

**CHARTER COMMISSION
PUBLIC HEARING
"REVISED" DRAFT MINUTES 9/17/14**

Chairman Matthew Berger called the Public Hearing meeting for the Charter Revision Commission to order at 7:00pm. He shared the order of the meeting with the public and the members of the commission introduced themselves to the public. All the members were present: Chairman Matthew Berger, Vice- Chairman Stephen Bessette, Connie Frishman, Ashley Gillece, John Gomes, Amy Hambly, Susan Jones, Jerry Murphy, Gail Shea, Alice Soscia, and Bob Statchen.

The public spoke on their concerns with the Board of Finance. The following is a list of citizens who spoke and a brief statement of their remarks.

*Lou Allen: He shared comments on an alternative way to vote on our budget. He wants a democratic process vote on each department, individually.

*Bruce Yarnall: He highlighted the reasons for being here- 1) how Board of Finance members were elected, 2) how they are held accountable to voters, 3) term limits, 4) how things are run. His opinion is a 5-7 member board is appropriate.

*Pat Hambly: The commission's mission needs to stay focused on efforts on the Board of Finance, with the goal to produce a quality product in the time allotted.

*Cindy Ladwig: She is the Town Clerk for Stonington, speaking on behalf of herself & Linda Camilio, the Tax Collector. Her suggestion is to make these two positions part of the administrative staff versus a position to be voted on in a bi-partisan manner. She shared the learning curve necessary for these positions and suggests a four year term is appropriate.

*Don Marnell: He agreed with Ms. Ladwig's comments. He suggested taking a look at the size of the Board of Selectmen to possibly make it a 5 member board. The Finance Board has done a good job, although last year was "ugly" for a few reasons. His hopes are to have Finance Board members that don't have a single interest, and to consider term limits of 4 years. He spoke on the background of the Ethics commission too.

*Jennifer Herbst- She expressed support for this commission to address the concerns expressed in the petition for revision of the Board of Finance

*Harriett Statchen- She urged the group to stay on task also, with the main concern being lack of accountability to the town's people.

*Emily Kuhn- She supports comments already stated regarding the frustration of lack of accountability with the Finance Board.

*Kevin Bornstein- He echoed comments of the 1500 people signing the petition, asking for this commission to look at a very specific issue. "The crux of the matter is the election process; it's a non-election election". It needs to be made an elected position. Term limits need to be reviewed: 2 yrs. may be too short and 6 yrs. may be too long. He supports an odd number for the Board of Finance. He wants to change the minority representation of unaffiliated candidates.

*Lori Taylor- She agreed with Mr. Borestein's comments and stated a 6 yr. term is too long.

*Glenn Frishmann- Recommendations: 1) education budget should be voted on separately from town budget, 2) 5 member Board of Selectman, 3) an unaffiliated member being able to get on the ballot, 4) Board of Finance should be non-political.

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- *Tom Verde- He echoed support for the petition and the task at hand for the commission.
- *Catherine Ogilvie- She asked "if there was a way to have multiple amounts on the budget?" (i.e. one line item for the Board of Ed and other line items for other sections of the budget). Then it is the Board of Finance's job to figure out how we are going to meet the budget.
- *Celena Drury- She asked what are the criteria for an elected position on the Board of Finance. She agreed with previous comments on term limits and said it's okay to look at line by line item on the budget. She agreed with the Town Clerk & Tax Collector being made part of the administrative staff but that decision needs to look at the consideration of pensions, and requires approval of the Board of Selectmen.
- *Craig Esposito- He is a Board of Ed member. He said it'd be good idea if citizens could comment at each meeting.
- *Mark Mercier- He agrees with a 7 member Board of Finance idea, but wants to see a 5 member Board of Selectmen. He suggested a separate election line item/section for the Board of Selectmen.
- *Marsha Standish- She is the Assessor for the town. She suggested reinstating the Assessor's office to the administrative department. She shared the function of the Assessor's office.
- *Dr. J. Strunk- She is a member of the Board of Finance & the K-12 building committee. She suggested the Selectman election be every 4 years and institute term limits.
- *Michael Fauerbach-He asked about the details and timeline of this charter commission's process and task at hand. Chairman Berger answered this in detail. He asked if the issues will be addressed independently in a referendum or as lump some of suggestions. He commented that this commission needs to stay focused on the one main issue, as the commission & Board of Selectmen hope to take this to referendum once.
- *Dan Kelley- He is a former president of the PTO. "There's a lot that's right with Stonington!" The group needs to stay focused and address the main issue which is to address the concerns expressed in the petition for revision of the Board of Finance.
- *Alice Sasso- She signed the petition because of all the issues that happened last spring. "We learned that we, the voters, didn't have a voice." We want a truly democratic process, a fair nominating process, & term limits. Please stick to this task.
- *Jack Moorehouse- Last year he felt the Board of Finance had "an air about them that they know best, but they didn't listen to the people".
- *Patty Naslund- She agrees with many comments stated this evening that it hasn't been a true democracy. Please look at term limits and balloting.

Adjournment: Mr. Berger adjourned the meeting at 8:20pm