

Approved 6/15/2023

Charter Review Committee Minutes
Thursday May 4, 2023 -6:00 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 6:03 pm by Co-Chair Peter Cahill.

Present

Peter Cahill-Co-Chair, Nancy Hyde, John Loughnane and Dottie Powers, Town Clerk.
Ex-Officio Member: Christopher Coleman, Town Administrator & Patrick Ahearn, Town Counsel.
Special Counsel for the Charter Review Committee, Attorney Lauren Goldberg.
Jessica Cole recorded the Minutes.

Follow up on Annual Town Meeting

Mr. Cahill congratulated Ms. Powers, Mr. Ahearn and Mr. Coleman on a well-run Town Meeting. There was a discussion on what the next steps were after the Town Meeting and the passing of the Home Rule Petition-An Act Creating the Appointed Positions of Town Treasurer and Tax Collector. Ms. Hyde suggested that Mike Rush take the lead on it. Letter is drafted and we want Senator Rush to know the importance of this. Select Board Chair can contact Senator Rush's office, Mr. Coleman or anyone with a relationship with Senator Rush. Town Clerk Dottie Powers offered to take the lead on this, having experience with past Home Rule petitions. The letter should explain the importance of working quickly on this, the recommendation of the Division of Local Services as well as including the PowerPoint presentation with the submittal.

Approval of Minutes: March 23, 2023

Upon a motion made by Ms. Hyde and seconded by Mr. Loughnane, the Charter Review Committee voted in favor (4-0) to accept the minutes from March 23, 2023 as presented.

Discuss Town Charter Chapters 1-3, additional chapters if time allows

Mr. Cahill suggested that the Charter Review Committee have a redlined version. It will be done by Attorney Goldberg.
The Charter Review Committee went through the Town Charter line by line.

CHAPTER 1-POWERS OF THE TOWN

Section 1

Incorporation-No changes.

Section 2

Scope of Town Powers-No changes.

Section 3

Form of Government

Comments:

- The Charter Review Committee discussed Representative Town Meetings.
- Mr. Loughnane asked if there was a pro/con list, Attorney Goldberg will look into it,

Section 4

Construction of Charter-No changes.

Section 5

Intergovernmental Relations-No changes.

CHAPTER 2-ELECTIONS AND TOWN MEETING

Section 1

Legislative Power-No changes

Section 2

Town Elections

Comments:

- Suggestions: 2-2-1 change “meeting” to town *election*.
- Attorney Goldberg suggested having an option for the Select Board if the date for the town election needed to be changed.

Section 3

Elections to be Nonpartisan-No changes.

Section 4

Eligibility of Town Voters

Comments:

- Charter Review members suggested making it more readable.
- Categorize each change.
- This will be a housekeeping article.
- The Committee discussed the possibilities of requesting more than one Article for the May 2024 Annual Town Meeting.

Section 5

Initiative

Comments:

- There was discussion about the Town’s warrant, when it opens and when it closes.
- There was discussion about petition articles.
- The Committee discussed trying to make 2-5-1-1 (a) easier to read.
- 2-5-1.1 Pre-Petition change to *Have the pre-petition by December 1st.* (a)
- Remove concerning *the same by a date set by town by-law* (b)
- Attorney Goldberg will propose some language to make this section clearer.

Section 6

Business Sessions of the Town Meeting

Comments:

- Change the section title from “Business Session of the Town Meeting” to “*Annual Town Meeting*.”

- The Committee discussed language that would allow the Select Board to change the date for the Town Meeting.
- For 2-6-1 Suggested to add an (a) and (b).

Section 7

Finance and Warrant Commission Recommendation

Comments:

- Change from “meeting” to “hearing”.
- The Charter Review Committee discussed the cost of mailing the Annual Town Meeting Book.
- Attorney Goldberg stated that most communities do not mail a book.
- If the book is not mailed, it would give the Finance and Warrant Commission more time.
- It was discussed that according to Section 7, the Book does not need to be mailed.

Section 8

Quorum

Comments:

- Attorney Goldberg suggested making this a separate article for the May 2024 Annual Town Meeting.
- The Charter Review Committee is in favor of reducing or eliminating a Quorum.
- The Committee will leave the Charter as is and make changes in the By-laws.
- Change from “shall” to “may”.

Section 9

Presiding Officer

Moderator

Comments:

- The Charter Review Committee discussed the Moderator becoming a 3-year term.
- The current Moderator, Jim O’Sullivan, is not in favor of a 3-year term.
- Attorney Goldberg stated that a 3-year term is typical in MA, and would make it consistent.
- Attorney Goldberg suggested making this a separate article for the May 2024 Annual Town Meeting.
- The Charter Review Committee would like to have Mr. O’Sullivan come in and talk to the Committee again.
- 2-9-1 *add (s)* to meeting.
- Add a Deputy/Assistant Moderator to the Charter? Moderator will select the Deputy and will serve the entire term.
- Will discuss with Paul Fitzgerald at the next meeting.

Discuss and Vote Future Meeting Dates

May 18, 2023 -7:30am - Jaillet Meeting Room

June 1, 2023 - 6 pm -Jaillet Meeting Room

June 14, 2023 - 7:30am - Jaillet Meeting Room

June 15, 2023 - 6pm - Zoom 6pm

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Public Participation

None

Other Business not Anticipated by the Chair

None

Adjourn

Upon a motion made by Ms. Hyde and seconded by Ms. Powers, the Charter Review Committee voted in favor (4-0) to adjourn at 8:04pm.