

**CHARTER REVISION COMMISSION
REGULAR MEETING
MINUTES JANUARY 22, 2015**

Chairman Matthew Berger called the meeting to order at 7:05pm. In attendance were Chairman Matthew Berger, Vice-Chairman Stephen Bessette, Sue Jones, Gail Shea, Alice Soscia, Connie Frishman, Amy Hambly, Bob Statchen, Ashley Gillece, James Murphy, and John Gomes.

1. Public Comment:

- a. Kevin Bornstein, made comments regarding the petition made by the residents, urging the commission to remember the 1,556 signatures gathered and to remember the point of the resolution.
- b. Bruce Yarnall, made a comment regarding the public's view on the structure of the Board of Finance and that there was no public support for a 5 member Board of Selectmen and a Town Manager.
- c. Harriet Statchen, showed her support for the commission and is in agreement with the provisional structure proposed by the commission. She hopes that the commission's items will be able to be on the ballot in November.
- d. Greg Teifert, commented on the bifurcation of the town and school budgets, saying it may create a longer process. He commented on the structure of a Town Manager versus the current First Selectman, saying that a Town Manager may have an advantage since they do not have to be voted in.
- e. Marsha Standish, Town Assessor, speaking as a staff member, she urged the commission to look at the entire charter while it is still open. Although they are unable to create a petition, their comments are still important.
- f. Cindy Ladwig, Town Clerk, commented on her longevity and continuity. She urged the commission to look at the term for the Town Clerk and would like to see it at least four years.
- g. Greg Teifert spoke again in support for Ms. Ladwig's position.

2. Announcements: none.

3. Approval of Minutes of November 19, 2014:

Mr. Murphy moved to approve the minutes as amended. Mr. Bessette seconded. All in favor 11-0.

4. Communications:

- a. List Correspondance

5. Old Business

- a. **Transition process for Board of Finance from 6 to 7 members**

Ms. Shea began with her proposals to transition the board to the new format. Would like to see the board enter a sequence similar to the board of education where the election rotates electing three one election year and four the next. Ms. Shea presented three proposals to achieve this sequence.

Mr. Murphy commented on how the board of education transitioned to this format which is similar to proposal #2.

Mr. Gomes expressed his support for proposal #3.

Ms. Frishman commented on her concern of the positions being filled.

Ms. Soscia expressed her support for proposal #3.

Ms. Jones expressed that she is between the two but proposal #3 may be the best option, she is concerned with cutting a term short.

Ms. Hambly was concerned with proposal #3 extending out to 2023.

Mr. Stratchen agreed with Ms. Hambly and is in support of proposal #2, commented on other charter's transitions explaining that the commission does have the authority to shorten terms. Mr. Stratchen proposed that if the charter is adopted the Board of Finance would be able to appoint the vacancy, beginning the three-four structure faster.

The commission discussed the positives and negatives of this proposal by Mr. Stratchen. The commission discussed adding the statement that a special election would be held to appoint the vacancy.

Mr. Bessette commented on the issue in proposal three of the different terms in the 2017 election, he expressed support for proposal #2.

Ms. Gillece expressed concern about the appointment as well as the public being concerned with the cost of a special election.

Ms. Jones proposed that the two current slots up for election would be made four year terms. Allowing the three-four rotation to begin in 2017.

Ms. Hambly expressed her support of Mr. Stratchen's proposal and believes the public will support a special election in order to achieve their goals as quickly as possible.

Ms. Gillece discussed the possibility of appointing the third candidate to the vacancy. Mr. Berger expressed initial support for proposal #2, however is inclined to support Mr. Stratchen's proposal with a special election for the vacancy.

The commission thoroughly discussed the proposal for clarity.

Mr. Stratchen moved to have the candidates running in 2015 terms be shortened to four years, having a special election for the vacancy in 2016 whose term will expire in 2019, in 2017 four positions will be elected to four year terms and in 2019 three positions will be elected to four year terms, the motion was seconded by Mr. Gomes. Mr. Bessette made a motion to table the motion for the next meeting. Ms. Soscia seconded the motion to table. All in favor 11-0.

B. Filling of vacancies on the Board of Finance and Board of Education

The commission discussed wording used by other town charters concerning vacancies. The commission proposed language to appoint someone to a vacancy until the next November election. The commission is unsure whether this would be allowed, if so it would be during the next town election. This election would be to fill the remainder of the term. There is also concern that if someone were to resign too soon before the town election, there would be issues.

Mr. Bessette proposed adopting the same vacancy as the board of education, not limiting the appointed position.

Mr. Bessette moved to adopt the policy that in the event of a vacancy on the Board of Finance, the remaining members of the board shall be empowered to appoint a member of the same party until the next municipal election. Mr. Bessette withdrew his motion.

Mr. Stratchen moved that vacancies on a multi-member elective agency shall be filled by the remaining members of that agency until the next Town election. If a vacancy exists for more than 45 days, the Board of Selectmen shall be empowered to fill the vacancy until the next Town election. The replacement member shall be of the same political party as the vacating member or shall be an unaffiliated voter. Nothing contained herein, however, shall preclude a special election from being held in accordance with the provisions of the General Statutes to fill a vacancy in an elective office or to fill a vacancy on an elected agency in lieu of the procedures set forth above for filling such vacancies. Ms. Gillece seconded the motion.

Mr. Bessette moved to amend the motion to change "multi-member elective agency" to "Board of Finance and Board of Education" seconded by Mr. Berger. All in favor 11-0. Discussion on the amended motion. Ms. Shea moved to amend the words "Town" in the motion to be changed to

"Municipal". Seconded by Mr. Berger. All in favor 11-0. No discussion. Amended motion was approved all in favor 11-0.

C. Whether to adopt a bifurcated budget referenda process

Mr. Gomes spoke to a discussion with North Stonington that they have had success with it.

Ms. Shea commented that she is unsure that it will help or not.

Mr. Murphy expressed that he is not sure it is worth it to the town.

Ms. Hambly mentioned there was only one public comment in favor of bifurcation.

Mr. Bessette commented that it is somewhat bifurcated since it is discussed separately prior to election currently.

Ms. Gillece is in agreement that it is not worth it.

Ms. Frishman is in favor of bifurcation for the Board of Finance to understand where the fault is in the budget.

Mr. Berger is not in favor of bifurcation since it creates a divide in the budget and may cause problems with the education budget. It should be up to the Board of Finance to make decisions on where cuts should be.

Ms. Hambly is in agreement.

Ms. Gillece moved to discontinue discussion on the bifurcation of the budget. Seconded by Ms. Hambly. 9 in favor, 2 against Mr. Gomes and Ms. Frishman. The motion passes.

7. New Business

A. Where do we go from here - discussion on whether to address other issues for the CRC

Mr. Bessette suggested discussing the Town Clerk and Town Assessor positions further.

Mr. Gomes and Ms. Frishman suggested discussing having a five member Board of Selectmen.

Ms. Shea discussed speaking to all of the issues brought forward from the public hearing and feels it is the commission's duty.

Mr. Statchen believes it is premature to discuss further topics and would like to see a draft of changes thus far before deciding on further issues to discuss.

Mr. Berger expressed the desire to complete the mission of the charter revision commission. Ms. Shea expressed the desire to discuss further issues.

Ms. Soscia expressed that a majority of the issues discussed at the public hearing was regarding Board of Finance.

Ms. Frishman expressed that from the beginning it was not going to be solely about the Board of Finance. Mr. Gomes expressed agreement and that we should look at everything.

Ms. Hambly expressed that the charter was opened because of the petition regarding the Board of Finance.

Mr. Berger expressed that the commission must look at the Board of Finance but may or may not look at other issues.

Mr. Murphy expressed that the Town Clerk, Town Assessor and Tax Collector. Ms. Shea would like to have more issues.

Ms. Gillece agreed with Mr. Murphy.

Mr. Bessette agreed as well with housekeeping.

Mr. Statchen believes it is premature to decide on further issues.

Ms. Hambly would like to get a draft prior to accepting further issues and would like to see discussion on the Town Clerk, Assessor and Tax Collector.

Ms. Jones expressed that she would like to see the Board of Finance and Town Clerk, Assessor and Tax Collector, even if through special meeting.

Ms. Soscia was in agreement with Ms. Jones.

Ms. Frishman would like to look at the Town Clerk, Assessor and Tax Collector as well as the constables and selectmen.

Mr. Berger proposed to have the vote on term changes, language on changes and add the agenda Town Clerk, Town Assessor, and Tax Collector. New business will include additional issues.

8. Public Comment

- A. Marsha Standish, commented that her position was appointed and is concerned about the future of her position as well as the Town Clerk and Tax Collector. Staff was looking for appointments because internal staff that could be promoted was worried about standing for election every four years.
- B. Greg Heifert, would like a copy of the petition that called the charter. He expressed desire to see the public decide on Board of Selectman and Town Manager.

Motion to adjourn by Mr. Berger, seconded by Mr. Gomes. Meeting was adjourned at 10:30pm.



Amy Hambly
Secretary