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**Committee to Study  
Five-Member Board of Selectmen  
Report 2005**

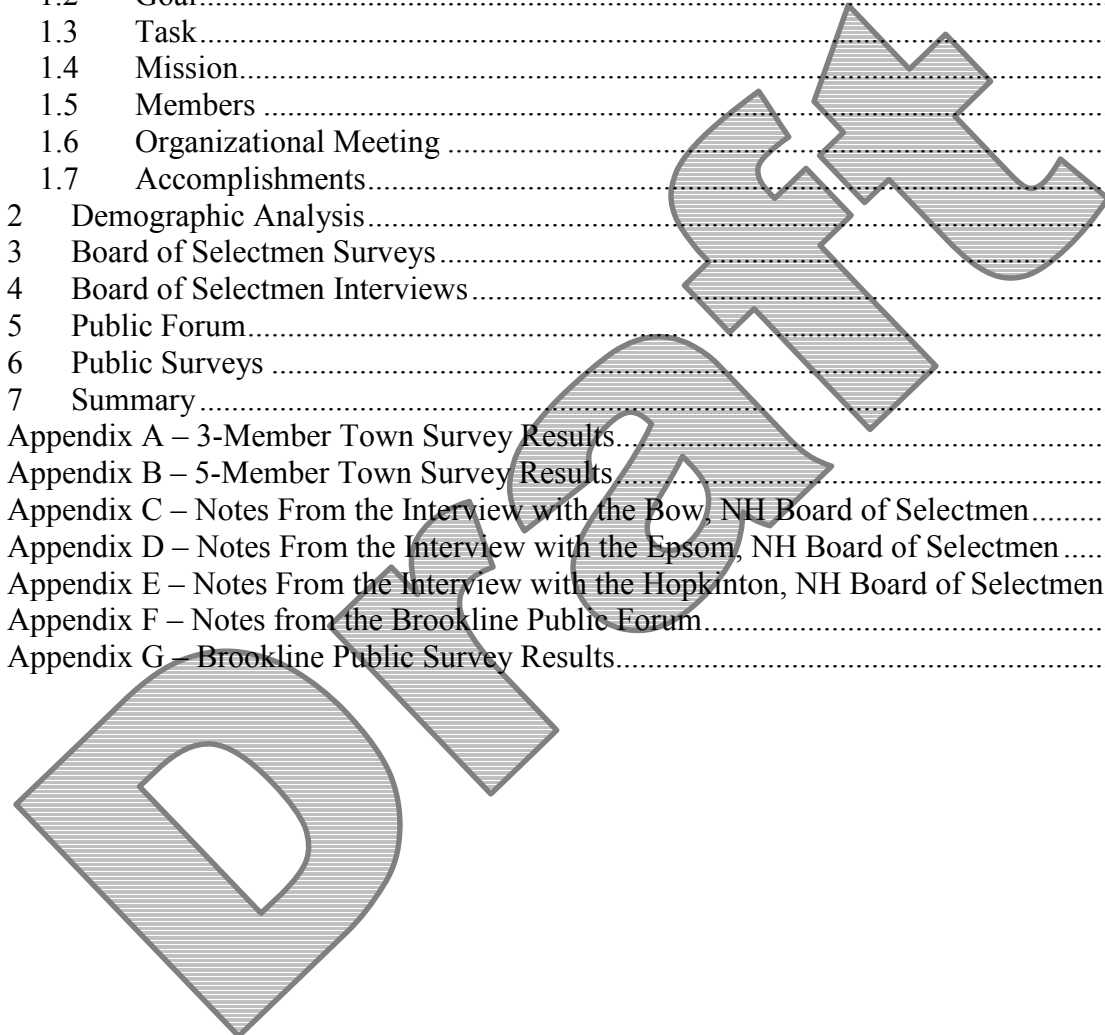
**Brookline, New Hampshire**



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# Table of Contents

|  |     |
|--|-----|
| Table of Contents .....  | ii  |
| Preface .....  | iii |
| Purpose .....  | iii |
| Acknowledgements .....   | iii |
| 1 Introduction .....   | 1   |
| 1.1 Letter From the Moderator, Peter Webb .....                                    | 1   |
| 1.2 Goal .....   | 1   |
| 1.3 Task .....   | 1   |
| 1.4 Mission .....  | 1   |
| 1.5 Members .....  | 2   |
| 1.6 Organizational Meeting .....   | 2   |
| 1.7 Accomplishments .....  | 2   |
| 2 Demographic Analysis .....   | 2   |
| 3 Board of Selectmen Surveys .....   | 3   |
| 4 Board of Selectmen Interviews .....  | 4   |
| 5 Public Forum .....   | 5   |
| 6 Public Surveys .....   | 5   |
| 7 Summary .....  | 5   |
| Appendix A – 3-Member Town Survey Results .....                                    | 6   |
| Appendix B – 5-Member Town Survey Results .....                                    | 9   |
| Appendix C – Notes From the Interview with the Bow, NH Board of Selectmen .....    | 13  |
| Appendix D – Notes From the Interview with the Epsom, NH Board of Selectmen .....  | 15  |
| Appendix E – Notes From the Interview with the Hopkinton, NH Board of Selectmen .. | 17  |
| Appendix F – Notes from the Brookline Public Forum .....                           | 19  |
| Appendix G – Brookline Public Survey Results .....                                 | 20  |



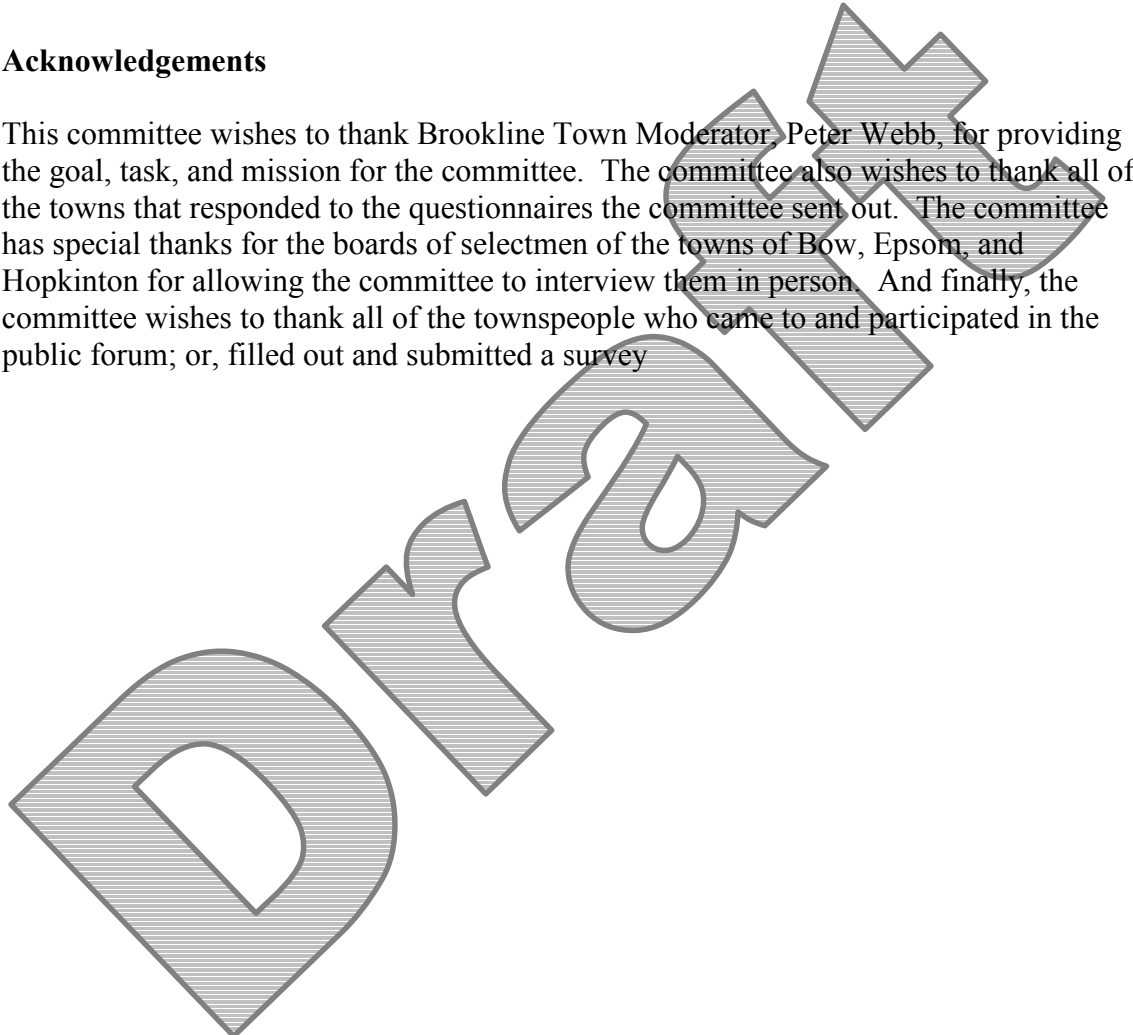
## **Preface**

### **Purpose**

The purpose of this report is to report on the works of the Selectmen Study Committee formed out of Article 21 of the March 2005 Brookline Annual Town Meeting. The committee studied a five-member Board of Selectmen to help the townspeople understand the relative merits of the two sizes of Boards.

### **Acknowledgements**

This committee wishes to thank Brookline Town Moderator Peter Webb, for providing the goal, task, and mission for the committee. The committee also wishes to thank all of the towns that responded to the questionnaires the committee sent out. The committee has special thanks for the boards of selectmen of the towns of Bow, Epsom, and Hopkinton for allowing the committee to interview them in person. And finally, the committee wishes to thank all of the townspeople who came to and participated in the public forum; or, filled out and submitted a survey



# 1 Introduction

**At the March, 2005, Town Meeting Article 21 (by petition) was proposed and amended:**

**ARTICLE 21.** (by petition) To see if the Town of Brookline will vote to increase the Board of Selectmen from three members to five members effective March 2006. One of those additional members will be elected for a one year term and the other for a two year term. Thereafter the added members will serve for a term of three years.

Town Counsel William Drescher determined that this petition Article is not legally presented, and can only be discussed for a sense of the meeting.

**MOTION** Betty Hall, 2nd Forest Milkowski to establish a committee to study a five member Board of Selectmen and report the pros and cons and make a recommendation for an official ballot article for the 2006 Town Meeting. The reports shall be made in time for printing in next years Town Report. The Moderator shall appoint the committee by April 15, 2005.

AMD Jack Flanagan, 2nd Forest Milkowski to establish a committee to study a five member Board of Selectmen. A report shall be made in time for printing in next years Town Report. This committee shall be appointed by the Moderator.

**AMD HAND VOTE YES.**

**AMD MOTION HAND VOTE YES.**

## 1.1 Letter From the Moderator, Peter Webb

“... there was an emended Motion which asked the Moderator to appoint a committee to study a five-member Board of Selectmen and to issue a written report for inclusion in the next Town Report. ... the task is to assess the pros and cons of having five versus three selectmen. ... the mission is to help the townspeople understand the relative merits of the two Boards.”

## 1.2 Goal

Study a five-member Board of Selectmen and issue a written report for inclusion in the next Town Report.

## 1.3 Task

Assess the pros and cons of having five versus three selectmen.

## 1.4 Mission

Help the townspeople understand the relative merits of the two sizes of Boards.

## 1.5 Members

Rena Duncklee  
Russell Heinselmann  
Forest Milkowski  
Linda Saari  
Lorna Spargo

## 1.6 Organizational Meeting

The Committee to Study Five-Member Board of Selectmen (SSC) received the letter from the Moderator, Peter Webb, outlining the goal, the task and the mission for the committee. The committee met for the first time on May 12, 2005 and established the name, "The Selectmen Study Committee (SSC)". Lorna Spargo was elected chairperson; and, Linda Saari, secretary. A timeline was discussed and a course of action planned. The SSC members agreed that the report should be final for the inclusion into the town's Annual Report of Officers and Committees.

## 1.7 Accomplishments

- Contacted Local Government Center (New Hampshire Municipal) for information about Towns.
- Retrieved information on population growth.
- Wrote and mailed questionnaires to towns.
- Tabulated the results from the questionnaires.
- Did follow-up calls to towns who did not return the questionnaires.
- Created analysis reports of the questionnaire results for 5-member and 3-member boards.
- Identified and interviewed towns to ask additional questions.
- Contacted petition originator of Brookline to discover the catalyst for creating the petition to increase the board to a 5-member board.
- Held a public forum to collect opinions from the townspeople of Brookline regarding a possible change in the size of the board.

## 2 Demographic Analysis

The "2004 Wage, Salary and Benefits Survey" from the Local Government Center (LGC) in Concord, NH serves as the basis for an analysis of how common it is for town in New Hampshire to have 3-member and 5-member boards of selectmen. Table 1 shows the percentage of towns with 3-member and 5-member, or more, boards of selectmen. In Table 1 the population based groupings are directly from the LGC survey. With a 2003 population of 4533, Brookline is a member of the 4,000 – 6,000 population grouping.

The NRPC grouping consists of towns that belong to the Nashua Regional Planning Commission (NRPC). Brookline is an NRPC member. And, the 25-mile radius grouping consists of New Hampshire towns within an approximate 25- mile radius of Brookline.

| Population/Group | # Towns | 3   | 5+   |
|------------------|---------|-----|------|
| 10,000 – 15,000  | 13      | 0%  | 100% |
| 5,000 – 10,000   | 28      | 61% | 39%  |
| 4,000 – 6,000    | 35      | 74% | 26%  |
| 2,000 – 4,000    | 63      | 79% | 21%  |
| NRPC             | 12      | 33% | 67%  |
| 25 Mile Radius   | 46      | 65% | 35%  |

Table 1. Number of Selectmen in New Hampshire Towns

### 3 Board of Selectmen Surveys

A written survey was sent to 26 towns – 10 with 3-member boards and 16 with 5-member boards. The surveyed towns were chosen to be generally within 25-30 miles of Brookline and generally in the 4,000 to 6,000 population grouping. 22 surveys were returned – 10 from 3-member boards and 12 from 5-member boards. The surveyed towns are listed in Tables 2 and 3. The survey results are summarized in Appendices A and B for boards sizes 3 and 5, respectively.

Population growth is often cited as a factor in making the change from 3 to 5 member boards. “NH Municipalities Arranged in Rank Order by Percent Growth 1960 to 2000” from the New Hampshire Office of Energy and Planning serves as the basis for growth rate shown in Tables 2 and 3 for each of the towns receiving a written survey. Also shown in Tables 2 and 3 is whether or not the town has a town manager/administrator as reported by the previously referenced LGC survey, augmented by direct question response. And, in Table 3 there is a column that shows the year each town changed from 3 to 5 members, as reported in the survey responses.

| Town         | 2003 Population | 1960 – 2000 Population Growth | Town Manager/Administrator |
|--------------|-----------------|-------------------------------|----------------------------|
| Atkinson     | 6578            | 19%                           | Y                          |
| Auburn       | 4984            | 15%                           |                            |
| Hampstead    | 8529            | 23%                           | Y                          |
| Hillsborough | 5331            | 10%                           | Y                          |
| Jaffrey      | 5665            | 2%                            | Y                          |
| New Boston   | 4716            | 29%                           | Y                          |
| New Ipswich  | 4842            | 7%                            |                            |
| Peterborough | 6086            | 12%                           | Y                          |
| Rindge       | 5940            | 10%                           |                            |
| Sandown      | 5563            | 27%                           |                            |

Table 2. 3-Member Survey Towns

| Town       | 2003 Population | 1960 – 2000 Population Growth | Town Manager/Administrator | Year of Change |
|------------|-----------------|-------------------------------|----------------------------|----------------|
| Barrington | 7968            | 21%                           | Y                          | 2001           |
| Bow        | 7635            | 30%                           | Y                          | 2003           |
| Chester    | 4488            | 41%                           |                            |                |
| Deerfield  | 4151            | 18%                           | Y                          | 1991           |
| Epping     | 5879            | 6%                            | Y                          |                |
| Epsom      | 4380            | 12%                           | N                          | 2003           |
| Farmington | 6273            | 1%                            | Y                          |                |
| Haverhill  | 4561            | 6%                            | Y                          | 2003           |
| Henniker   | 4757            | 7%                            | Y                          | 2005           |
| Hollis     | 7454            | 23%                           | Y                          | 1998           |
| Hopkinton  | 5582            | 12%                           | Y                          | 2003           |
| Litchfield | 7829            | 33%                           | Y                          | 1995           |
| Newport    | 6363            | 3%                            |                            | 1950           |
| Pembroke   | 7231            | 5%                            | Y                          | 2004           |
| Plaistow   | 7906            | 6%                            | Y                          | 1978           |
| Weare      | 8405            | 26%                           |                            |                |

Table 3. 5-Member Survey Towns

## 4 Board of Selectmen Interviews

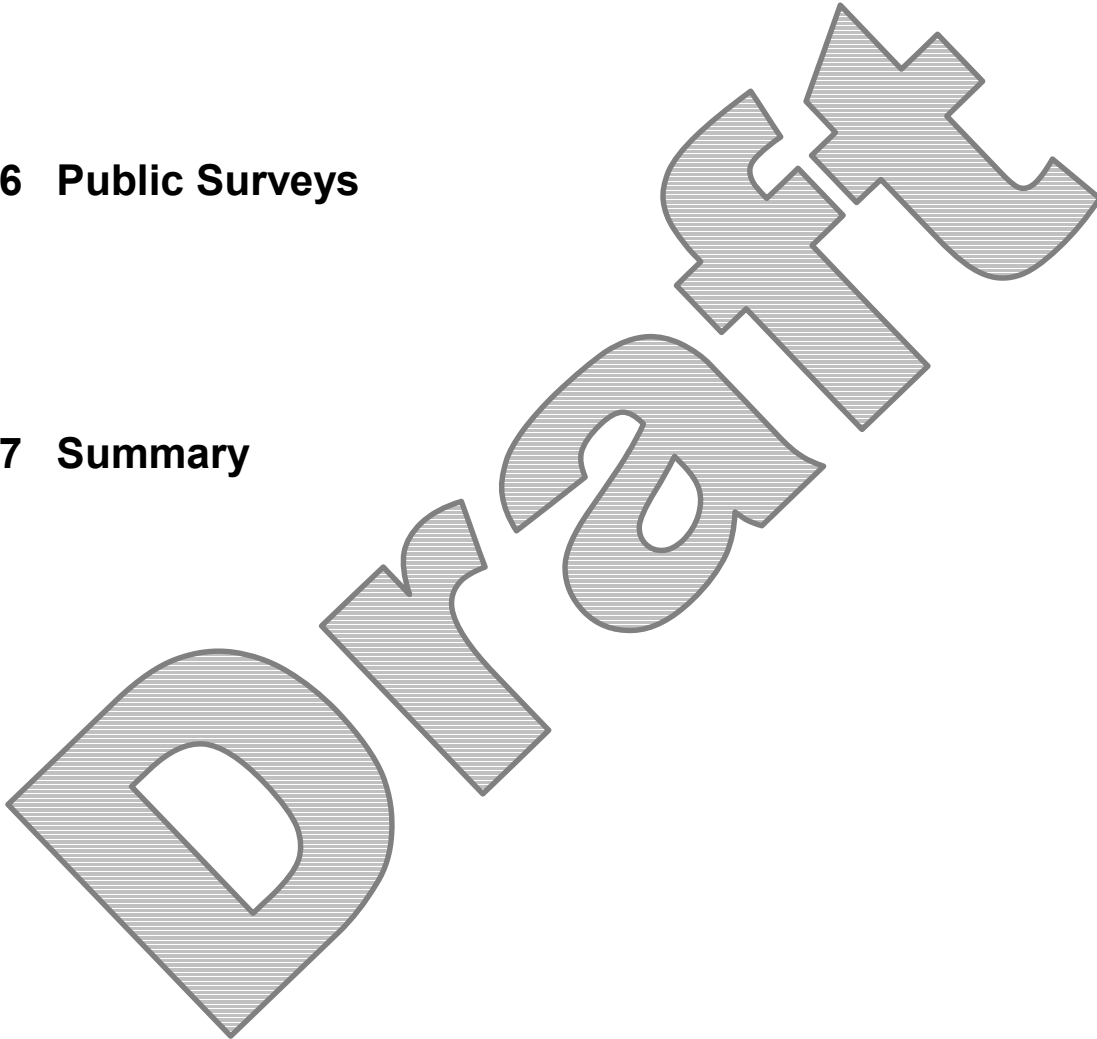
In-person interviews were done with three towns – Bow, Epsom, and Hopkinton. All three of these towns responded in full to the survey. Each of the three towns converted from 3 to 5 member boards in 2003. And, all three towns have rates of population

growth greater than 10%. Notes from the interviews appear as Appendices C, D, and E, respectively.

**5 Public Forum**

**6 Public Surveys**

**7 Summary**



### Appendix A – 3-Member Town Survey Results

1. The size of the Board of Selectmen in our Town is a 3-member board.

(100%)  Yes  No \_\_\_\_\_ (size of board)

2. Our Town has had a 3-member board since \_\_\_\_\_ (year)

- [Atkinson] Since God created selectmen
- [Auburn] Always
- [Hampstead] Last 150+ years
- [Hillsborough] At least 1894
- [Jaffrey] 1765
- [Peterborough] Always
- [Rindge] As long as we know
- [Sandown] 1756

3. Has the Town considered or is the Town considering increasing to a 5-member board?

(30%)  Yes  No . If no, go on to question 9.

4. What are some of the reasons your Town considered a 5-member board? Check all that apply.

- (0%)  Size of Town
- (0%)  Growth of Town
- (0%)  Number of Departments
- (10%)  Workload
- (0%)  Diverse Opinions on board
- (0%)  2 members can meet without quorum/posting

(20%)  Other: please comment:

[Hampstead] Citizen petition  
[Peterborough] Wanted to know if it was warranted. Performed survey and determined it was not.

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5. Was a 5-member board presented to the Town Meeting?

(20%)  Yes Year(s): \_\_\_\_\_ (20%)  No *If no, go on to*

question 9.

[Hampstead] 1990

[Jaffrey] 1990

6. Was a 5-member board presented as a petition warrant article, or as a warrant article by the selectmen?

(20%)  Petition warrant article  
warrant article

(0%)  Selectmen's

7. Please comment on the reasons for failure of the warrant article.

[Hampstead] Lack of support by informed voters

[Jaffrey] Presented by a taxpayers group. It had no support beyond that group.

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8. Is the Town considering bringing this up again at a future town meeting?

(10%)  Yes (60%)  No *If no, go on to*  
question 10.

9. What are reasons you are staying with a three member Board vs. a larger board?

Check all that apply.

(40%)  Difficult to fill seats

(0%)  Too many diverse opinions

(0%)  Too costly

(50%)  Population doesn't warrant it

(50%)  Workload doesn't warrant it

[Hampstead] Committees share in much of our work

(60%)  Happy with the way the board is working

(20%)  Never thought of it

(10%)  Other: please comment

[Hillsborough] Lack of interest at a public meeting held to discuss issue.

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10. Please comment on the subject of 3 vs. 5 member boards for any issue not covered in this survey.

[Hampstead] I feel a three member board can communicate better and get more accomplished when supported by well run boards and committees in the town.

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## Appendix B – 5-Member Town Survey Results

1. The size of the Board of Selectmen in our Town is a 5-member board.

(100%)  Yes  No size of board: \_\_\_\_\_

2. Our Town has had a 5-member board since \_\_\_\_\_ (year)

- [Barrington] 2001
- [Bow] 2003
- [Deerfield] 1991
- [Epsom] 2003
- [Haverhill] 2003
- [Henniker] 2005
- [Hollis] 1998
- [Hopkinton] 2003
- [Litchfield] 1995
- [Newport] 1950
- [Pembroke] 2004
- [Plaistow] 1958

3. Did your Town change from a 3-member to a 5-member board, or did the town always have a 5 member board?

(100%)  Changed from 3 to 5  Always 5 *if always 5, go to question 8*

4. What are some of the reasons your Town changed to a 5-member board? Check all that apply.

- (8%)  Size of Town
- (50%)  Growth of Town
- (17%)  Number of Departments
- (67%)  Workload
- (50%)  Diverse Opinions on board

(17%)  2 members can meet without quorum/posting

(33%)  Other: please comment:

- [Barrington] A warrant article out of spite.
- [Bow] Selectman availability to residents - ease in attaining quorum
- [Deerfield] The 5 member board works well for Deerfield. Duties can be delegated

easily.

[Haverhill] Petition of voters  
 [Hopkinton] One group felt they weren't being represented with 3 member board.  
 [Newport] Have no idea why. Happened long ago.  
 [Pembroke] Changes in departments and overhaul of personnel issues and benefits - keep just 2 people from controlling board

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5. Was a 5-member board presented to the Town Meeting?

(92%)  Yes Year(s): \_\_\_\_\_  No *If no go to question 8.*

6. Was a 5-member board presented as a petition warrant article or as a warrant article by the selectmen?

(58%)  Petition warrant article (33%)  Selectmen's warrant article

7. Please comment on the reasons for successful passage of the warrant article.

[Barrington] Townspeople thought more was better.  
 [Bow] Selectman availability to residents - ease in attaining quorum  
 [Epsom] 2001 town meeting amended warrant article from "change from 3-5 to research 3-5" passed 394-294. 2002 passed 3-5 520-188.  
 [Hopkinton] The small group that wanted the 5 member board were extremely well organized and the existing 3 member board felt it was anti-democratic to take any position.  
 [Pembroke] People wanted to see more points of view being represented, more involvement in different committees and events  
 [Plaistow] Made sense to taxpayers

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8. Is the 5 member board working well from the Town's point of view?

(75%)  Yes (8%)  No

Why or why not? Please comment.

[Barrington] I don't think that most people know how many are on the board.  
 [Bow] Availability of selectmen especially when signatures are required between meeting dates. Also, better dispensation workload.  
 [Epsom] More diverse opinions, less apt to meet at unauthorized times, decisions need more votes for a quorum, ability to better delegate work  
 [Haverhill] More representative of the town  
 [Hollis] There are more opportunities for town residents and employees to provide input and feedback  
 [Hopkinton] Too many people meddling in the affairs of the department heads

[Newport] There has never been an article to go back to a 3 person board  
 [Pembroke] More ideas and perspectives, more involvement in different committees and events  
 [Plaistow] More opinions. More difficult for one or two members to dominate the board. People feel they are more likely to have someone who thinks like them.

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9. Is the 5 member board working well from the Board's point of view?

(75%)  Yes (17%)  No

Why or why not? Please comment.

[Bow] Availability of selectmen especially when signatures are required between meeting dates. Also, better dispensation workload.  
 [Deerfield] Because the town is growing and diverse, 5 Selectmen make the workload lighter. It isn't as difficult to get a quorum.  
 [Epsom] More people to divvy the work up  
 [Haverhill] More board members available for committee and board assignments  
 [Hollis] When the Board is diversified it creates a more dynamic outcome. Spreading workload has allowed for expansion of the number of committees.  
 [Hopkinton] Too much talk and little or no action  
 [Newport] 5 is a manageable number and it allows for more diverse opinion on issues. This better represents to town. Also a manager will always prefer a 5 person over a 3.  
 [Pembroke] No one or two people controlling, more involvement in different committees and events, lighter workload (evenings working), more feedback with more involvement by selectmen (selectpersons)  
 [Plaistow] More opinions. More difficult for one or two members to dominate the board. People feel they are more likely to have someone who thinks like them.

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10. Has the Town considered or is the Town considering changing the size of the board?

(17%)  Yes to what size? \_\_\_\_\_ (83%)  No

[Barrington] 3  
 [Hopkinton] 3

11. In hindsight, would you have remained a 3-member board? Please check any of the following which apply.

(8%)  Difficult to fill seats warrant it

(8%)  Workload doesn't

(17%)  Too many diverse opinions board is working

(50%)  Happy with the way the

(8%)  Too costly

(17%)  Never thought of it

(8%)  Population doesn't warrant it

(0%)  Other:

12. Please comment on the subject of 3 vs. 5 member boards for any issue not covered in this survey.

[Barrington] ... Five years ago, a group of people in town were unhappy with the administration and decided that 5 members would be better than three. That year they also submitted three other petition warrant articles. The articles were aimed at one individual ... The year after the change, we tried to change it back and the vote was turned down. ...

[Bow] Only problem is that board membership still prefers to have all 5 members present for meetings which sometimes involves some difficulty in scheduling.

[Epsom] I was on the committee that research it and I am glad I was. Now I am in my second year as chairman of the board. If you had told me when I was on committee that would have happened I would have not believed it.

[Hollis] It is a challenge to find qualified candidates to fill all 5 seats. However, spreading the workload among 5 members makes the job easier.

[Newport] It makes for a more democratic process - better decisions come out of a 5 person board. If you ever hire an administrator or manager he/she will prefer a 5 person board to work with.

[Pembroke] Was concern for filling seats but with people seeing that their options could count there have been more than the minimum needed candidates on the ballot. Wasn't too costly - salary paid to 3 was divided by 5

[Plaistow] Discussions take longer - everyone has an opinion on every subject and feels the need to express it. Leads to some longer meetings.

7.1.1.1.1.1

## Appendix C – Notes From the Interview with the Bow, NH Board of Selectmen

**Board of Selectmen, Bow (vote won 1760 YES to 298 NO)**

October 4, 2005 at 7:00 pm

### Questions:

**1. What was the catalyst for going from a three to five member board?**

SB2 had failed for seven years. To encourage participation from the town and They battled having a quorum because of work obligations and illness pulling members of the board away from meetings. A 5-member Board addressed the inappropriate meetings between two members of the board. There was a desire to spread the workload amongst more members. The end result was a more efficient board that the Town embraced.

The Town decided to form the **Alternative Forms of Government Committee** in 2001. The committee studied all forms of town government. The conclusions were to improve upon their current form of government, hence increasing the board from 3 members to 5, change the date for the Town Meeting from March to April or May which was to be held in a separate week from the School District Meeting, change the fiscal year to July 1 – June 30, improve communication at Town Meetings by projecting each article and amendment for all to see before a vote is taken, establish procedures to eliminate lengthy and repeated voter check-in and voting, access to the polls free of politicking and loitering, and the form of government should be reviewed again in five years. They also allowed Selectmen to teleconference into meetings with voting power (created that rule – although there must be a quorum in the room to hold the meeting).

Also, people were educated in Roberts Rules. The Selectmen appeared at the Municipal Association and invited a number of towns who changed from a 3-member board to a 5-member board and who remained 3-member boards.

**2. Have you seen an increase/decrease in productivity of the board? Where has the productivity increase/decreased?**

Accomplish more, more organized and the meetings run more like a streamlined business. The meetings are strictly kept to an agenda as much as possible. Moved their meetings from 7 to 5 pm so that people can stop by on their way home from work, and the members of the board can get home at an earlier time.

**3. Have you had an increase in diversity on the board? In what ways has diversity helped? In what ways has diversity hurt?**

There is a positive increase in diversity on the board which is directly related to the diversity in expertise. The expertise forces the Town Manager to pay close attention.

**4. Have the results/expectations been met for going from a three to five member board? Have the results/expectations changed as a result of going from three to five members?**

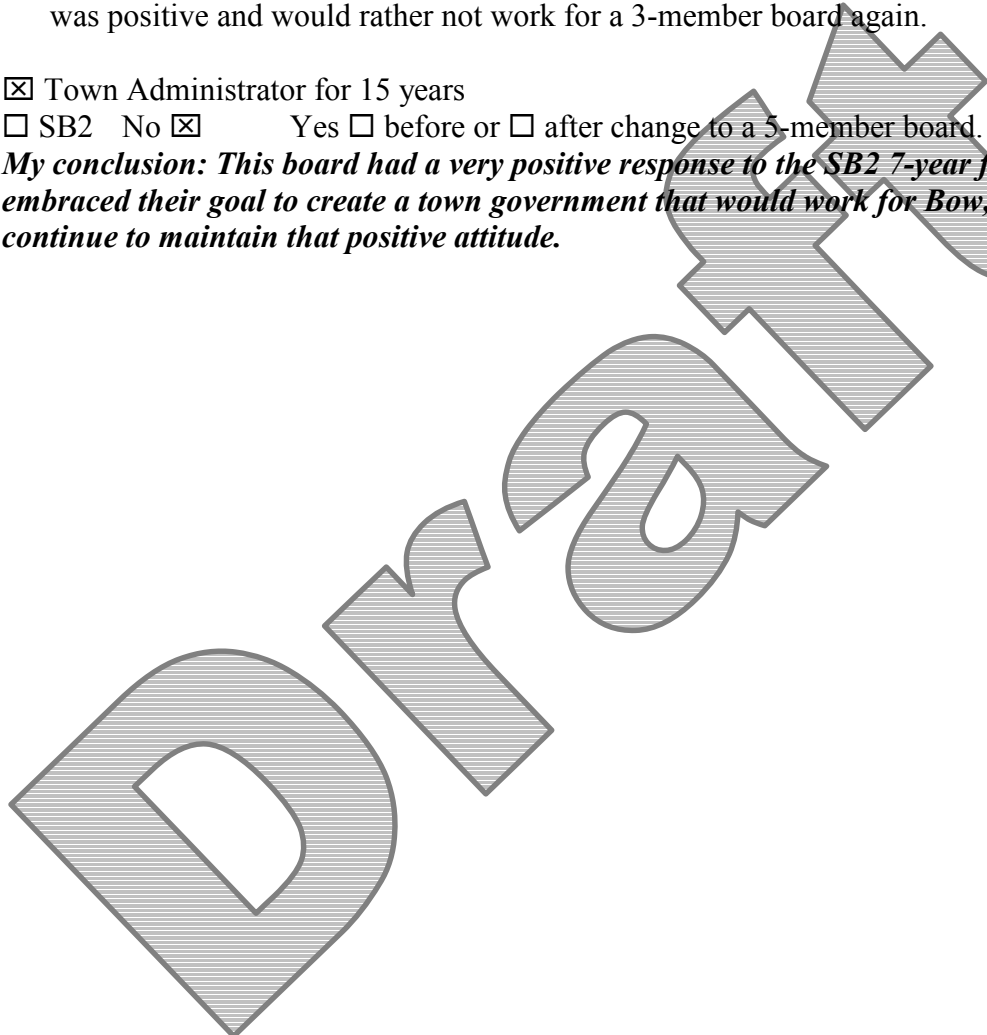
The meetings are shorter (there was some transition in the first year). The disappointment is that more people don't run opposed. They encourage many people to run for all positions. However, the increase in the board has directly increased the number of participants on other boards. Bow would love more diversity in age to maintain a well-balanced board. It is easier to meet the quorum criteria.

The Town Manager asked to speak and concluded that going to a 5-member board was positive and would rather not work for a 3-member board again.

Town Administrator for 15 years

SB2 No  Yes  before or  after change to a 5-member board.

*My conclusion: This board had a very positive response to the SB2 7-year failure. They embraced their goal to create a town government that would work for Bow, and they continue to maintain that positive attitude.*



## Appendix D – Notes From the Interview with the Epsom, NH Board of Selectmen

### Board of Selectmen, Hopkinton

Has a Town Administrator (for at least 20 years)

2<sup>nd</sup> year as 5 member board (vote won by 10 votes)

September 26, 2005 at 7:00 pm

### Questions:

**1. What was the catalyst for going from a three to five member board?**

There has been a history of contention between the villages (Contoocook and Hopkinton) of whether or not the board was trustworthy (a desire for more opinions for decision making and rounded discussion). The workload was increasing and business obligations pulled away board members on meeting nights leaving some nights.

**2. Have you seen an increase/decrease in productivity of the board? Where has the productivity increase/decreased?**

The increase in the board size has created a better product and the budget is understood more overall. However, it takes more time for the board to wade through the discussion to get to the better decision making. The first year had growing pains/issues, but they are now into their second year and unanimously feel that they will have a great product to produce to the towns people this year.

**3. Have you had an increase in diversity on the board? In what ways has diversity helped? In what ways has diversity hurt?**

Diversity was looked at as a negative term. This board does not feel that they necessarily disagree on many items, and they get along very well. It just takes longer to satisfy each individual on some discussion. The Town Administrator would prefer to work with a 3 member board, the meetings would be shorter in his opinion.

**4. Have the results/expectations been met for going form a three to five member board? Have the results/expectations changed as a result of going from three to five members?**

The petitioners expectations were met because of the appreciation to have more opinions heard on the board and in her opinion the products are better and worth the time it takes to discuss each one. Although admits that it does cause for a longer meeting on some topics. The opposing petitioner stated that all his expectations were met, “the meetings are longer and he prefers 3, possibly one”.

**5. Why is it more costly to be a 5-member board vs. a 3-member board?**

It costs the tax-payers \$6,200 more a year according to the Town Administrator.

**6. In the board's and town's people opinion, what size population warrants a 5-member board vs. a 3-member board?**

Both the board and the town stated that a 5 member board provided a better board for both villages to be represented. Although, they do not pull a pre-decided number of people from either town; whoever runs and wins, regardless of the village they live in, is elected to the board.

**7. Is the town petitioning to retract their decision to go to a 5-member board or is the board of selectmen submitting their own warrant article to revert back to a 3-member board?**

The town is happy with a 5 member board and has no plans to go back to a 3 member board, however, one board member stated that in his opinion, if a strong enough campaign was launched to return to a 3 member board, it could win. (This board member was on the 3 member board prior to the vote, doesn't work, and can devote his time to the board.)

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## Appendix E – Notes From the Interview with the Hopkinton, NH Board of Selectmen

Board of Selectmen, Epsom

September 26, 2005 at 7:00 pm

### Questions:

#### 1. What was the catalyst for going from a three to five member board?

Between the answers from the board and the audience it was unclear whether it was started by Petition to ‘Talk about the change from 3 to 5’ or if it was a signed Petitioned Warrant Article. But, it was the spirit in the form of a ‘Petition’ that the argument was raised to make a change to the size of the board, over a period of several years of discussion. A list of arguments surfaced such as:

- growth of town directly impacting the need for more help on the board
- school board changed first, setting an example of the need
- break up the ‘good-old-boy’ network
- turned into a study (a committee such as ours)
- more diverse representation was needed on the board with a growing town

#### 2. Have you seen an increase/decrease in productivity of the board? Where has the productivity increase/decreased?

It was agreed that there is more work for the board regardless of having 3 or 5 on the board, and that going from 3 to 5 has been better for the town, but more time for the board at meetings. However, it was also pointed out that more is on each agenda now that the town is growing.

They have taken a new approach to spreading the work amongst them by appointing board members as liaisons to the departments.

#### 3. Have you had an increase in diversity on the board? In what ways has diversity helped? In what ways has diversity hurt?

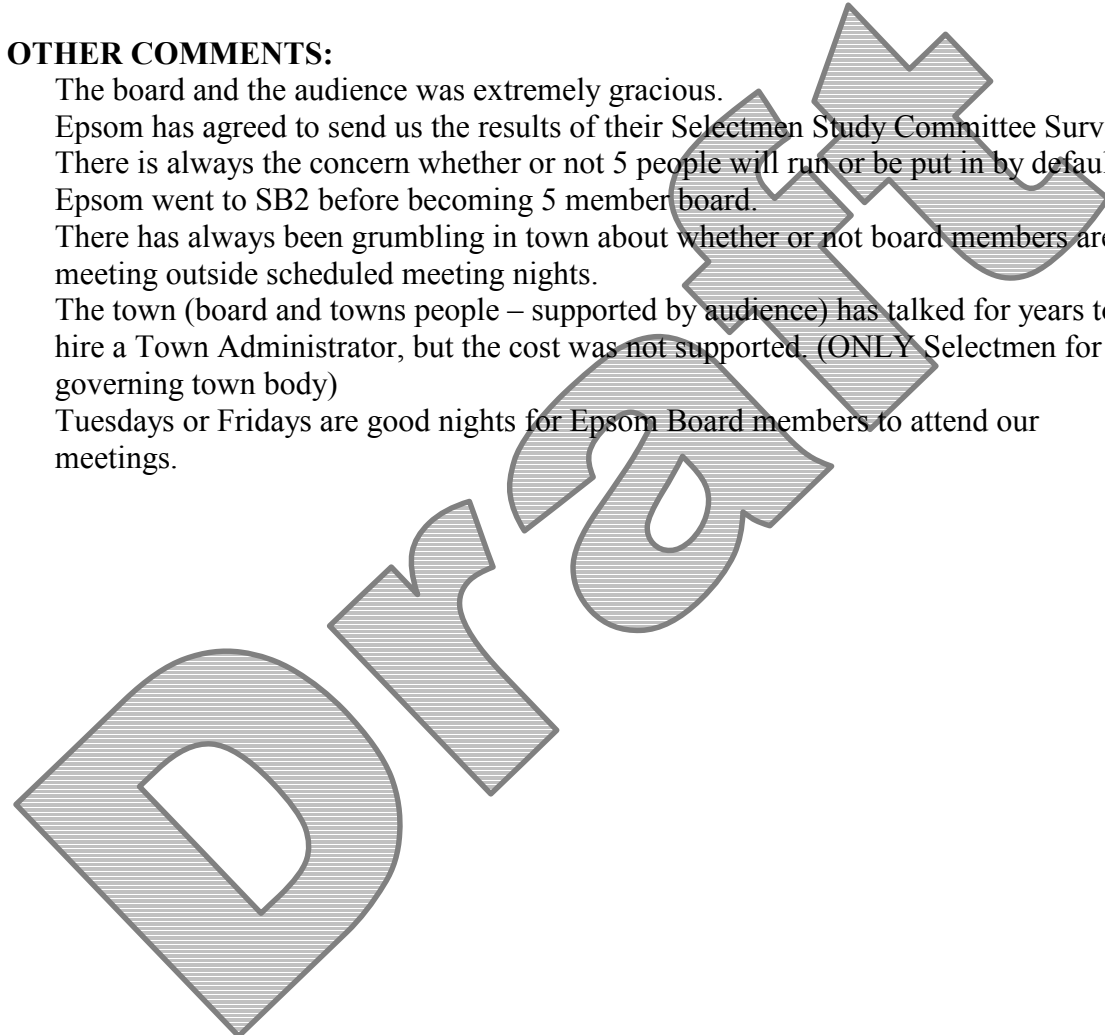
Yes, there has been an increase of diversity on the board (agreed by both board and audience). There was a full audience that was allowed to speak freely. Many shared that they felt the board was now a better representation of the town’s people and that the board was a better ‘quality’ board. Diversity was not looked at negatively.

**4. Have the results/expectations been met for going from a three to five member board? Have the results/expectations changed as a result of going from three to five members?**

The audience feels that their expectations have been met. They feel more represented on a 5 member board. Some board members are very happy, some are still skeptical and one felt she/he knew what is best because of her/his experience on 'private boards' and that a 3 member board would always be better (she did not have prior experience on the 3 member board).

**OTHER COMMENTS:**

The board and the audience was extremely gracious. Epsom has agreed to send us the results of their Selectmen Study Committee Survey. There is always the concern whether or not 5 people will run or be put in by default. Epsom went to SB2 before becoming 5 member board. There has always been grumbling in town about whether or not board members are meeting outside scheduled meeting nights. The town (board and towns people – supported by audience) has talked for years to hire a Town Administrator, but the cost was not supported. (ONLY Selectmen for a governing town body) Tuesdays or Fridays are good nights for Epsom Board members to attend our meetings.



## **Appendix F – Notes from the Brookline Public Forum**

**DRAFT**

## **Appendix G – Brookline Public Survey Results**

**DRAFT**