

Charter Review Commission Organizational Meeting Minutes – July 16, 2018

The meeting was called to order at 6:00 pm.

Roll Call

Members present were: Karen Farber, Dave Goldberg, Ned Kitchel, Bill Lunt, Dave McConnell, Mary Nelson, Rachel Reed. Staff present were: Amy Lamontagne, Nathan Poore, Amy Tchao.

Members absent were: Sean Mahoney, Richard Olson.

Town Clerk Ellen Planer presided over the swearing in of commission members.

Item 1 – Introductions

Commission members introduced themselves and discussed their varied experience.

Item 2 – Election of a Chair

Mary nominated Karen Farber as Chair, Dave G. seconded. All in favor 7-0.

Item 3 – Election of a Vice Chair

Ned nominated Richard as Vice Chair, Mary seconded. All in favor 7-0.

Item 4 – Election of a Secretary

Dave M. nominated Rachel as Secretary, Ned seconded. All in favor 7-0.

Item 5 – Establish a Meeting Schedule

Before discussing a meeting schedule, Karen suggested an update from Amy Tchao, Town Attorney. Amy reviewed the state statute which requires municipalities to convene a Charter Commission every ten years. The purpose is to make changes, amendments, or adopt a new charter. The charter is the town's major governing doc – it's constitution. Amy has worked on a variety of charter commissions. Some were perfunctory and some divided communities. Most charter work involves dealing with budgetary issues, public meetings, public hearings, comments, etc. Some issues are minor while others are more substantive issues. The commission must determine what the community sees as major issues. Because the Town Council is the governing body, a referendum must be held for citizens to accept or reject the proposed changes.

Bill provided background about the 2008 commission. He and Richard served on it (with Amy L. and Nathan as staff). Mary served on the 1998 commission. Bill explained that the 2008 group

worked quickly to issue the final report in time for the November election. The 2008 charter revision had a 4-3 vote from the commission with one absent and one abstaining. Bill discussed the minority report that was issued in response to the Assessor charge in the charter (Assessor was changed from reporting to the Town Council to reporting to the Town Manager). Bill also asked if the Charter Commission meetings will be videotaped. Nathan said there are no plans to videotape but offered to audiotape all meetings. This process will start with the next meeting.

Karen initiated a general discussion about process and how the charter should be reviewed. Should the document get divided into sections and these sections get reviewed at different meetings? Bill confirmed that this was the approach used in 2008.

Dave G. suggested a review starting with the beginning and working through – putting things on the table but wondering if the group needs to cover everything?

Amy T. explained that a public meeting must be held within 30 days after the commission's organizational meeting to obtain comments. She also suggested asking the town staff for comments.

Nathan mentioned some housekeeping issues, including a past issue with the Maine Municipal Bond Bank related to a sewer bond. Luckily, the bond was run through the Portland Water District so the town could borrow money but the charter problem needs to get fixed. Nathan also discussed increasing the limit on sewer expenses – i.e. the amount needed before going to bond.

A general discussion continued about the meeting schedule and a September 24 deadline to get a final report to the Town Council in advance of the November 6 election. While commission members agreed the deadline is tight, they are committed to having frequent meetings to work with that deadline. The commission also agreed that if the September 24 deadline isn't feasible, they can continue working through the winter in preparation for a June 2019 vote.

The commission decided to meet on Tuesdays from 6:00 pm – 8:00 pm with a hard stop at 8:00 pm. Proposed meeting dates are July 24, August 7 and 21, and September 4 and 18. Karen reminded the group that two members were missing and dates might be changed to accommodate their schedules.

For the next meeting, Karen asked town staff and commission members to review the charter and provide input. Based on this review, the group will create a structured meeting plan and review approach moving forward. All group members agreed with this plan.

Item 6 – Other Business

There was no other business at this time.

Item 7 – Adjourn

The meeting was adjourned at 7:03 pm.