

# **Charter Review Committee - Remote Meeting**

2/24/2021 - Minutes

## **1. Call To Order And Pledge Of Allegiance**

The meeting was called to order at 7:08 pm. The pledge of allegiance was said.

Attendance (Charter Review Committee Members attended via remote connection): Matt Jussaume (Chair), Caroline Ahdab (Vice Chair), Ramona Reed (Clerk), Harvey Serreze, Marilyn Tremblay Absent: John Ladik, Bob Newton

## **2. Acceptance Of Minutes**

The minutes from the meeting on February 10, 2021 were reviewed.

Marilyn Tremblay made a motion, seconded by Harvey Serreze to approve the meeting minutes from February 10, 2021. These were unanimously accepted by the CRC members in attendance at that meeting: Matt Jussaume, Ramona Reed, Marilyn Tremblay, Harvey Serreze Abstained: Caroline Ahdab

## **3. Public Comments On The Agenda**

None

## **4. Public Feedback Received**

None

## **5. Discussion / Action Items**

### **5.1. Revision Discussions For Article 7-6 General Provisions - Periodic Review And Other Charter Sections, Time Permitting**

#### **Section 7-6 General Provisions:**

At the last meeting, the CRC discussed whether the Housing Authority or the Affordable Housing Committee, or a combination of both, should be mentioned in the Charter, according to information Marilyn Tremblay provided about these two agencies. The Housing Authority is a state agency, with some members who are elected residents of Pepperell. The Affordable Housing Committee is a town committee whose members are appointed. Marilyn reiterated that it would be worthwhile to have a member of the Affordable Housing Committee participate in Charter reviews, however if we as a committee decided not to make this change, she reminded that we need to update Article 3 - Elected Officials, Section 3.4 Housing Authority, because most of the item b, listing powers and duties of the Housing Authority, are carried out by the Affordable Housing Committee.

It was questioned whether the list of committees whose members should take part in a Charter Review Committee are required by law, which is why the Housing Authority was indicated. Nobody knew the answer to this, so it was decided that Town Counsel could be asked if we decided to remove the Housing Authority participation.

By the end of the discussion, the CRC agreed that we would leave the Housing Authority as the body to be represented on the Charter Review Committee and that Section 3.4 would be updated to reflect their responsibilities and current membership composition. Item a in that section will also need to be updated because there was a recent requirement change that the 5th member should be a tenant, appointed by the Town.

## **Section 7-7 Removals and Suspensions:**

The CRC discussed whether this section required revisions. Feedback from the Town Administrator, Andrew MacLean, had been received during an earlier review of this section asking if the procedure for removing an officer, member of a multiple member body or employee could be codified based on attendance and a vote of members.

After a closer review of this section, the CRC decided the procedures itemized for removal were important and appropriate, especially since removal based on attendance was already separately considered, covered under Section 7-10 Loss of Office, Excessive Absence.

**Motion:** Marilyn Tremblay made a motion to leave Section 7-7 as written, this was seconded by Caroline Ahdab. The motion carried unanimously.

## **Section 7-8 Procedures Governing Multiple Member Bodies**

Item a - Meetings: The following text was added to the first sentence:

"In accordance with the Commonwealth of Massachusetts Open Meeting Law,". Other minor grammatical fixes were also made.

Item b - Rules and Journal: The current text in this section is as follows:

*"Each multiple member body shall determine its own rules and order of business unless otherwise provided by this Charter, M.G.L, or by by-law and shall provide for the keeping of a journal of its proceedings. These rules and journals shall be public records, and shall be kept available for public inspection."*

As this section was reviewed, Caroline Ahdab asked if a requirement could be added that stipulated that committees must allow 30 minutes at each open meeting for the public to provide comments, if there were public attendees who wished to provide feedback. Also, time limits per speaker could be specified.

This was discussed. Ramona Reed asked if this would conflict with the Mass. Open Meeting Law, Public Participation section, which states "While the public is permitted to attend an open meeting, an individual may not address the public body without permission of the chair". (reference: Open Meeting Law Guide, October 6, 2017, pg. 15).

The committee decided to continue this discussion and agreed to review Caroline's suggestion again at our next meeting, after the members had time to think about this.

**Action:** Caroline agreed to draft text about requiring time for public comments at Town open meetings.

The Charter review will continue with Section 7.8 at the next CRC meeting, and subsequent sections will follow, as time permits. Additionally, if time permits, after the review of Article 8, we will begin our review of the list we created of complex issues that need further discussion.

## **6. Other Matters Which Could Not Be Reasonably Anticipated 48 Hours Prior To Meeting**

The CRC discussed our report that is required for the Annual Town Report, which is due to be submitted to Town Clerk, Brynn Montesanti, by 2/26/2021. Matt Jussaume created an initial draft for review. This was discussed until the committee came to an agreement on the content and level of detail to provide. After the discussion, a vote was taken to submit our report with changes discussed at this meeting.

**Motion:** A motion was made by Marilyn Tremblay to accept the report draft as discussed for submission to

the Annual Town Report. This was seconded by Ramona Reed. The motion carried unanimously.

## **7. Adjournment**

Marilyn Tremblay motioned to adjourn the meeting, which was seconded by Caroline Ahdab. By unanimous vote, the meeting adjourned at 8:57 pm. The next Charter Review Committee Meeting will be scheduled for Weds., March 10, 2021, at 7 pm.

Minutes respectfully submitted by Ramona Reed, Clerk, Charter Review Committee