

**MINUTES OF THE REGULAR MEETING OF THE
CHARTER REVISION COMMISSION
APRIL 16, 2015**

Present: Bob Brooks, Brian Fitzgerald, Robert Parks, Jeff Kew, Brian Dudack, Charles Watras and Bobbie Kling.. First Selectman Ed McAnaney was also in attendance. Chairman Brooks called the meeting to order at 7:05 p.m.

Approval of Minutes from April 9, 2015 Regular Meeting

Mr. Parks made a motion to accept the minutes of the April 9th Regular Meeting of the Charter Revision Commission (CRC) as presented. Mr. Fitzgerald seconded the motion. Vote 7-0 in favor.

Correspondence Received: The CRC received an email from Tom Frenaye, Chairman of the Democratic Town Committee (DTC) stating that the DTC has endorsed more than 2 candidates for the Board of Selectmen in the 2003, 2007 and 2009 elections. He also said that the number of candidates there are in a race is often not how many could run, but how many chose to run, and is a result of the party caucuses held each time.

Public Comment: Ernie Petkovich of 40 Valley View Drive recommended that the CRC consider reverting back to the pre-2001 charter change where the losing First Selectman candidate could use their votes in the Board of Selectmen race. Mr. Petkovich also noted that the Town Administrator recommended in the 2009 CRC was a compromise among members of that group. He noted that the last two First Selectmen have been knowledgeable in Town government but that there have been past and will be future candidates who don't know what they are doing. He said that coupled with a change of term from 2 years to 4 years would be a disaster. He also said that the CRC appears to be an extension of the Board of Selectmen and that the CRC should make their own recommendations and sell them to the electorate. He closed by saying that the CRC needs more time to complete their work.

Mel Chafetz of 803 Mapleton Ave. said he was disturbed after reading the last minutes and said the CRC should be an independent board not driven by the Board of Selectmen. He also noted that there are no qualifications to be First Selectman except to be an elector living in Suffield. He said the town needs a Town Manager with trained, experienced and shown leadership qualities. Discussion followed about the First Selectman qualifications and it was suggested to ask the Town Attorney for an opinion on establishing a more extensive list of qualifications. Mr. Chafetz said since 1984 there have only been three non-Republican First Selectmen. He doesn't agree with the four year term he thinks a 2 year term keeps the person accountable. He is not in favor of the CFO position either. He suggests giving the Director of Finance the staff needed. Mr. Brooks asked Mr. Chafetz if he was suggesting putting qualifications for the First Selectman. He replied yes, there are no limits of how long you've lived in Town, and should require some experience on commissions. Ms. Kling said that she supports a 2 year First Selectmen term since if they are capable they would be re-elected. She said a municipality is different than a business. She said 60% of the people who do work are volunteers and provide a pool of people to elect to positions. She believes that the Town doesn't want a Town Manager

right now. She doesn't see the Board of Finance funding two positions over \$100,000. She believes that the Director of Finance should hire an assistant to free the Finance director to be more involved in financial reviews at monthly meetings; there would be more checks and balances; to remove audit concerns and could be a bridge to a CFO/Town Manager position. She noted that a CFO could be hired now per the charter.

CFO / Director of Finance Position

Chairman Brooks began the discussion by saying that a number of people thought that the idea of a CFO is a good idea for the Town including Joe Sangiovanni, Ed Basile (may co-exist with the treasurer), Ms. Catherine Cabral (WL Finance Director) and ultimately Chris Childs. Ms. Kling asked how the position would be funded. Mr. Parks said they should make a recommendation on what's right and the CRC shouldn't be concerned with the financial implications. Ms. Kling said that the Charter already allows this position and is questioning why it's a charge item. Mr. Brooks said that the reporting responsibilities were also part of the issue since the Director of Finance reports to both the BoF and BoS. There were also concerns about who is the hiring and firing authority for that position.

Roger Ives 584 Thompsonville Road was in the audience and offered Public Comment. He said he is in favor of a Town Manager and said the Town is at the point where we need the professionalism and continuity that position would provide. He also is opposed to a four year term and sees more hazards than benefits for a four year term.

Mr. Kew said that he feels badly that the CRC is not looking at a Town Manager. Chairman Brooks asked if it was the role of the CRC to pursue the Town Manager issue again given the fact that the current B of S was not sympathetic to the idea which is what the last CRC did and which was ultimately turned down by the B of S, apparently unanimously. He also questioned what was meant by "selling it to electorate" which he did not see as a CRC role.

Mr. Watras noted that the CRC has the opinion of some elected officials but says the Town demographics are changing and he would like to find a mechanism to use to get the pulse of the community to see if they are in favor of professional management of the administration of the Town. There was talk of a non binding referendum or possibly a survey. Ms. Kling stated that the charter already allows for some sort of an administrator. Mr. Parks noted that there would need to be education to advise electors of the details of a Town Manager structure. Mr. Parks said he would not support a Town Manager and a full time First Selectman. Mr. Fitzgerald said that how you phrase the question would be important i.e. Would you like a professional manager vs Do you want an outsider running the Town? Mr. Dudack said he thought the minutes reflected that we had tabled the Town Manager concept.

The conversation went back to the CFO position and Mr. Watras said that it could be filled today per the charter. There was a discussion about the Treasurer and Director of Finance roles and their checks and balances. Mr. McAnaney said that the First Selectman is also involved in the purchasing and expenditures the Town makes. Mr. Brooks said he's been told that the BoF and BoS are looking for more from the Director of Finance. Mr. Watras said that it may be hard to find a person with the qualifications that have been discussed for a CFO. He suggested that the Town budgets (Board of Finance, Selectmen, Education and WPCA) include monies to utilize consultants/advisors for expertise in investing, bonding, etc. The Director of Finance reporting to

both the BoF and BoS was discussed. Chairman Brooks said that reporting to both boards is wrong and needs to be adjusted. He said everyone agrees that finding a CFO person could be challenging with the responsibilities noted. Mr. Kew suggested elevating the Director of Finance to make the position more robust. Ms. Kling said she didn't see an issue with the dual reporting of the director of Finance. Mr. McAnaney said that the Director of Finance should report to the First Selectman on a day to day basis like any other department head. Divided allegiance can lead to difficulty. He asked how a performance review could be done on a staff person by someone they see once a month (Board of Finance). Mr. Brooks said the change would be viewed negatively if de-coupling the position from the Board of Finance. Mr. Watras said when push comes to shove allegiance falls to who you report to. Mr. Kew noted that the term of appointment has been ignored for the Director of Finance and suggested that a majority of both boards should approve reappointment. Members agreed that appointed personnel should have performance reviews annually. A discussion took place between Mr. McAnaney and Mr. Watras regarding who has executive authority to hire consultants. Mr. Watras thought the Boards should be able to obtain expertise for their areas and resources should not be denied. Discussion followed about modifying provision 611 in the charter regarding the Director of Finance reporting including language about the Director of Finance being a liason with the Board of Finance to support their financial requirements. Chairman Brooks volunteered to work on that language. Discussion followed to elevate the Director of Finance and how the treasurer position would be integrated. Mr. McAnaney reiterated the need for more financial information though expertise and advice and financial oversight. A brief discussion took place regarding possible changes to the treasurer duties. Mr. Watras asked about trying to find information on how other towns of our size operate. Mr. Kew and Mr. Brooks had looked at this before and there was no consistent model. Mr. Fitzgerald said the challenge is how make it fit for Suffield. Mr. Brooks came back to the point that the reporting relationship is still a key matter. Mr. Parks asked Mr. McAnaney if reporting relationships were changed for the Police, Fire and Director of Finance would the First Selectman position have too large a span of control? Mr. McAnaney replied that the First Selectman doesn't deal with everyone on a daily basis.

Ms. Kling moved to adjourn. Mr. Kew seconded. After a unanimous vote, the meeting was adjourned at 9:25 p.m.

Next Meeting will be held on April 23rd.

Respectfully submitted,
Lisa Trase
Recording Secretary