

Harvard Charter Commission
Meeting Minutes
October 6, 2016
Town Hall

Members present: Paul Cohen (Chair), Rick Maiore, Sharon McCarthy, George McKenna, Stephanie Opalka, Ron Ostberg, Charles Redinger, Cindy Russo, Peter Warren

Paul called the meeting to order at 7 p.m. The Commission approved the minutes of the 9/1 and 9/22 meetings as presented and the minutes of the 9/8 meeting as corrected. Rick will look for the 8/11 minutes.

Discussion with **Finance Committee** (FinCom) represented by members Heidi Frank, Don Ludwig, Bruce Nickerson, John Seeley, and Laura Vilain

- Current process: every department with a budget submits its budget according to FinCom instructions: level service, level budget, or override. FinCom reads through justifications, discusses with department, ranks requests, votes, and then finds out what money is available.
- Town Administrator review of department budgets for compliance with budget requirements and questioning of overspending has saved FinCom time. Issue raised: who owns the budget and what is FinCom's authority?
- Duplication of reviews – each department goes to the Board of Selectmen (BOS), FinCom, and CPIC. Issue raised: could all budgets go to Town Administrator to compile – not edit – and then send to FinCom for review?
- Would like more certainty and better communication on revenue estimates.
- Good volunteers are crucial – for submitting good budgets as well as analyzing them. How much should be dependent on volunteers?
- Issue raised: the town lacks a coordinated long-term town financial vision that includes FinCom, CPIC, and other town committees and departments, and reflects the Master Plan. This issue goes beyond planning for capital spending on items such as fire trucks and police cruisers. Who owns the town vision?
- Member appointment by Town Moderator works.
- Nine members is a good number.

Discussion with **Capitol Planning and Investment Committee** (CPIC) represented by members Heidi Frank, Teresa Jordon, and former member Ken Swanton

- Current process: In September each department submits its capital requirements for the next year and out two, three, four, five, and (last year) six years. Each CPIC member rates the requests using criteria set by CPIC to decide what projects have priority.
- Projects under \$100k are paid from accumulated free cash; projects at or over \$100k require a debt exclusion or override.
- CPIC goes to FinCom for funding source.

- Five voting CPIC members – FinCom, schools, BOS, two citizens at large. CPIC thinks that number works; FinCom has talked about adding more citizens at large.
- Issue raised: Should there be policy to direct planning? Eg. Debt service should be X percent of total budget.
- Issue raised: Does CPIC have adequate projection tools?
- Issue raised: Long-term investment in infrastructure not methodically addressed.

Discussion about relationship between FinCom and CPIC:

- FinCom is advisory to CPIC and is responsible for omnibus budget
- Issue raised: maintenance funding – who makes the decision as to whether this is in the omnibus budget and not the capital budget. Neither committee is responsible for stewardship of town buildings and infrastructure.
- Issue raised: Should routine capital requests, like police cars, go in the omnibus budget.

Public comments:

- Budget process needs to be more transparent – Commission will talk about most appropriate outreach at a later meeting.

Next meetings:

- Thursday, October 27, 7 p.m. Town Hall 2nd floor with BOS and Town Administrator
- Thursday, November 3, 7 p.m. Town Hall 2nd floor
- Thursday, November 17, 7 p.m. Town Hall 2nd floor – Public Hearing

Paul told FinCom and CPIC that the Commission will follow up with them early next year.

Paul adjourned the meeting at 9 p.m.

Laura Andrews, recorder