

Harvard Charter Commission

Meeting Minutes

May 25, 2017

Town Hall

Commissioners Present:

Paul Cohen; Rick Maiore; Sharon McCarthy; George McKenna; Stephanie Opalka; Ron Ostberg; Charles Redinger; Cindy Russo; Peter Warren.

Call to Order

Chair Cohen called the meeting to order at 7:05 p.m.

Public Input

No public input.

Approval of Minutes

It was agreed to table review and acceptance of minutes from previous meetings; April 25 and May 2 minutes.

Review of Draft Charter Document

There was discussion on the input received from meetings with town board/commissions, and the public hearings held in May. This included: two public hearings, May 6 and 11; meeting on May 2 with the School Committee and Planning Board; and, meeting on May 23 with the Board of Selectmen (BOS), Finance Committee, Capital Planning and Investment Committee, and Board of Health.

Key topics identified from these meetings included: term lengths, two versus three years; board/commission rotations, staggered versus simultaneous; election timing, fall versus spring; elected versus appointed for some boards/commissions; term limits; and, chair rotation requirement. Also identified were issues related to the budget process, BOS accountabilities, and volunteer issues.

Discussion yielded several motions.

1. Board/commission chair rotation. Ms. Russo moved that section 3.9 of the draft charter be revised to reflect chair rotation only for permitting boards/commissions. Mr. Ostberg provided a second. Discussion ensued. Vote: 9 yes, 0 no.
2. Terms for elected and appointed positions. Mr. Ostberg moved that sections 3.2 (BOS), 3.3 (School), 3.4 (Moderator), 3.5 (Library), 3.6 (Warner), and 3.8 (Appointed) of the draft charter be revised to reflect length of terms as they currently are (pre-charter activities), as well to keep in place staggered rotations. Discussion ensued. Mr. Warren provided a second. Vote: 9 yes, 0 no.
3. Elected versus appointed board/commissions. Mr. Warren moved that section 3.1.a of the draft charter remain regarding elected versus appointed boards/commissions. Ms. Russo provided a second. Vote: 9 yes, 0 no.
4. Town elections and caucus. Mr. Maiore moved that sections 3.1.b and 3.1.c of the draft charter be revised to return election timing to the current timeframe (February-June), and the current caucus format for placement on the ballot, of eligible persons, be replaced with

a requirement to complete (and submit to the Town Clerk) nomination papers, along with 25 valid signatures. Mr. Ostberg provided a second. Vote: 9 yes, 0 no.

There was discussion about town bylaws. This included: topics that have come up during the commission's activities that appeared to be bylaw issues versus issues to address in the charter; the potential impact the charter may have on existing bylaws; and, the potential of making bylaw revision recommendations.

There was discussion about the value of the charter's preamble, as well as a "narrative" document that would address charter key points.

There was discussion about section 7.6 and periodic charter review. It was highlighted that review needed to happen "at least once every 10-year period after the [charter's] effective date," and that current language did not restrict review sooner than 10 years.

There was discussion about the value of a transition or implementation document to assist with charter implementation. It was pointed out that Article 8 – Transitional Provisions would address some of these issues. It was suggested to add language in section 3.2 to recommend or require BOS accountability for implementation.

There was discussion about section 5.5 – Building Inspector/Facilities Manager, and whether this issue was appropriate for the charter versus a potential bylaw change/revision. There was discussion about planning and facility accountabilities, and the potential of establishing a standing building committee. It was agreed to table discussion to a later date.

Preparation for Preliminary Charter Commission Report

Mr. Cohen reviewed a timeline for preparation and subsequent submission of the charter document. June commission meeting dates were identified; June 1, 15, and 29.

Meeting adjourned at 9:12. Mr. Maiore made the motion. Ms. McCarthy provided a second. Vote, unanimous.

Minutes prepared by: C. Redinger