

Charter Commission
Regular Meeting
March 20, 2019
7:00 PM
Town Hall
MINUTES

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

Others Present: Administrative Assistant Bernard Dennler

1.0 Call to Order

The Chairman called the meeting to order at around 7 pm.

2.0 Discuss and act upon approval of minutes from March 6, 2019 Regular Meeting

M. Davis MOVED to approve the minutes from the 3/6/19 meeting

P. Belisle SECONDED; MOTION carried 6:0:0

3.0 Communications

In response to an inquiry by the Chairman, B. Dennler attended the meeting at the Chairman's request. B. Dennler discussed the prior charter commission and clarified that the June 10, 2015 draft of the last proposed charter is identical to other draft dated September 2015. He also explained that the prior charter commission was dissolved for missing a publication deadline; and was reconstituted by the Board of Selectman. B. Dennler reiterated that as far as he was aware, the reconstituted commission did not change any part of the proposed charter that had been drafted before being dissolved.

K. Buffkin handed out a report issued by the State regarding state statutes on minority representation for municipal boards.

The Chairman informed the members that an attorney from Waller Smith and Palmer would be available to review any new language in the proposed charter and that there would be no need for further review of language that was from the old proposed charter.

4.0 Continue review of previous charter proposal as starting point. Work on framework /draft of document/ and schedules considering input from hearing, & any core points of consensus.

The Chairman then proposed that a Word version of the last proposed charter be made available to members, which they could use to propose changes to the text. G. LaFontaine also proposed that, once there was a consensus to change the text, that K. Buffkin would be the member to make the edits in the version in Google Docs. This Google Docs version would be the official, new proposed charter. The members agreed that K. Buffkin would be the member to make the edits in the official, Google.doc version.

The members then continued to review and comment on the last proposed charter, starting on page 12. One member proposed that the minority representation chart in section 6.2 have two charts—one for the board of selectman and one for agencies. Article 7 was then discussed. One member commented that Section 7.1 reflects how elective officials and agencies are currently run, but that the wording may have to be changed if changes are made to the part of the charter concerning selectmen. On Section 7.2 there was discussion on whether to change the six year terms of office for some elected officials. Several members indicated that the current six year terms of office were sufficient and there was further discussion on not making too many changes. As for the board of selectmen, there was discussion on having a five member board of selectman with staggered terms in order to maintain continuity. The members agreed to revisit this section.

Members then discussed section 7.2 and whether to change the date when terms of office commence to a later date. Members discussed changing the date to a day in January of the year following the election. Members were of the opinion that a longer transition period would be beneficial. The members then agreed that section 7.2 should be changed to have the second Monday in January be the date when terms of office commence for all agencies, including the terms of office for members of the board of selectmen.

Section 7.3.1 was then discussed. There was discussion on having a five member board of selectmen. The members agreed that a five member board, with staggered terms could be proposed at the next public meeting. After the public meeting, the commission members would assess whether the new proposed charter would provide for a five member board of selectmen. There was further discussion on compensation and one member queried on whether to include compensation in the charter.

Section 7.3.2 was then discussed. Several members voiced concerns over resignations and whether the length of term of office was a factor. B. Dennler provided one member a chart identifying resignations by members of all town agencies, boards. After review and discussion, several members were of the opinion that the six year terms of office for these board members need not be changed.

Members reached consensus that Sections 7.3.3 and 7.3.4 should not be changed. With respect to Sections 7.3.4, 7.3.5, 7.3.6, 7.3.7, and 7.3.8, members indicated that the provisions reflected current practice and that none of the respective agencies had voiced concerns that changes needed to be made.

The members then discussed section 7.4 regarding vacancies. Members discussed whether a vacancy had to be filled from a member of the same party as the one vacating the seat or whether an independent could fill the vacancy. There was further discussion on the role that the board of selectman played in filling the vacancy. One member indicated that section 7.4 in the last proposed charter was different than current practice.

Members then discussed Section 8.1. One member queried as to meaning of the term “elector” and whether it should be changed so the term is defined in that section. The Chairman proposed that S. Gilleese propose how the term should be defined in this section. The third paragraph on page 16 was then discussed. B. Dennler explained that agency recommendations regarding reappointment are generally followed by the board of selectmen and that the board relies on them in making decisions on reappointment.

Sections 8.1. through 8.5 were then addressed. The Chairman informed the members that these sections were not highlighted by the prior commission as sections that would change current

practice. K. Buffkin indicated that five year terms for members of the Economic Development commission were mandated by state statute. Members then discussed cleaning up language in Sections 8.1.2 and 8.1.7 to clarify terms of appointment for members younger than eighteen. B. Dennler pointed out that the Commission on Children and Families was no longer active. Members asked B. Dennler to look into why that commission is no longer active. There was further discussion on Section 8.1.9 and 8.1.10.

5.0 Consider date for next public hearing

The Chairman proposed that the commission table the decision on when to hold the next public hearing and called for a motion on that.

P. Belisle MOVED to table the decision on the date for the next public hearing to April 3rd.
M. Nintean SECONDED.
MOTION CARRIED 6:0:0.

6.0 Identify questions & areas of concerns, additional reference materials required.

The Chairman queried whether a special meeting should be scheduled during the last week of April. The Chairman indicated that members could email him.

7.0 Adjourn

K. Buffkin MOVED to adjourn.
MOTION CARRIED 6:0:0.

Respectfully submitted,

Suzanne Gilleese
Secretary, Charter Commission