

**TOWN OF SPRINGFIELD
SELECTMEN'S HALL – 96 MAIN STREET – THIRD FLOOR
CHARTER REVIEW COMMITTEE MEETING
WEDNESDAY, APRIL 20, 2016 @ 6:00 PM**

MEETING MINUTES

1. CALL MEETING TO ORDER AND ROLL CALL: The meeting was called to order at 6:02 p.m. The following Committee Members were present – Richard Andrews, John Bond, John Follett, John Hall, Barbara Schultz, Tom Yennerell, Barbara Courchesne, Jeff Mobus, and Walter Martone. Sharon Ayer participated by telephone, and Kristi Morris was absent. Town Clerk Barbara Courchesne swore in Jeff Mobus.
2. MINUTES: a. Town Charter Review Committee Minutes, April 13, 2016: It was moved by Richard Andrews and seconded by Tom Yennerell to approve the Minutes as presented. The Minutes were approved by unanimous vote.
3. REVIEW PUBLIC HEARING AND VOTING REQUIREMENTS TIMELINE: Barbara Courchesne provided a handout that identified the important dates and timeline required by State Statute for amending a town charter. The most important date is December 27, 2016. This is last opportunity for an item to be warned and posted for action at the 2017 Town Meeting. Other items discussed:
 - a. For presentation to the Selectboard, recommended edits to the charter should be reflected with italics or underlining for additions, and strikeouts for deletions.
 - b. The Selectboard will decide whether to present the Charter amendments to the voters on a line-by-line basis, or as a summary.
 - c. The Committee must complete its work and have the final version with edits and other recommendations ready to be transmitted to the Selectboard before Christmas.
 - d. Items that are significant or potentially controversial should be sent to the Selectboard earlier. This will give the Selectboard the opportunity to have more time to consider these items before the Committee completes the review of the Charter.
 - e. By consensus, the Committee agreed to establish November 1, 2016 as the date for completion of its review and mark up of the Charter.
4. SUGGESTED AGENDA CHANGES: It was recommended that the Committee reconfirm the election of officers. It was moved by Walter Martone and seconded by John Bond to nominate John Hall for Chair. Richard Andrews moved to close the nominations and direct the Town Clerk to cast one ballot for John Hall as Chair. The motion passed unanimously. It was moved by Tom Yennerell and seconded by John Hall to nominate Richard Andrews for Vice-Chair. It was moved by Jeff Mobus and seconded by Barbara Courchesne to close the nominations and direct the Town Clerk to cast one ballot for Richard Andrews as Vice-Chair. The motion passed unanimously.

Additional recommendations for new agenda items included:

- a. Controlling the method for circulating edits recommended by individual Committee Members between meetings. It was recommended and agreed that Members will not circulate edits between meetings. Edits will be presented at the next scheduled meeting and the changes will be recorded in the minutes.
 - b. A benchmark timeline should be developed so the Committee can track its progress toward completing the document by November 1, 2016.
 - c. The Committee should create a process for soliciting and considering public comments.
5. DISCUSS THE GOALS OF THE COMMITTEE:
 - a. Chairman Hall presented a proposed framework for tracking our progress:
 - 1) Allow approximately six (6) weeks for review and editing, per ARTICLE in the Charter. There are four (4) ARTICLES and there will be three (3) meetings devoted to each ARTICLE.
 - i. 1st meeting will be open discussion.
 - ii. 2nd meeting will include review of proposed mark-ups and suggested edits.
 - iii. 3rd meeting will be devoted to finalizing the changes.
 - 2) Some ARTICLES may require additional time, and some will be completed in less time. We will monitor our progress and make adjustments to the timeframe as needed.
 - b. The Vermont League of Cities and Towns (VLCT) will develop a proposal that outlines how they might assist the Committee with its work. They will be helpful in identifying things missing from the current Charter, changes in the law, feedback on how the Legislature has dealt with charter amendments from other towns/cities, and recommendations for how to address changes under consideration by the Committee.

- c. It was suggested that we put the proposed changes/edits into categories such as:
 - 1) Provisions that transition from the past charter to the current charter.
 - 2) Administrative changes.
 - 3) Clerical changes.
 - 4) Substantive changes.

It was also suggested that the review of Article I be used as a test case for deciding on the categories, and then apply these categories to future Articles.

6. Discuss specific charter changes:

- a. After discussion about the fact that multiple differing versions of the Charter currently exist, it was decided that the wording used in the version contained in the Vermont Statutes should be the controlling document. Barbara Courchesne agreed to print a copy of this section of the Vermont Statutes and provide copies to the Committee Members.
- b. It was suggested that after the Committee completes its work, an index of the document should be created and added to the back of the Charter to make research easier.
- c. Preamble: Barbara Schultz offered to look at some charters from other towns and provide ideas at our next meeting for creating a preamble to include in the Springfield Charter.
- d. Powers of the Town: This section of the Charter is the likely place for the introduction of items that could expand the ability of the Town to accomplish its goals and objectives. This might include things such as addressing blight, facilitating the redevelopment of specific buildings, revitalizing neighborhoods and certain districts, organizing and expanding economic development, and other items. Members were asked to be thinking about potential items that should be included, and members might want to look at this section in the charters of towns that have successfully rebounded from distressed situations. There may be things in these charters that helped the towns to rebound. Some towns/cities that might be considered include:
 - 1) St. Albans City
 - 2) Windsor Town
 - 3) Milton Town
 - 4) Rutland City
 - 5) Lyndon Town and Lyndonville Village
 - 6) Vergennes Town
 - 7) Waterbury Town and Village
 - 8) Barre City
 - 9) Hartford Town and White River Junction Village
 - 10) Randolph Town
- e. There was discussion on the Open Meeting Law. Members need to refrain from having discussions and circulating e-mails among multiple Committee Members. These actions could be construed as a "meeting" under the Open Meeting Law and must be noticed in advance.
- f. There was discussion about having a section in the Charter for "definitions." Members should make note of items where having a definition would be helpful. At a future meeting the Committee will determine whether a specific section for definitions should be created.
- g. There was discussion about soliciting input (possibly by doing a press release) from the public, specifically reaching out to individuals (for example former Selectboard members and former Town employees) who may have had prior experience with Charter items. It could be useful to discover if these individuals have encountered situations where a change in the Charter could resolve some important issue. The Committee will take this item up again at a future meeting.
- h. At this point the Committee began a line-by-line review of the Charter starting with Article One, Incorporation, General Law, Miscellaneous Provisions. The specific changes that were proposed are shown on the pages attached to these minutes.

7. PUBLIC COMMENTS: No one from the public was present.

8. ADJOURNMENT: The meeting was adjourned at 7:40 p.m.

9. NEXT MEETING: The next meeting will be held on Wednesday, May 11, 2016 at 6:00 p.m. at Town Hall.

Respectfully submitted,
Walter Martone

POTENTIAL CHARTER EDITS

1. Make gender neutral
2. Residence for Town officials
3. Add Library Board as elected offices
4. Give new powers to the Town
 - a. Redevelopment
 - b. Blight
5. Add preamble (Barbara S.)
6. Add definitions (Barbara S.)
7. Time of Town meeting (Kristi)
8. Election provisions (Barbara C.)
9. Personnel evaluation system (Tom)
10. Elected officials – criminal record (Kristi)
11. Local options taxes