

**MINUTES OF THE PUBLIC HEARING OF THE
CHARTER REVISION COMMISSION
FEBRUARY 5, 2015**

Present: Bob Brooks, Bob Parks, Brian Fitzgerald, Bobbie Kling, Jeff Kew, and Brian Dudack. Also in attendance: First Selectman Edward G. McAnaney. Chairman Brooks called the Public Hearing to order at 7:00 p.m.

Chairman Brooks opened the meeting by welcoming the residents and soliciting their input for changes and comments to the Town Charter.

Christine Davidson of 103 Plantation Drive identified herself as the Town Treasurer. Ms. Davidson spoke regarding the suggestion to Section 302D and Chapter 6 - Town Treasurer to being appointed rather than elected. She stated that this suggestion dismantles some of the fundamental checks and balances presently in the charter. The Town Treasurer is effective because he or she answers to the town by election and is not accountable to any one board or commission over another. She asked that the Town Treasurer position remain as an elected position and present staff relationships kept the same.

Mel Chafetz of 803 Mapleton Avenue identified himself as a former Selectman and the current Interim Superintendent. Mr. Chafetz noted that the Charter Revision Commission (CRC) can look at the whole charter and asked them to consider a Town Manager. Mr. Chafetz stated the Town needs a professional leader. He added that if they chose not to recommend a Town Manager that the CRC does not recommend a 4 year term for the Board of Selectmen. He also recommended that the Board of Education continue to be allowed to appoint members to fill vacancies and that the number of members remain as is and not be reduced from 9 to 7.

Jeanne Gee of 13 Willow Creek identified herself as a member of the Board of Education. Ms. Gee said she appreciates the efforts of the CRC. She recommended that the Board of Education membership remain at 9 members and that the Board of Finance and Board of Education retain the ability to appoint members to fill vacancies on their boards.

Gordon Stagg of 1575 North Stone Street spoke in favor of a Town Administrator as recommended in the last Charter Revision effort. It's a professional position that doesn't challenge the authority of the First Selectman.

Paul Wersaukas of 1240 Mapleton Avenue was concerned about the Board of Selectmen having more control. He doesn't know the rationale for some of these changes and fears that the voting public will be left out of more than they should.

Wally Rodger of 48 Deep Brook Harbor identified himself as a WPCA Commissioner. He attended with many other commission and WPCA staff members. He spoke regarding their concern for a WPCA structure change. After their next meeting they will provide Statutory documents, financial management and public health requirements for keeping the WPCA separate. He offered the CRC to contact the WPCA

as needed.

Vice-Chairman Parks noted that the charge document is a starting point and other items can be considered.

Christine Rago of 22 Brookside Drive asked what charge #11 meant. It is to consider clarifying language as to executive authority of the First Selectman with respect to town employees. Chairman Brooks said the CRC haven't had any substantive discussions on the charge document so he couldn't comment.

Bruce Rietberg of 12 Devine Road spoke in favor of retaining a 2 year term for Board of Selectmen. There should be a not too onerous procedure if you want to remove a Selectman.

Christine Rago of 22 Brookside Drive remarked that a number of Boards and Commissions benefit by having many members. She said if we have people to serve why reduce the number of members.

Ernie Petkovich of 40 Valley View Drive identified himself as the chairman of the previous Charter Revision Commission. He congratulated the members of the CRC to help move the Town into the 21st century and to learn more about Town government. He discussed the process used by and recommendations made by the former CRC. Mr. Petkovich explained that the Board of Selectmen rejected all 8 of the recommendations made by the last CRC. He said the 5 members of the Board of Selectmen should not make the decision for 8300 voters. He said that the CRC needs to sell its recommendations through the media and at the Board of Selectmen meeting where the CRC recommendations are voted on. He spoke in support of the Town Administrator position that was recommended by the last CRC. Mr. Petkovich said that the current charter is lacking a provision to remove a Town Attorney and it should be added. He noted that 11 of 24 of the current charge items focus on increasing the power of the Board of Selectmen. Mr. Petkovich was also in favor of reducing the number of signatures needed to force a referendum. He also suggested standardization of the number of days to hold a referendum. Mr. Petkovich suggested that the CRC recommend 6-10 changes otherwise everyone will be confused. He noted that 11 of 24 of the current charge items focus on increasing the power of the Board of Selectmen. He thinks that is the wrong direction. Mr. Petkovich said that there is a risk since Brian Fitzgerald will not be able to vote on the recommendations as a member of the Board of Selectmen. He is concerned that with only 4 Selectmen left to vote there may be 2-2 ties which count as a failed motion. Mr. Petkovich offered his assistance and wished the CRC success and to have fun.

Gordon Stagg of 1575 North Stone stated that he is concerned with Mr. Petkovich's assessment that there is a possibility of a 2-2 tie (meaning a failed motion) by the Board of Selectmen. He asked if Mr. Fitzgerald's voting status was considered when the Commission was formed.

First Selectman McAnaney said that he disagreed with Mr. Petkovich's position. He believes that Mr. Fitzgerald can vote as a member on the CRC and when the matter comes to the Board of Selectmen.

Gordon Stagg of 1575 North Stone asked that the issue be cleared up.

Ernie Petkovich of 40 Valley View Drive said that there appears to be no violation from a State Statute or Ethics perspective but from common sense and a realistic standpoint it doesn't make sense to put Brian Fitzgerald in that position.

Ginny Bromage of 576 North Main Street stated that she thought Board of Education and Board of Finance members have a better handle on the needs of their board members than the Board of Selectmen. She also questioned the elimination of the Public Works Commission.

Kendra Wiesel of 37 Willow Creek asked how the public would get information regarding the CRC decisions and impetus for some of the items on the charge. How does the public get up to date on your efforts/rationale? Chairman Brooks noted that there will be a second Public Hearing before the draft report is sent to the Board of Selectmen. Mr. Fitzgerald said that minutes would be published for the CRC weekly meetings. Public Comment will also be available at each of the weekly meetings. Ms. Kling said the CRC should consider Public Comment at the beginning and end of each meeting.

Bruce Rietberg of 12 Devine Road asked that with the availability of the internet can decisions be posted by the CRC? Chairman Brooks said that the goal of the CRC is to be transparent. It is early in the process to make a determination. The short time frame may make posting decisions difficult.

Ginny Bromage of 576 North Main Street asked why 6-30-15 was the drop dead date? Chairman Brooks said that the attempt is to have a special election in the fall. The hope is to have the CRC recommendations take place at the General election.

Kendra Wiesel of 37 Willow Creek asked what's the rush? The last CRC took 16-18 months and all the time needed should be allowed.

John P. Murphy of 18 Downing Way stated that he was on the last two CRC and the scope was much bigger in the last two efforts but thought that the June deadline would be difficult to meet. As a co-chairman of the Republican Town Committee finding people to run for Boards and Commissions has gotten more difficult over the past 15 years. Not enough people step up to volunteer for the Boards and Commission openings. He doesn't believe 5 months is sufficient to get the work completed.

Ginny Bromage of 576 North Main Street stated that it would be more fiscally responsible to hold the referendum at a general election.

Chairman Brooks thanked everyone for their attendance and comments. The Public Hearing was adjourned at 7:49 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,
Lisa Trase
Recording Secretary