

**Charter Commission
Regular Meeting March 6,
2019
7:00 PM
Town Hall**

Minutes

Members Present: Myles Davis, Mike Ninteau, Karen Buffkin, Gregg LaFontaine, Pierre Belisle, and Suzanne Gilleese

Others Present: A resident of the town.

1.0 Call to Order

G. LaFontaine called the meeting to order at approximately 7 pm.
All members present.

2.0 Discuss and act upon approval of minutes from February 20, 2019 Regular Meeting, February 26, 2019 Special Meeting, and February 26, 2019 Public Hearing

2/20/19 meeting minutes: M. Ninteau MOVED to approve; M. Davis SECONDED, Motion carried 6:0:0

2/26/19 special meeting minutes: K. Buffkin MOVED to approve; M. Ninteau SECONDED, Motion carried 6:0:0

2/26/19 public hearing minutes: K. Buffkin MOVED to approve; M. Ninteau SECONDED, Motion carried 6:0:0

3.0 Correspondence

There was discussion regarding the 3/5/19 letter received from B. Dennler regarding the date for the second public hearing on the proposed charter. The Chairman indicated that the letter gives May 24th as the last date for this public hearing. There was discussion that the commission would give a proposal, get comments and make adjustments, at this hearing. The Chairman stated that the committee can set the date for this public hearing at the next meeting.

The Chairman queried whether members had reviewed the Norwich Bulletin article attached to B. Dennler correspondence. S. Gilleese noted that that legal counsel would be available to review the commission's proposed charter to review for any possible problems with wording, to avoid the problem noted in the Norwich Bulletin article.

4.0 Discuss and review input from first public hearing, consider core points of consensus

Several members noted their disappointment with the sparse attendance of the February 26, 2019 public hearing, with only nine attendees and one member of the press. Several members noted that there were more members at public meetings with respect to the last proposed charter.

Members discussed the idea of four year terms that was brought up at the meeting. There was also discussion about a five member board of selectman, which was brought up at the hearing, with staggered terms although there were concerns that it may be difficult to get volunteers.

The members noted that most of the attendees at the public hearing wanted a town administrator but another member noted that others at the hearing were concerned of too much bureaucracy and increased costs. There was a proposal of having a provision in the charter that allowed the first selectman to delegate duties as needed to others, as opposed to having a permanent town administrator position created for the town.

Members also noted that some attendees voiced concerns about the Board of Finance of being stripped of too much power with a charter.

The Chairman noted that that checks and balances were brought up a lot and that, if there were going to be changes made in town government, that the changes would have to be explained. The Chairman further noted that people wanted the town meeting format for town government and wanted local voices heard. The Chairman further noted that if there were to be a professional administrator and staggered terms, that these changes would have to be justified.

The Chairman queried the committee members whether changes should be made for the next public meeting. Members indicated that no changes were needed. There was discussion on how to correct any misinformation, if needed, at the next meeting. There was further discussion about clarifying the difference between a town manager as opposed to town administrator. The Chairman noted that at the next public meeting, that time would need to be allocated for a presentation, before taking comments.

5.0 Review previous charter proposal considering input from hearing, and any core points of consensus

The committee discussed pages 1 through 12, Articles 1 through 6 of the last proposed charter, dated June 10, 2015.

The Chairman made clear that the committee will revisit sections after discussion.

There was agreement that the table of contents would include the subsections in each article to make it more user friendly. Several members indicated that subsections 1.1 through 1.3 should remain. There was discussion about some of the legal terms and that there should be an attempt to replace archaic, legalistic terms with their equivalent in plain language. There was debate about whether subsection 1.4 (definitions of terms) should remain and whether Article 2 should remain if it reflected current practice.

Several members indicated that they wanted to revisit paragraph 7 in subsection 2.4. Members also debated subsection 2.5 and whether changes should be made.

On Article 3, the members discussed having four year staggered terms for the board of selectman and having a five member board of selectman. One member noted that if there was to be a town

administrator that staggered terms may not be needed. Another member voiced concerns about having a permanent town administrator position, as that may have been one reason why the last proposed charter was not approved. Another member voiced concern about getting residents to volunteer to serve as selectmen.

There was further discussion on certain enumerated paragraphs in subsection 3.3, namely paragraphs 3, 5, 6, 9, 15, 21, including whether to require a referendum for approval of the town budget.

The committee addressed subsection 4.2 and compensation for the First Selectman and stipends for the other selectman.

There was further discussion about minority representation for the board of selectman and that a state statute provided for a maximum of three members from the same party for a five member board of selectmen.

There was discussion on subsection 6.4 on breaking a tie in an election.

The members noted that future committee meetings would be two hours long. Members agreed to adjourn at 8:30 pm for this meeting.

6.0 Start to assemble outline/ framework/draft of document/ and schedules to assemble proposal

K. Buffkin agreed to begin drafting and revising provisions for the proposed charter.

7.0 Identify questions and areas of concerns, additional reference materials required

The Lebanon Planning and Zoning Commission's survey was discussed. The members agreed that K. Buffkin should draft a question on a town charter, for the survey, to replace the survey question, proposed by the Planning and Zoning Commission.

8.0 Adjourn

M. Davis MOVED to adjourn at approximately 8:30 pm; MOTION CARRIED 6:0:0.

Respectfully submitted,

Suzanne Gilleese
Secretary, Charter Commission