

## Minutes approved 11/29/2022

Charter Review Committee Minutes  
Thursday November 10, 2022  
6:00 PM  
Via Remote Participation  
Westwood, MA 02090

### **Welcome:**

### **Call To Order:**

The meeting was called to order at approximately 7:00 pm by Co-Chair Paul Fitzgerald.

### **Present:**

Paul Fitzgerald-Co-Chair, Peter Cahill-Co-Chair, Nancy Hyde, John Loughnane and Dottie Powers, Town Clerk.

Ex-Officio Member: Christopher Coleman, Town Administrator.  
Jessica Cole recorded the Minutes.

### **Meet/Discuss matters with Elected Officials:**

#### **Robert Gotti-Select Board**

- Mr. Gotti reaffirmed that we should remain as an Open Town Meeting form of government versus Representative Town Meeting. Further Mr. Gotti(as do all members of the Select Board) favors keeping it as it currently exists.
- There are some key positions that should be looked at for appointed versus elected: Town Treasurer, Tax Collector and Town Clerk. They are important positions that need to be secure.
- Mr. Gotti addressed the quorum. The Town lowered the quorum during COVID to 45 and still exceeded that number; the current Town Meeting quorum is 175.
- Finance & Warrant Commission members are currently not allowed to serve on other boards or committees, are fairly informed and would add value in an ex-officio fashion. Mr. Gotti has no issue with the current size, but is open to a smaller Finance & Warrant Commission with potential alternates if the Town went to 9 or 11 members.
- Mr. Gotti stated that any member of the Finance & Warrant Commission that has a Citizen's Petition article should be required to recuse themselves from any deliberative action on the petition article.
- Mr. Gotti suggested maintaining a quality candidate pool, and a vetting process. A rush to fill vacancies after Town Meeting puts a lot on the Town Moderator.
- Does the IT Advisory Board need to be revisited? Mr. Gotti is not sure who is on the board. It may help with remote work opportunities.

#### **Board Questions:**

- Thoughts on no quorum? *Is there a precedent? Mr. Gotti likes the idea of lowering some of the articles to draw a crowd and then residents may leave. He would be open to this possibility.*
- Mr. Loughnane: Thoughts on potential role for identifying candidates? *Not sure how it would operate? Idea that we have a process for maintaining an active pool of people who are interested in serving and then vetting. He thinks it would be helpful to the Town Moderator who has less than a (5) five-week window to fill the positions.*

- Mr. Fitzgerald: Universal consensus-believe in Open Town Meeting. Anything about the structure that you want us to think about? *Budget presentation prerecorded is helpful, utilization of large screens and electronic voting make for an efficient Town Meeting.*
- Mr. Fitzgerald: Discussion about Indefinite Postponement-Different title. Ms. Hyde: To undo Indefinite Postponement requires a 2/3 vote, we have been told by Legal Counsel that it is a majority vote in some communities. Mr. Fitzgerald: Indefinite postponement means that the article is removed off the warrant without discussion. People are confused by this concept. Looking at best practices and making recommendations.
- Personnel Board, complexity of HR, its effectiveness. Mr. Gotti: Not informed enough. Mr. Coleman: Have challenges with creating new positions, the process involves Posting a Personnel Board meeting, the Board has to review the position, descriptions, recommendations for classifications. The process is slowing us down.
- Mr Gotti: Is there an alternative model that other communities are using? *Mr. Coleman: Molly Kean will talk about this at the November 29 meeting. It is not the Personnel Board it is the process, something to review.*
- Comment further on the 3-member Board. *Mr. Gotti: Issues with increasing the board size includes - Will there be enough candidates willing to run? Will it increase the burden on the Town Administrator?*
- Mr. Cahill: Interested in opinion on FinCom - Is FinCom Legislative or Advisory? *Mr. Gotti: The Charter is clear, it is advisory.*
- Getting feedback about FinCom that that is not the case. Wanting more of a role during the budget process and want to be more involved. *Mr. Gotti: The Select Board and Town Administrator set the Budget, and the Select Board presents the budget to Town Meeting. And present it to FinCom. There is a significant process that is involved in building the budget, that FinCom will then review.*

#### **Charles Donahue-School Committee Chair**

- Mr. Donahue is the Chairman of the School committee and has worked with Town Depts and appreciates everyone.
- Overall he is pleased with the School Committees relationship with all of the Town groups. They have all been very supportive and helpful in advising the School Committee.

#### **Tony Mullin-School Committee**

- Representative vs Open Town Meeting-1200 people came out to vote was positive. Open Town meetings work well for our Town.
- The School Committee has struggled with Finance & Warrant Commission turnover. Is it a size issue?
- The Charter is pretty clear; If they want more input they need to start earlier.
- The Town Moderator has done a good job with diversity.
- Mr. Mullin asked about having a Town Meeting on a Saturday? Evenings are a struggle.
- Bring people with children into other committees in town.
- Glad the Town is bringing back the Long-Range Financial Planning committee.
- 5 members on the School Committee works well.
- Mr. Cahill: 5-person Select Board-2 members can speak to each other and have conversations. An argument to keep 3. Do you find there are policy discussions that you don't want to have occur? *Mr. Mullin: Has not had that issue, five is the norm of most towns. Should all Boards be the same number?*
- Mr. Mullin stated that the Associate Member language was confusing. Did not understand.
- Why are some members getting compensated? Make it consistent.

- Clarify what the Personnel Board is. The Schools are looking for additional HR support that is falling on the Assistant Superintendent.
- Ms. Powers: Saturday town meetings promote more people with school age children. *Mr. Mullin: Not sure what other towns have done. Would need to pick the right time so we could get at least one parent there.*
- Ms. Powers: Opinion on Saturday Election Day? *It could work, there are lots of options to vote early and by mail.*

### **Division of Local Services:**

**Marcia Bohinc-Senior Project Manager, Financial Management Resource Bureau & Kasey Bik, Project Manager, Financial Management Resource Bureau**  
**Ms. Bohinc had a presentation.**

### **Why Move from Elected to Appointed**

- What is the difference and what is appropriate?
- Appointed for the technical/operational roles.
- Specific qualifications are needed.
- Treasurer and Tax Collector are technical positions, with appointments you can expand the pool of qualified candidates.
- Accountability is important to talk about the good and the bad.
- Elected people can go wrong-underperforming.

### **Key Positions to Convert**

- Treasurer in charge of so much. Bank accounts, monitoring funds, working with the accounting side.
- Collector-taking everything that is flowing in, record keeping, books up to date. Important to have people with the experience and qualifications.

### **When to Make the Change**

- Retirement, vacancy, poor performance, community consensus, Finance & Warrant Commission support.
- Recommendation to Town Meeting.

### **When not to do it**

- Capable and committed individuals occupy the role and lack of public support.
- Ms. Bik-There can be a sense of mistrust. The Town may not understand. Ms. Hyde-Do you have specific recommendations on building community consensus? *Westwood is on the right track, meetings, and advertising, how your community engages the most. The more you have an open discussion the better.*
- Helpful to have current office holders agreeing with the change.

### **Enacting the Change**

- Develop a succession plan
- Job description
- Salary
- Benefits
- Sometimes it is a single role/position.

### **Why Combine the Treasurer Collector?**

- Same cash management functions.

- Handle all receipt processing in one place.
- Growing trend-215 combined now 281 towns combine the roles.

#### **Other Changes to Consider**

- Tax Collector vs Town Collector-Tax Collector can only collect committed bills (real estate personal property utility) and a Town collector can collect any type of receipt.
- Understand the transactions that are being dealt with.
- Have a tiered responsibility checklist.

#### **Statistics-elected Treasurers and Collectors**

- 298 Appointed
- Both Elected-44
- Collector only-6
- Treasurer only -3

#### **Board Comments:**

Mr. Fitzgerald: Are they smaller Towns? *No, across the board. Some are very small towns.*

Ms. Bik: Why has it remained Elected? Have had long term qualified people.

Mr. Fitzgerald: Towns we use in comparison? Canton, & Sharon.

Mr. Loughnane: When did the community's switch over? Ms. Bohinc: Hingham-5-6 years the rest are all before then, she will see if she has any visuals of the map and the shift.

#### **Election Statistics:**

It should be the people's choice.

Mr. Coleman thanked Mr. Ahearn for the help with DLS.

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

No new responses.

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

- Molly Kean, Asst. Town Administrator/HR Director will come on November 29, 2022 at 7pm.
- November 29, 2022 at 7pm at the Jaillet Meeting Room.
- Will extend invitations to Chris Pfaff, Phil Shapiro, and Maureen VonEuw.

#### **Other Business:**

None.

#### **Approval of Minutes October 27, 2022 meeting:**

Upon a motion made by Mr. Loughnane and seconded by Ms. Powers, the Charter Review Committee voted in favor (4-0-1-Hyde) to accept the minutes from October 27, 2022 as presented.

#### **Adjourn:**

Upon a motion made by Ms. Hyde and seconded by Mr. Loughnane, the Charter Review Committee voted in favor (5-0) to adjourn at 7:45pm.