

## Approved Minutes on 11/10/2022

Charter Review Committee Minutes  
Thursday October 27, 2022 - 7:00 PM  
Champagne Meeting Room  
50 Carby Street  
Westwood, MA 02090

### **Welcome:**

### **Call To Order:**

The meeting was called to order at approximately 7:01 pm by Co-Chair Paul Fitzgerald.

### **Present:**

Paul Fitzgerald-Co-Chair, Peter Cahill-Co-Chair, John Loughnane and Dottie Powers.  
Ex-Officio Member: Christopher Coleman, Town Administrator & Patrick Ahearn, Town Counsel.  
Lauren Goldberg, Special Counsel, KP Law.  
Jessica Cole recorded the Minutes.

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

#### **Julianne Bride**

- Confident with how the Town runs and works and is confident with the elected officials.
- Mr. Cahill: Role of FinCom and the view of the role. What was your experience? How did it work? Budget through draft articles. Was it satisfactory? *FinCom did well, representing the needs of the Town and diversity of our thinking, and challenging each other. Brought forth different perspectives on articles and proposals. Fair representation on the committee, but there is always an opportunity to grow in diversity.*
- Process: *There is a lot of work, preparing for meetings, going to the meetings, sticking to the agenda. Could have meetings when articles were not ready, is there a better way?*
- Size of the board? *It is a good number if we could get a broad representation of the Town-aged, diversity of religion, business knowledge, public health knowledge, zoning knowledge.*
- Would like to see an equalization of the workload, but not sure how to distribute that. The Chair will ultimately pick it up.
- Any sense of time commitment given to you? *No, but no one was deceitful. It was probably assumed that I knew what was entailed. To make the committee more efficient/equal, find a way to share the workload, and have people understand upfront*
- Try to recruit a new member? *Discuss the number of meetings, clarify what committee you'll be on. You may have a preference.*
- Did you feel that you were getting access to the information that you needed? *Overall yes, but once had a back and forth with the Planning Board and with the Budget, 2 years in a row getting data from the Chief of Police for his budget request. It creates a domino effect when you don't have all the information.*
- The Town was supportive and got all the information needed.
- A major change from the last Charter was the creation of the Municipal Finance Director and Municipal Finance Department. Kept the Elected Treasurer/Elected Tax Collector. Do you think that model works? *It worked really well, Pam was always prepared and had information for FinCom.*
- Town Meeting. How it works/Structured/ make it more effective. *Representatives could work for the Town, no quorum necessary. Help in case all can't make it. Do not think the outcomes would change.*

- Indefinite Postponement, not for Charter but Bylaws, talking about best practices. *Feels it is a verbiage thing, changing the words could overcome it. We have tried to explain it.*
- Attorney Goldberg: Indefinite postponement is the equivalent of negative action which is why zoning usually recommends that it be referred to the Planning Board for further study, which is a positive action. Commonly called 'PassOver', is that easier to understand, or 'Take No Action'. Reason that it is used so we do not say 'no'.
- FinCom cannot be on other committees. Any thoughts? *You should not be on more than one committee, get more people in Town involved. Informally sharing could be better, improved communication could work. Ex-officio is okay.*
- Open Town meeting, any recommendations, do we explain the process? *The Book is useful, should more be done to prepare digitally. Ways to consolidate from all the Boards. YouTube videos to help explain it.*
- Attorney Goldberg: Some Towns did this during COVID.
- What is the intended role for FinCom? *Advisory, but decision making within it. Advisory with a vote.*
- Town Meeting is Legislative and FinCom Advises and recommends.
- Residents always ask: Who voted against it? What was the rationale? *Represent the minority vote and defend their point, there is value in explaining. 11-4, that is a red flag for Town Meeting. FinCom usually tries to have 2 different responses.*
- Attorney Goldberg: Would it appear in the minutes, why they voted no? *Maybe attach the minutes.*
- Even a 14-1 vote to have 2 reports.

#### **Ellen Larkin Rollings-Planning Board-Vice Chair**

- The Planning Board works pretty well as a 5-member Board with alternates.
- FinCom-observations: *Some holes in the understanding of what the role of FinCom is.*
- Presenting a zoning article is not the job of FinCom to tell another Board what they can/can't bring to Town meeting.
- FinCom needs better vetting.
- Think that FinCom is too big with 15, maybe 11.
- Several Towns elect their FinCom.
- Smaller FinCom-Work issue? Representation/Diversity issue? *With the bigger group you can get a better diversity/representation of the Town.*
- Workload? *Difficult not having the data, good support from the committee, volunteer board (all boards are), and a big workload.*
- Make it clear about advisory.
- Keeping an Open Town Meeting is very important.
- Quorum, is 175 too high? Lower the quorum, whoever shows up is the quorum. *Would support lowering the quorum, better than representative.*
- When asked about FinCom members serving on other Committees. Cannot be voting members on multiple committees. Exofficio is okay.
- Electronic voting has made things move faster and smoother.
- Ms. Rollings stated that the Select Board members should increase from 3 to 5.
- Ms. Rollings was okay with the Zoning Board with 3 or 5 members.
- Ms. Rollings would like to see these 2 Boards in town have more voices and also stated the ZBA should have alternates.
- Indefinite Postponement: Incredibly confusing language.
- Planning Board: Read the section of the Charter and it is pretty straightforward. We are a specialized Board. It is pretty clear and we understand what we do. It works as an elected position.

- Attorney Goldberg: We can explain what all the different Boards do in town.

#### **Michael Walsh-Select Board**

- Originally he pushed for 5 Select Board members, and realized it should stay at 3. He Likes the open discussion.
- Many Towns have gone from elected positions to appointed positions.
- Appointed by the Select Board-and they will be held accountable for.
- Treasurer, Tax Collector and Town Clerk: We should be getting qualified people.
- Personnel Board? *Always about getting the best qualified people and what they can bring to the Board.*
- Town Meeting? *Loves Open Town meeting.*
- Quorum? *Could be reduced to 10%.*
- No quorum? *Is it legally possible? He is okay with it, Westwood does not have that problem.*
- Indefinite Postponement. Thoughts? *Need to do more educating as to what it means.*
- FinCom with 15 members? *It is a good cross section of Town.*
- What is FinComs role? *Their job is to make a recommendation. They are an advisory Board.*
- Select Board should receive \$5,000 instead of \$2,000. The Town of Falmouth pays their Select Board members each \$5,000/year.
- Attorney Goldberg: Town Meeting is appropriating authority, and Town Meeting can appropriate it, it cannot be mandated by the Charter.

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

No new responses.

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

- Virtual Nov 10th @ 6pm: Rob Gotti, Division of Local Services, Charlie Donahue and Tony Mullin.
- Molly Kean, Asst. Town Administrator/HR Director will be rescheduled.
- November 29, 2022 at 7pm at the Jaillet Meeting Room.

#### **Other Business:**

Mr. Cahill has a son who can volunteer to do graphs and tables for the Committee. Ms. Powers has a lot of information for him.

He can work with Ms. Powers and Attorney Goldberg.

#### **Final Comments on the Meeting:**

- Getting the same comments about Advisory.
- Speak to Emily Parks about a teacher that may run the Legislative Council or Government to get the kids involved.
- Provide transparency to the Town process, and make it easier to understand.
- Number of FinCom members. Attorney Goldberg said it is a lot compared to other towns. Have had mixed reviews on the number. Maybe make the number 'Up to' 15, set the number each year and that would decide the quorum.
- Maybe give the Moderator more time to fill the FinCom seats after Town Meeting (Aug 1) or 60 days from the close of Town Meeting.
- FinCom: 10-20 hours/month, 15 people to put in 10-20 hours/month is a difficult task.
- Attorney Goldberg: A committee of 15 is hard to control, having a smaller Board reduces the amount of time that is spent on things that are not as important. Less management and more work.

- Attorney Goldberg: FinCom in Westwood has a lot of authority and is influencing what gets to move forward.
- How about adding Advisory to the FinCom title?
- There was a discussion about Town Meeting quorum and if there was a zero quorum would eliminate the quorum question. How could this be explained so the community could understand it?
- The Committee briefly discussed Town Meeting Vote for Reconsideration which can be brought up any time during Town Meeting.
- 

**Approval of Minutes October 19, 2022 meeting:**

Upon a motion made by Mr. Cahill and seconded by Ms. Powers, the Charter Review Committee voted in favor (4-0) to accept the minutes from October 19, 2022 as amended.

**Adjourn:**

Upon a motion made by Mr. Cahill and seconded by Ms. Powers, the Charter Review Committee voted in favor (4-0) to adjourn at 9:02pm.