

Remote Meeting via On-Line Link provided on Town of Pepperell website with this Meeting's Agenda

3/25/2020 - Minutes

1. Call To Order And Pledge Of Allegiance

The meeting was called to order at 7:10 pm. The pledge of allegiance was said.

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

2. Acceptance Of Minutes

2.1. Vote To Accept Meeting Minutes From Meetings On 1/22/2020, 2/26/2020, 3/11/2020

1/22/2020 Minutes

Mike Tang made a motion, seconded by Matt Jussaume, to approve the meeting minutes of January 22, 2020.

These were accepted by a vote of 4: Caroline Ahdab, Matt Jussaume, John Ladik, Harvey Serreze with 4 members abstaining, Doug Adams, Ramona Reed, Mike Tang and Marilyn Tremblay because they were not present at the meeting.

2/26/2020 Minutes

Mike Tang made a motion, seconded by Marilyn Tremblay, to approve the meeting minutes of February 26, 2020.

These were accepted by a vote of 5: Caroline Ahdab, John Ladik, Ramona Reed, Harvey Serreze, Marilyn Tremblay with 3 members abstaining, Doug Adams, Matt Jussaume and Marilyn Tremblay because they were not present at the meeting.

3/11/2020 Minutes

Mike Tang made a motion, seconded by Harvey Serreze, to approve the meeting minutes of March 11, 2020. These were accepted by a vote of 4: Matt Jussaume, Ramona Reed, Harvey Serreze, Mike Tang with 4 members abstaining, Doug Adams, Caroline Ahdab, John Ladik and Marilyn Tremblay because they were not present at the meeting.

3. Public Comments On The Agenda

None.

4. Public Feedback Received

No written correspondence since the last meeting. See Agenda item 5.1 for a public comment on that at this meeting.

5. Discussion / Action Items

5.1. Follow Up Secton 3-2a - Board Of Selectmen Composition - Discuss Methods Of More Public Feedback For 3 Vs 5 BOS (E.g. Non-Binding Ballot Question, Public

Forum?)

Caroline Ahdab presented feedback she received in an email dated March 4, 2020 from Andrew MacLean with comments from Town Attorney Doneski concerning the CRC's request to have a non-binding public ballot question about Pepperell having a 3 vs. 5 member Board of Selectmen. It was pointed out that the deadline to submit the ballot request for the April 27, 2020 election was March 23, 2020, so it had passed. However, given that the election date has been postponed, the Committee would still consider pursuing the request for the ballot question in case the deadline for its approval might be extended.

A motion was made by Matt Jussaume that the CRC request a non-binding public question be added to the ballot for the next Town election, using the suggested text from Town Attorney Doneski. The question text would be:

Are you in favor of the Pepperell Board of Selectmen to increase from three (3) board members to five (5) board members? Yes No

Mike Tang made a motion to amend the prior motion to include additional text on the ballot advising voters they could provide further comments to the CRC through Town Hall. Mike subsequently withdrew this motion in favor of the CRC placing flyers at the election site with info on how to contact us. The slide that was used at the 2019 Fall Town Meeting will be used for the flyer.

Other discussion about requesting a non-binding ballot question about the 3 vs. 5 member Board of Selectmen included a concern made by Caroline Ahdab that if we move forward with the ballot question and the town accepted to move towards a 5 member board, this could create financial issues for the town. For example that additional personnel might need to be hired to support a larger Board. Other discussion by Harvey Serreze, Mike Tang and Ramona Reed supported requesting the non-binding ballot question to receive feedback from a larger sample of the public.

Pepperell resident, Dave Lavender, asked why the topic of having a 3 vs. 5 member Board of Selectmen is so important to the CRC, as a lot of time is spent on this issue by this Committee. Mr. Lavender further pointed out there are multiple ways for the public to provide the Committee feedback and if we present something to the Town that isn't accepted it can be voted down or sent back for revisions. He also commented that asking for a vote on this might cause discussion about other issues like what powers the Town Administrator or Board of Selectman have or don't have, and asked would the Committee then call for votes on these, having this go on for years? He suggested the Committee make the decision.

Doug Adams explained this is a controversial topic that could have a big impact on the town so it's up to the CRC to receive as much feedback as possible. Currently we have not heard from that many citizens. Given the cost, time and effort to make revisions after the fact, it would be in this Committee's best interest to put forward a Charter that we believe would be accepted by the Town. Doug also pointed out that if the result of the non-binding vote was controversial, it would likely generate much feedback to help with the decision for the Charter. Mike Tang added that it is important for us to get a pulse from the public as we collect data on pros and cons for this topic. The voting results give us more information to consider with other pros and cons.

After the discussion, the Committee voted on the motion to request a non-binding ballot question with the suggested text. This was unanimously accepted. **Action:** Ramona Reed will contact the Town Administrator to request that this question be added to an upcoming Select Board agenda for their consideration of adding it to the ballot for the next Town Election.

5.2. Plan For Second Pass On Charter Sections/Continue Charter Review

Matt Jussaume advised that we completed the first pass of the Charter Review at our last meeting. He sent CRC a link to the working Google document for reference and input.

Doug Adams reminded that our objective is to complete the review and edits, then have this approved by the Town. It was agreed by the CRC that our revised timeline would be to have this completed for review at the Fall 2020 Town Meeting. As such, the CRC will continue to meet every other Wednesday for the near future, with flexibility to make schedule adjustments as needed.

Given that some edits have already been made a long the way, Doug suggested that for sections that need more work, each Committee member should identify the areas they agreed to work on to ensure our individual research has been included for further review. He also suggested that we consider forming sub-committees to work on the more complicated sections that still need work (e.g. Harvey Serreze suggested that Section 5-5, Town Organization, was one that a subcommittee could take rather than the whole committee discussing at a meeting). It was agreed that Committee members could either leave comments about edits on the working Google document or email edits to Matt Jussaume, cc'ing the rest of the CRC. Matt Jussaume suggested that at our next meeting we could start reading through the edited Charter and categorize revisions as easy or more difficult and leave the difficult ones for later so we can move more quickly through editing.

John Ladik mentioned some points he'd like to have considered for the Charter but wasn't sure which sections should include them. The CRC agreed to further review these.

1. How By-Laws are made

2. The Pepperell Code Book is not currently referenced in the Charter

3. Consider stating that there should be alternates assigned on some Boards and Commissions so that quorums can be met when members are absent.

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

None.

7. Adjournment

Mike Tang motioned to adjourn the meeting, which was seconded by Caroline Ahdab. By unanimous vote, the meeting adjourned at 8:35 pm. The next Charter Review Committee Meeting will be scheduled for Weds, April 8, 2020.

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