CRC members;

I am writing to follow up on my email of Thu, Mar 27 at 10:54 PM after the resignation of our CRC Chair, Burt Stevens, a valued member of our CRC body, who I surmise did not want to take responsibility for votes with which he disagreed.

With humility and respect, I would like to state that his resignation could have been avoided through "Consent Decision Making".

May I remind the CRC body that we are fine when "voting" results in 100% consensus. When there is no consensus, voting creates "winners" and "losers", potentially disenfranchising minority voters, especially with issues that are controversial and with which there are "paramount objections".

With that said, I would like to propose that in Agenda #4 "Nomination and Election of Chairperson and Vice Chairperson" for tonight's CRC Special Meeting of 3/31/2025, the following be reviewed and considered as a matter of discussion.

An alternative to "voting" is to *work through issues* by:

- hearing from all members,
- reasoning together in the round, and
- creating proposals to which all members can consent.

A decision is made when there is no unresolved objection and/or objections have been integrated into a proposal. While all preferences may not be met, all objections need to be addressed.

Consent means "good enough for now and safe enough to try until a specified time of evaluation". Members can likely consent when they feel their concerns for unintended consequences will be addressed at the specified time a decision is evaluated.

Again, this decision-making process is called "Consent Decision Making".

I strongly recommend that "Consent Decision Making" be available as a decision-making *option* for all governing and advisory bodies, in addition to the already known practice of voting. Again, my specific proposal is [here](#).

Below are other current issues I propose we review and address, in light of the above.

Thank you for your consideration.

Respectfully,
Margaret Arndt
CRC Member

Current Issues

1. Regarding CRC members voting on whether a Board, Agency, or Commission shall be a governing or advisory body, again, it seems to me that CRC members were mindful of what members of such bodies desired/preferred and what seemed practical.

Regarding the CRC majority vote that the Library Board of Trustees be a governing body, it seems that a compromise was developed in which the Library Board of Trustees can have the governing and fiduciary responsibility of handling the funds (assuming this is appropriate), but the advisory responsibility of providing advice and recommendations regarding the Library Director to the Board of Selectmen, leaving the Board of Selectmen with the governing responsibility of actually hiring/firing the Library Director.

Again, I am not sure we are clear about the desires of the Park and Recreation Commission, especially in light of a letter of 3/18/2025, copied to its Chair, indicating its desire to be an advisory body. Do we know conclusively what they prefer?

2. Regarding the CRC vote to establish term limits on Chair serving a town governance body (Board, Agency, or Commission), especially when members want to continue voting for said Chair, the controversy is: 1. Chair term limits is overreach on a body of members who c/should be able to decide for themselves, or 2. Term limits create an opportunity for others to serve as Chair, and discourages potential abuse of authority and power – both seemingly worthwhile perspectives.

A submission by the Board of Finance on November 25, 2024 included a statement that it “is not in support of term limits for the Chairman” and “the board has and should retain the authority to elect their chairman each year without restriction.”

What is a proposal to which all members can consent?

How about creating criteria for a Chair (as leader and facilitator) so members of a body can evaluate the Chair’s performance in a role during specified time frames? For example: “How well are meetings facilitated,” “Are goals being met and projects fulfilled on time”, etc..

Any other ideas? What are your thoughts?