

Charter Review Committee Remote Meeting

6/9/2021 - Minutes

1. Call To Order And Pledge Of Allegiance

The meeting was called to order at 7:03 pm. The pledge of allegiance was said.

Attendance (Charter Review Committee Members attended via remote connection): Matt Jussaume (Chair), Caroline Ahdab (Vice Chair), Ramona Reed (Clerk), John Ladik, Harvey Serreze, Marilyn Tremblay, Absent: Bob Newton

2. Acceptance Of Minutes

The minutes from the meeting on May 26, 2021 were reviewed.

Marilyn Tremblay made a motion, seconded by John Ladik, to accept the meetings minutes from 5/26/2021. The minutes were accepted unanimously by the committee members present at that meeting.

Yes: Matt Jussaume (Chair), Ramona Reed (Clerk), John Ladik, Harvey Serreze, Marilyn Tremblay

Abstained: Caroline Ahdab (Vice Chair)

3. Public Comments On The Agenda

None

4. Public Feedback Received

Matt Jussaume reported that he had communicated with Select Board member, Mr. Mark Matthews. Mr. Matthews reported that the Select Board will be working on code of conduct and anti-harassment policies for Town multi-member bodies.

5. Charter Revisions - Work On Complex Issues (See List Of Items In Agenda Packet)

5.1. Item 1 Social Media Policy - Charter Section 1-8

This item was reviewed to be included in Charter section 1-8 Ethics Standards. Details for this are included with the minutes for agenda item 5.2.

5.2. Item 4 Ethics - Charter Section 1-8

The CRC reviewed some previous text revisions made for section 1.8 Ethics Standards. Additional revisions were made to include a requirement for Town employees and multi member body members to take the State Conflict of Interest/Ethics training and to add a statement that they shall abide by the town polices relative to conduct and ethics. The following paragraph was added:

"All elected and appointed officers, employees and volunteers of the Town shall take and abide by the Conflict of Interest/Ethics Training as required in the MGL Chapter 268 Section A, that the public may justifiably have trust and confidence in the integrity of their government. Certifications for all elected and appointed officials, employees and volunteers will be on file in the Town Clerk's office.

All elected and appointed officers, employees and volunteers of the Town shall abide by any policies of the Town pertinent to ethical behavior such as but not limited to codes of conduct, anti-harassment policies, and policies related to conduct on any public accessible media."

Motion: Marilyn made a motion, seconded by Harvey Serreze, that the changes to section 1.8 be included in the Charter to resolve the ethics and social media topics from the complex issues list. The motion carried unanimously.

5.3. Other Items From Complex Issues List, Time Permitting

The following items from list of complex issues were also reviewed.

Section 2.3 b Committees, Finance Committee

Motion: John Ladik made a motion, seconded by Marilyn Tremblay, that the following text be removed from Charter section 2.3 b:

"No member of the Finance Committee shall serve on any other Board or Committee as a voting member except for a Charter Review Committee, or as may be provided by by-law."

The motion did not carry. No: Caroline Ahdab, Harvey Serreze, Ramona Reed, Yes: John Ladik, Marilyn Tremblay, Abstained: Matt Jussaume. The Charter text in section 2.3 b was left as is.

Discussion: Some examples of when members of the Finance Committee requested to serve on other Town committees were presented to the CRC during the past year. A recent example was the Capital Program Committee. John explained that the current Charter restriction for this is unnecessary because while the Finance Committee makes recommendations on financial matters, they have no authority to make decisions. This is left to the Select Board, the Town Administrator and voters. Caroline Ahdab commented that we should have legal counsel review this section if we remove the text, though she does recognize that it could benefit some committees to have members from the Finance Committee. She and Marilyn Tremblay agreed that there could be some conflict of interests if a Finance Committee member served on a committee which had financial matters or budgets that are reviewed by the Finance Committee. Marilyn advised that she would vote yes on the motion as long as legal counsel reviewed the revision. It was also discussed that although the Finance Committee members don't have powers to make budget and other financial decisions, the recommendations it makes on the Town meeting budget and expense-related warrants often do carry influence with voters.

Section 2.11 Report to Voters

It was necessary to revisit this section to review previous changes made to the text concerning the Capital Plan Report, and to add a description about the requirement for the state mandated Annual Town Report. It was also agreed that the initial paragraphs of the section should be broken out into smaller sections so they are easier to read. After discussion, the following changes were completed:

1. The title of the section was renamed to "Reports to Voters" to reflect that the section covers more than one report, the annual meeting warrants packet, and now, the Annual Town Report.
2. The section was divided into two items:
 - a. Town Meeting Warrant
 - b. Town Annual Report
3. The existing revised text was reformatted under item a, and further minor revisions were made to clarify some text.
4. The following new text was added as item b to describe the Town Annual Report. This text was taken from the description on the Town website.

b. Annual Town Report - In accordance with Massachusetts General Law, the Town shall prepare, and

make public, an Annual Town Report prior to the Annual Town Meeting. The report focuses on significant accomplishments of the previous fiscal year and goals for the current fiscal year. The Annual Town Report may also include reports from boards and committees, election results and Town Meeting information.

Motion: A motion was made by John Ladik, seconded by Marilyn Tremblay, to accept the edits to Charter section 2.11. The motion carried unanimously.

6. Other Matters Which Could Not Be Reasonably Anticipated 48 Hours Prior To Meeting

None

7. Adjournment

Marilyn Tremblay motioned to adjourn the meeting, which was seconded by Ramona Reed. By unanimous vote, the meeting adjourned at 8:57 pm. The next Charter Review Committee meeting is planned for June 23, 2021.

Minutes respectfully submitted by Ramona Reed, Clerk, Charter Review Committee