

**MINUTES OF THE REGULAR MEETING OF THE
CHARTER REVISION COMMISSION
MARCH 26, 2015**

Present: Bob Brooks, Brian Fitzgerald, Bobbie Kling, Jeff Kew, Brian Dudack and Charles Watras. **Absent:** Bob Parks. First Selectman Ed McAnaney was also in attendance. Chairman Brooks called the meeting to order at 7:00 p.m.

Approval of Minutes from March 19, 2015 Regular Meeting

Mr. Fitzgerald made a motion to accept the minutes of the March 19th Regular Meeting of the Charter Revision Commission (CRC) as presented. Mr. Kew seconded the motion. Vote 5-0 in favor with Mr. Watras abstaining.

Mr. Watras was welcomed to the Commission.

Correspondence Received: An email was received from Ben Rodriguez of 560 Thrall Ave. He suggested that each charge item discussion include the reason for the change. He spoke in favor of the double threshold described in the 3/19 minutes for referendum. He spoke against reducing the membership on any commission and spoke against changing who appoints Board of Education vacancies.

Public Comment: None

Consider changing the term for all five selectmen to four years

A document was provided showing towns in Connecticut with their government structure and term lengths. Chairman Brooks began the discussion noting that the only Board without a 4 year term is the Board of Selectmen. Mr. Fitzgerald noted that most other towns had a 2 year term probably derived from the State Statutes. Discussion followed about the possibility of staggered 4 year terms for the Board of Selectmen (BoS). It was noted that other boards and commissions have 4 year staggered terms. Mr. Fitzgerald noted that if residents are dissatisfied with their Selectmen they are stuck with them if there's a four year term. He also noted that running for office every two years is expensive. Campaigns cost between \$5,000 - \$10,000. Mr. McAnaney added that there was support for a Town Administrator to allow for continuity and 4 year term provides additional stability. Mr. Kew said that during the Public Hearing there was no support for a 4 year term. Mr. Watras asked what was the driving factor in raising this issue? Mr. McAnaney said that a longer term would allow for a broader pool of residents. He noted that it is a difficult decision to upend your career to run for a two year term. Largely the candidates are either retired or unemployed. Ms. Kling said that politics is not a career with job security. Mr. Fitzgerald noted that the current First Selectman is approaching the longest time in office in the past 25 years. It was noted that the short term also impacts internal employees who can wait out a term until the next selectmen are elected. Mr. Dudack commented that there may be people who only want to serve two years but a 4 year term would draw a dedicated public servant. Mr. Watras noted that recent First

Selectmen all had expertise and knowledge and in their first term they learned public service. When they ran for re-election they were turned out by the electorate. It was noted that unpopular decision making can have a big impact on re-election. Mr. Brooks asked if you can make tough decisions in a two year term? He said that after your first year in office and with an election looming would your vote be impeded based on your re-election? Mr. Watras said if you have qualified, responsible people it's only fair to compensate them in all ways and longevity in the position is a compensation factor. He said you need to balance the public desire to control their own destiny. Mr. Kew was concerned about recommending a 4 year term and the impact on other charter initiatives. Ms. Kling noted that Suffield has been fortunate in their choice of leaders and that these people consider the length of term when they run. She believes that four years is a long time in a small town. Mr. McAnaney said two years goes by in a heartbeat. He also noted that Town business may be put aside when running a re-election campaign. A brief discussion took place about First Selectman compensation and it was noted that some department heads/directors make more than the First Selectman and while department heads/directors get annual raises the First Selectman position does not. Chairman Brooks asked if the CRC owes it to the electorate to let them make the decision on a 2 vs. 4 year term? Discussion took place on how the Charter Commission items would be packaged in a referendum. It was agreed that items would be packaged in inter-related questions. The power to recall was discussed but was not well supported. The concept of a two year First Selectman and 4 year term for other selectmen was briefly discussed.

Discussion also took place about the non-competitiveness of the other selectmen races. Mr. Fitzgerald suggested that the 2001 Charter change to make the First Selectman race separate was not practical. Before that change, if the loser of the First Selectman race received enough votes they could be elected to the Board of Selectmen. You could transfer your votes to the Selectmen race if you wished. He said that now each party endorses two candidates and they automatically win. Mr. Watras said he was on the 2001 CRC and the logic was that the First Selectman race was the most important race and the loser wouldn't bump off candidates for the Selectmen race. He said the ideal situation would be that the parties nominated more than 2 candidates and that would act as a feeder for future elections. The minority representation rules would have allowed a 4-1 imbalance. Now a simple majority is in place. Mr. Fitzgerald said it is not practical for the political parties to put up more candidates since the loser would not be able to serve on any other elected board/commission in that election cycle. He suggested that they consider adding this item to the charge.

Treasurer/Chief Financial Officer (CFO) – more discussion on next steps

Ms. Kling requested a flow chart be developed to show how the CFO position would work. She also wants to discuss whether there will be an elected treasurer or not. She said reporting lines and duties for the CFO and Director of Finance positions should be defined. Mr. Watras asked what the impetus for the charge item was. It was suggested that he listen to the recordings of the discussion with Joe Sangiovanni. Mr. Fitzgerald

said that the charter includes a Director of Finance and that position has become a comptroller. He said the BoS and Board of Finance are looking for an advisor on policy for risk management, health risk management, bond issues, etc.

Mr Kew suggested that some of the former First Selectmen be interviewed for their thoughts on the First Selectman term.

Ms. Kling moved to adjourn. Mr. Fitzgerald seconded. After a unanimous vote, the meeting was adjourned at 9:02 p.m.

Next Meeting will be held on April 9th.

Respectfully submitted,
Lisa Trase
Recording Secretary