

Minutes Accepted 3/13/2024

**Charter Review Committee Minutes
(Charter Review Committee Attendance at Finance and Warrant Commission's Meeting)
Tuesday February 27, 2024
Westwood Library, Community Meeting Room
660 High Street -7:00 PM
Westwood, MA 02090**

The Charter Review Committee attended the Finance and Warrant Commission's public hearing on Annual Town Meeting Warrant Articles to participate in the discussion and presentation of annual town meeting warrant articles.

Present

Peter Cahill-Co-Chair, Nancy Hyde & John Loughnane.

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 remotely.

Call to Order

Co-Chair Peter Cahill called the meeting to order at 7:27pm.

Nancy Hyde introduced the Charter Review Committee, explained how the Charter Review Committee arrived at the recommendation and went through the presentation. Have heard from input and will go through the Articles. Ms. Hyde went through what the Charter Review Committee has been working on for the past 2 years.

Presentation of recommended Charter Amendments

Quorum

1st Article-Select Board Article #5

Comments:

- Briefly describe the process for getting the Charter approved? *Ms. Hyde: The Home rule Petition Process starts locally at Open Town Meeting, we have an approval process that is required and then we submit our articles to the State Legislature. It will go through our local Rep or State Senator and it goes through a committee review process. We may receive feedback to the Select Board. Ultimately it has to get both House and Senate approval, and then signed off by the Governor.*
- What happens if the Legislature never acts on it? *Attorney Goldberg: It depends where it is in the session. The end of year is when most bills get enacted.*
- Will we have to resubmit the Tax collector and Treasurer? *Attorney Goldberg does not anticipate that we will.*
- Quorum: *Ms. Hyde: A lot of work has gone into it, if the count falls below we are adjourned for the night and will have to come back to another meeting and it will ultimately cost.*
- It is to promote the power of the people. Our agenda is what will make the Town work better.
- Are towns starting to outgrow Open Town Meeting? *Attorney Goldberg: I don't see Open Town Meeting going to a Representative Town. Calling a quorum is a procedural maneuver. It is on every voter to come to Town Meeting.*
- *Attorney Goldberg: People are the legislative body, it is important to stay at Town Meeting.*
- Quorum in other Towns? *Many Towns have no Open Town Meeting Quorum. It is a trend in that direction. It is your responsibility to be at Town Meeting.*

Elected Officers

2nd Article-Select Board Article #6

Change Town Clerk from Elected to Appointed.

Ms. Hyde went through the Town Clerk's responsibilities.

Comments:

- "In Consultation with"? *Ms. Hyde: Screening process, narrow down candidates, no public interview of the finalist interview. Select Board working with the Town Administrator. Mr. Ahearn: It is in our Charter with the hiring of the Finance Director.*
- Discussed the Certification of Town Clerk.Allow for flexibility
- Appointed indefinitely? *Ms. Hyde: Town Administrator and Select Board will have to decide.*

Finance & Warrant Commission

3rd Article-Select Board Article #7

Discussed the flexibility of appointed members, and allowing members to be appointed as ex-Officio members of other boards/committees.

Comments:

- The Chair is pleased with the new language.
- The Bylaws will need to be changed.
- Attorney Goldberg: The Charter supersedes the Town Bylaws.
- How will this affect the quorum? *Attorney Goldberg: The proposed Charter Amendment A quorum is a majority of those in office.*
- What happens when there is a split vote? *Attorney Goldberg: No action.*
- Would a tie be no decision or indefinite postponement? *Mr. Ahearn: Go to Town Meeting with a split vote.*

Personnel Board

4th Article-Select Board Article #8

Change the name to Personnel Advisory Board.

Permanent Building Commission

5th Article: Select Board Article #9

Adds flexibility to the make-up of the Permanent Building Commission.

Requires a school committee member to be included for any school project consistent with State Law.

Technical Articles

6th Article-Select Board Article #10

Comments:

- Is Town Counsel comfortable with the changes? *Mr. Ahearn: Yes.*
- Provision 4.6-1: Associate members, appointment of Associate Members. Was it considered townwide to elect the associate members? *Ms. Hyde: It was not considered.*
- 7.3.2-Finance & Warrant Commission, cannot have employment in the Town? Why? *Attorney Goldberg: It is very common for Fin Com members to be separate from the Town. So that they are not invested in a particular Board, committee or Department.*
- The ethics video takes that into consideration. *Ms. Goldberg: It is very common for Finance Committees not to be able to serve on additional boards independently and not to be employees of the Town.*

Housekeeping Articles

7th Article: Select Board Article #11

Proposed edits, typos & reformatting.

Housing Authority

8th Article-Select Board Article #12

It was not in the Charter.

Public Comments

None.

Adjournment

Received March 18, 2024@8:00AM
By:Westwood Town Clerk

Upon a motion made by Ms. Hyde and seconded by Mr. Loughnane, the Charter Review Committee voted in favor (3-0) to adjourn at approximately 8:45 p.m.