

Minutes accepted on 10/12/2022

Charter Review Committee Minutes  
Wednesday September 28, 2022 - 7:00 PM  
Jaillet Meeting Room - Westwood Police Station  
588 High Street  
Westwood, MA 02090

**Welcome:**

**Call To Order:**

The meeting was called to order at approximately 7:02 pm by Co-Chair Peter Cahill.

**Present:**

Peter Cahill-Co-Chairman, Nancy Hyde, John Loughnane and Dottie Powers.  
Ex-Officio Member: Christopher Coleman, Town Administrator & Patrick Ahearn, Town Counsel.  
Jessica Cole recorded the Minutes.

**Meet/Discuss matters with representatives from the Finance and Warrant Commission and Elected Officials:**

Mr. James Gavin was present to discuss his feedback to the Charter Review Committee.  
The Committee started by thanking Mr. Gavin for his dedication to the Town as the Town Treasurer.  
The Committee just wanted to have a conversation and were looking for some insight.

- What do you think about the skill set that is necessary and what matters? To be educated in Finance, banking background is helpful, he had retail banking background and requirements of banks. Step in and understand the language of banking. Have a good understanding of what is going on, the trends in interest rates in terms of borrowing. Long Term vs short term debt, understand what is out there.
- Role he played as an elected official: It is outdated, it is not appropriate for today. It is a big responsibility, you need to delegate. A job that is hard to do if you are not in the office. The Charter is outdated. So many means of access, 3rd party vendors. So many ways to access funds. Would talk weekly for 2 hours. Apprehensive about opening new accounts.
- Any suggestions? What should we consider? Don't think you can name someone as a Treasurer that is not a full time employee. Asst Treasurer may need to be a full time employee too. It is an elected position. Access to move funds to any institution. There are vulnerabilities. The Treasurer is a fiduciary.
- More towns have full time treasurer roles than elected roles.
- Mr. Gavin relied a lot on Pam Dukeman and staff.
- Always had an open conversation, along with Pat Conley and Kathy Foley.
- Always met in November, where we were with the audit, what was ahead of us, on the warrant, long range financial committee meetings, always had an understanding as to what was going on.
- Discussed any issues, weekly and monthly reporting.
- Ms. Foley and Ms. Conley reported respectfully to Mr. Gavin, but daily to Ms. Dukeman.
- Treasurer/Collector there was an overlap.
- Collection rate has always been high.

- Communication in the Finance Dept is key.
- Importance in Management including Select Board, School Board, are policies being followed.
- It is a 3 Year Term.
- Any advice? Time for the younger residents to step up.

George Hertz & Chris Poreda co-Chairs of the Finance and Warrant Commission were present. Mr. Hertz and Mr. Poreda are running FinCom together.

- They feel that the Town Charter and Bylaws are not consistent.
- They have concerns about other Boards, making sure no one is thinking we are trying to control other Boards.
- Helpful to have FinCom members be a participant.
- Town Charter says, If on FinCom, you cannot serve any other elected or appointed positions.
- FinCom cannot participate and cannot vote and will have its own Long Range Financial Planning Committee related to the 5 year financial plan.
- Cannot appoint a member to participate set up by the Select Board,
- FinCom members are appointed, not elected. It's a study group, a commission.
- It is a challenge to get volunteers in Town.
- Ex-Officio members, would it limit you? Prefer to be members.
- Size of the Finance Warrant Commission-15 member is too large. Pros of 9-easier to manage. A smaller FinCom could work.
- Concern - maintain open meeting laws- Geographically and Demographically representative of the Town.
- Always 5-7 heavy lifters- all members assigned to a committee. Public Safety, Human Services-every FinCom member will be assigned to a committee. It's a way to get engaged.
- Moderator has a hard time finding members.
- With a 9 member commission, they get nervous with the vote, 5 can take over.
- How often is there a vacancy? 5 members rotate every 3 years.
- Keep 15 to have a quorum of 8 which allows for some flexibility.
- Concerned about the cost, give people that have a hard time financially a voice.
- Demographics in Town are changing. No longer a starter home in Westwood.
- How to reach out to new residents.
- Mr. Poreda will email Mr. Ahearn his written concerns.
- FinCom person on a group, there could be an outside influence. This is being addressed. Will not roll call the vote in the same order each time.
- ExOfficio- appointed non voting member, to be a part of the discussion.
- Core Functions:
  - Produce report to Town Meeting.
  - 5 year capital plan.
  - State wide and MMA-Done differently in many Towns.
- Value in the independence of FinCom.
- We have subcommittees (3-4 people and make a presentation and review the budget back to the Fin Com)
- If a member of Fin Com has an article needs to become a citizen and cannot vote on the article as a Fin Com member.
- FinCom-Not elected - 9 is larger than any Board. It is an appointed group.
- Term limits? Self limiting, not an issue.
- Chair should be limited to no more than 2 years, 3 max.
- 15 member Board- difficult to find the right people and diversity within the Town. They like sticking with 15 and a quorum of 7.

- Are you getting more input with 15? Yes, this year especially trying to get them involved.
- What is the time commitment? You will serve/be assigned on a committee. Breaking Municipal into 2 components. Smaller departments and visibility. Subcommittees meeting with the smaller depts.
- If you are going to make a change, have a rational basis.

**Review/Discuss the responses to the survey received:**

None

**Discuss invitations/schedule for meetings with elected/appointed officials:**

- Invite Department Heads? We want to speak to them.
- Mr. Coleman suggested a walk through the Charter and redline and we can view.
- Would it be helpful to have a Committee member present to go through the Charter?
- Mr. Coleman will bring it up at the Dept Head meeting.
- Schedule meeting to go through the Charter.
- Mr. Coleman referenced Minutes from 2010. Dept of Revenue and DLS, Elected Treasurer position.
- Ms. Powers suggested having the Department of Revenue and DLS should come in and talk to us at the October 19th meeting.
- 10/27 meeting-Police Station
- Attorney Goldberg invite her to the October 12th, 19th and 27th meeting.
- Mr. McCusker invite to the October 19th meeting with the public,

**Approval of Minutes September 21, 2022 meeting:**

Upon a motion made by Ms. Powers and seconded by Mr. Loughnane, the Charter Review Committee voted in favor (4-0) to accept the minutes from September 21, 2022 as presented.

**Discuss invitations/schedule for meetings with elected/appointed officials:**

**Wednesday Oct 12:** Mr. Coleman will reach out to: Town Moderator-Jim O' Sullivan, Select Board members and Planning Board Chair Chris Pfaff. Mr. Gotti and Mr. Coleman cannot attend, they will attend the FinCom meeting, 20 minutes each.

**Wednesday October 19:** Tom McCusker, Mr. Ahearn will reach out to him and he will attend the Public Input Meeting.

**Public Participation:**

None

**Other Business:**

Is FinCom an advisory Board-allows them to seek information and make recommendations.  
Mr. Hertz references MMA- Can we read it too, can we ask him to share what he is reading? Yes.  
Ms. Hyde will reach out to him.  
Mr. Poreda will send his language to Mr. Ahearn.  
Defining the role of Fin Com.  
Ms. Powers read from the bylaw about FinCom.  
Mr. Coleman read the timeline for the budget as written in the Charter timeline.

**Adjourn:**

Upon a motion made by Ms. Powers and seconded by Mr. Loughnane, the Charter Review Committee voted in favor (4-0) to adjourn at 9:06pm.

