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Honorable Representative Maida Townsend, Chair
House Committee on Government Operations
115 State Street
Montpelier, VT 05633-5301

April 10, 2017

Dear Representative Townsend,

I am writing in regard to H.520 entitled *An act relating to approval of amendments to the charter of the Town of Stowe* introduced by Stowe Representative Heidi Scheuermann.

I was chair of the Stowe Town Meeting Task Force, which was formed upon decision of the Stowe Selectboard in March 2016. Attendance at the annual town meeting in Stowe has declined in recent years. The tasks force's mission was to "study the reasons for the decline in voter attendance at the annual town meeting and recommend changes to increase attendance."

The task force met bi-monthly over six months. We started by identifying values and causes, gathered relevant data, reached out to numerous community groups, wrote articles in the local paper, conducted a survey in which 225 people engaged, and researched what other Vermont communities have done in response to decline in town meeting attendance.

We wrote a report, included with this correspondence, that summarizes our findings and gives recommendations to the Selectboard for consideration and action.

One clear message from the community was that the date and time of the meeting is challenging for many. The meeting takes place during normal working hours on a Tuesday morning. We recommend that the town be able to change the date and time of the meeting to any of the three days that precede the first Tuesday in March.

By following other recommendations in the report, such as a campaign to better utilize traditional and newer forms of social media to promote the meeting and the issues to be discussed, we were able to significantly increase attendance at this year's meeting.

On behalf of the members of the town meeting task force, I ask that your Committee act favorably on H.520 as presented, and report the bill out to the full House for its consideration.

Best regards,

David Jaqua