

**MINUTES OF THE REGULAR MEETING OF THE  
CHARTER REVISION COMMISSION  
APRIL 30, 2015**

**Present:** Bob Brooks, Brian Fitzgerald, Jeff Kew, Brian Dudack, Charles Watras and Bobbie Kling. **Absent:** Bob Parks. First Selectman Ed McAnaney was also in attendance. Chairman Brooks called the meeting to order at 7:02 p.m.

**Approval of Minutes from April 23, 2015 Regular Meeting**

Ms. Kling made a motion to accept the minutes of the April 23rd Regular Meeting of the Charter Revision Commission (CRC) as presented. Mr. Dudack seconded the motion. Vote 6-0 in favor.

**Correspondence Received:** Chairman Brooks noted the email received by Ginny Bromage 576 North Main Street on March 29<sup>th</sup>. It was not listed in prior minutes. Ms. Bromage was concerned about how possible Board and Commission membership changes could negatively impact selection of candidates for this year's elections.

**Public Comment:**

Mel Chafetz of 803 Mapleton Ave said that he still has concerns about the lack of qualifications needed for a First Selectman. Since the concept of a Town Manager doesn't have traction he suggested that the CRC think outside the box. Mr. Chafetz said that as the interim superintendent he is responsible to the Board of Education and must work within parameters. He would like to see the First Selectman position be more accountable. He said the First Selectman position is 1/5th of the vote on the BoS and even more if someone is absent. The First Selectman is accountable to the Board of Finance (BoF) for the budget. He is concerned that regarding the operation of the Town on a day to day basis there is no monitoring outside of finances. Mr. Chafetz suggested that the First Selectman position be changed to report to the Board of Selectmen (BoS) and become a non-voting member of the BoS. It's hard for the BoS to take an independent vote when the First Selectman is a member of the Board. Mr. Brooks said in this scenario you may need to add another selectman or switch the board to 3 members. Mr. Watras said in one corporate model the CEO is a member of the Board of Directors and asked Mr. Chafetz why the CEO wouldn't be a member of the Board. Mr. Chafetz replied that it's difficult for the Board of Selectmen to go against the First Selectman. He believes there needs to be more independence and review by the Board of Selectmen. Mr. Chafetz explained in a non-profit model the Executive Director is hired and is accountable to the Board of Directors but doesn't have a seat on the board. Mr. Chafetz concluded by saying that the Town government has a complex budget, lots of employees and unions and a different structure is needed to make people accountable for what they do.

Chris Childs of 338 South Main Street suggested that Mr. Chafetz seemed to be proposing a workaround to a Town Manager. He believes that the Town Manager is still

the right solution. He cited the recent BoF discussion to implement a merit pool for raises. This wasn't workable since there is no performance review process and not all job descriptions are up to date. He said a Town Manager would enhance operating efficiencies and be a better way to encourage good behavior from our employees. Mr. Childs came to clarify the discussion noted in the April 16<sup>th</sup> minutes regarding the CFO and Director of Finance (DoF) positions. He said that in the charter we already have established a CFO position, we just call it the DoF. He said the Town would need to be prepared to spend at least \$125,000 annually to a CFO. He said the DoF had requested an Assistant DoF position in the budget but it was removed by the First Selectman. He said in the April meeting he said he was okay with a CFO position but we should call it what it is (a Town Manager). We are making the DoF become a CFO which becomes a Town Manager based on the responsibilities discussed. Ms. Kling said that the assistant DoF has been proposed multiple times and has been removed from the budget. Mr. Childs said that quality financial reporting is missing. Mr. Chafetz agreed that there was no monthly financial report when he was on the BoS. He said if you want that information you need the support staff.

Mr. Brooks asked Mr. Childs his opinion regarding the DoF dual reporting to the BoF and BoS. Mr. Childs said he felt that the BoF should have an executive session with the DoF annually to discuss strengths and weaknesses but believes the position should ultimately report through the First Selectman but the BoF should have input. Mr. Watras agreed that the DoF is a defacto CFO in the charter. He asked if the BoF has discussed the level of reporting needed with the DoF. Mr. Childs said that it was discussed in open session with a plan to discuss it in executive session but that didn't materialize. Mr. Watras said it is nearly impossible to report to two masters and asked how to achieve both groups getting what they need. Mr. Watras asked how the BoF could have oversight over the BoS? Mr. Childs said he'd think about it. Mr. Chafetz suggested merging the two boards. Mr. Fitzgerald said the power of the purse is a strong influence that the BoF holds.

Gordon Stagg of 1575 North Stone Street asked if the CRC was actively open to the idea of a Town Manager. He said the grapevine says the CRC has been told to not bother. Chairman Brooks said that in his opinion that the BoS will not view the concept of a Town Manager favorably so the choice as a commission is to spend time on a Town Manager or on other items. Mr. Stagg said he was part of a group (CAPS) that provided input to the last CRC he said there seemed to be support but then it just ended. He said that the Town needs change. Ms. Kling said that the last CRC was a big mistake since they spent 18 months and there wasn't support by the BoS. Ms. Kling was a member of that CRC. Mr. Childs asked if there is a provision for the charter revision to get to a referendum if voted down by the BoS. Ms. Kling said she doesn't think the time is now for a Town Manager. Mr. Watras shared his perspective on the last CRC. He said the last CRC included people who fought over the issues and reached some level of compromise. He said the BoS didn't like the idea of two Full time administrators (a First Selectman and a Town Administrator) and sent it back to the CRC for a stronger Town Administrator. Due to time constraints they couldn't change it. It went to the Board of Selectmen with a quorum of 4 members and the vote was 2-2 and the tie breaker wasn't at the table. Ms. Kling said do we want two full time leaders paid \$150,000? Mr.

Chafetz suggested a Town Manager full time and a part time First Selectman to be paid a stipend. Mr. Watras said that on this commission the decision has been to move on and not waste time. Mr. Stagg said it appears that our government doesn't facilitate change. Mr. Childs suggests that if there is a bonding referendum that perhaps a Town Manager question be included.

Mr. Brooks moved to amend the agenda to move "#5 Water Pollution Control Authority (WPCA) discussion to define further action, if any" to the next item to be discussed. Seconded by Mr. Watras and the vote was unanimous.

### **WPCA discussion to define further action**

Mr. Fitzgerald said that since the original bonds have been paid off that maybe the WPCA could become the Sewer Department in the town. It is a taxing authority itself. If we're not ready to make it a department then it needs financial oversight like other boards (BoS and Board of Education (BoE)). Mr. Fitzgerald proposes that in Section 302K a final sentence be added to say that "The Annual Budget of the WPCA shall be submitted to the Board of Finance for its' approval". Ms. Kling argued that the WPCA has professional staff and the plant and their processes seem to work well. Mr. McAnaney said that the WPCA was separately established under State Statutes and without a charter provision neither the BoF nor the Town Meeting has any effect on their operations. Ms. Kling said she wouldn't support the action. Mr. Watras said that where commonality exists there should be equality. If there are common activities like secretarial, administrative, etc people performing the same function could do better working for one agency with wages and benefits. Mr. McAnaney said in the last negotiations some strides were made. Mr. Watras asked what level of hardship would it be to the WPCA to endure a BoF review. Roger Ives, WPCA Commissioner, was in the audience and noted that the WPCA does present to the BoF and they made suggestions that were considered. Mr. McAnaney said that a second pair of eyes (the BoF) is a good thing from a financial perspective. Shane McCannon, Chief Operator said that Section 103 of the State Statute gives the WPCA the power to levy assessments and also requires them to present a budget but no other body can veto that budget. Mr. McAnaney said under home rule the charter may be able to legally add oversight. Ms. Kling said she would want the opinion of the BoF as well as an outside legal opinion since the WPCA has rights. Mr. Watras said that the concept of the BoF review is good for their comment and advice. It would put the town on a different standing when the annual audit takes place. Mr. Fitzgerald made a conceptual motion that the WPCA annual budget be submitted to the Board of Finance for its approval. Mr. Brooks seconded the motion. Mr. Brooks called the vote. Mr Brooks, Mr. Fitzgerald and Mr. Dudack voted in favor; Mr. Watras, Mr. Kew and Ms. Kling voted against. The motion failed. Mr. Brooks made a conceptual motion that the WPCA annual budget be submitted to the Board of Finance for review, comment and advice. Seconded by Mr. Watras. The motion passed unanimously.

### **Leases of exactly 5 years – revisit issue of renewals and options. (1006G).**

*Current language*

*Section 1006 Actions Requiring a Town Meeting*

*G. Real estate leases or lease options to which the Town is a party for terms in excess of five years. Real estate leases or lease options for terms less than five years shall be negotiated and executed by the Board of Selectmen.*

Mr. Brooks moved to approve the language discussed last week as follows : *Real estate leases and any extensions or renewals thereof or lease options to which the Town is a party for terms in excess of an aggregate of five years. Real estate leases and any extensions or renewals thereof or lease options for terms of five years or less shall be negotiated and executed by the Board of Selectmen.*

Mr. Fitzgerald seconded the motion. Vote 6-0 in favor.

**Public Works commission, consider deletion (706P)**

*Current language*

*Section 706 Appointed Boards and Commissions*

*P. Public Works Commission consisting of seven regular members who shall be appointed for four-year terms except that the initial terms of four of the seven members shall be for two years. All succeeding terms for those four members shall be four years. The Public Works Commission shall replace the Landfill Commission and assume its duties. In addition, the Public Works Commission shall oversee the efforts of the Highway Department and Town Engineer. (Approved 11-6-2001)*

Chairman Brooks noted that the Commission hasn't met since April of 2012. He asked Mr. McAnaney to provide some insight. Mr. McAnaney said that the functions of the Public Works Commission (PWC) in many respects have been taken over by the Permanent Building Commission (PBC). He said that the structure of the Public Works Department has become much more robust. It now includes a Director, a Facilities Manager and a Highway Foreman who oversees the landfill and highway workers. The First Selectman speaks to the staff on a daily basis. He said that the PWC had difficulties in obtaining a quorum. He noted that the commission's absence has not been felt since the PBC has become quite active. Ms. Kling said that the town has professionalized itself to have removed the need for the PWC at that level. Mr. Brooks made the motion that provision 706P the Public Works Commission be deleted. Mr. Fitzgerald seconded the motion. The motion passed 5-0-1 with Mr. Kew abstaining.

**Consider the creation of a Technology Commission**

Mr. Brooks noted that there was a Technology Committee that met but it stopped meeting. Discussion followed about the future of technology. Mr. Brooks discussed conceptually creating a Technology Commission to advise the BoS as to technical issues. Mr. McAnaney said it would aid in long range planning. He said town residents have offered to serve on this commission. Mr. Fitzgerald asked if it needs to be added to the charter since the BoS can create ad hoc committees as needed. It was agreed to leave it to the BoS to establish the commission outside of the charter.

### **Revise name of Zoning and Planning Commission**

Discussion took place to change the name of Zoning and Planning Commission to Planning and Zoning Commission. Mr. Brooks suggested that the Zoning and Planning Commission be consulted. Mr. McAnaney said home rule allows us to keep the name as is. Mr. Fitzgerald said the change would make Suffield in harmony with the Secretary of the State. Mr. Brooks offered to approach Zoning and Planning.

It was noted that Board of Tax Review and Board of Assessment Appeals may also need to be addressed. The index also needs to be consistent.

### **Authorization for the Board of Selectmen to approve expenditures not otherwise budgeted and transfer money among accounts less than some percentage of the total budget.**

The BoS wants more flexibility in moving monies. Mr. Fitzgerald gave an example of transferring money from one account to another such as Public Works to Legal fees. This would be up to a threshold amount, possibly .25% of the annual budget. Mr. Watras said that this is erasing the oversight responsibility of the Board of Finance. He said with some of the other charge items more authority is being sought to be consolidated in to the First Selectman and the BoS. Mr. McAnaney said the BoS also has a financial responsibility too. Mr. Watras said he sees no harm in seeking the advice and consent of the Board of Finance in an approved budget. He didn't think requesting a transfer is an unreasonable burden on the BoS. Ms. Kling said that the transfer provides a paper trail for the transaction. Mr. McAnaney said the BoS could provide the paper trail too. Mr. McAnaney said that monies have been transferred between departmental budgets this year. Mr. Fitzgerald said that the BoS is envious of the BoE and the WPCA since the BoF can't define how the BoE and WPCA spend their budget. Those bodies don't have to return to the Board of Finance for any spending of their budgeted monies.

### **Agenda for next meeting**

Mr. Brooks and Mr. Parks will be absent for the May 7<sup>th</sup> meeting. After discussion, it was agreed to cancel the next meeting.

Ms. Kling moved to adjourn. Mr. Fitzgerald seconded. After a unanimous vote, the meeting was adjourned at 9:05 p.m.

Next Meeting will be held on May 14<sup>th</sup>.

Respectfully submitted,  
Lisa Trase  
Recording Secretary