

Williamstown Charter Review Committee
Municipal Building - 31 North Street
Hybrid - Zoom Meeting
Thursday, October 20, 2022 - 1:30 P.M.

Present: Andy Hogeland, Joseph Bergeron, Anne Skinner, Jeff Strait, Mary Kennedy and Town Manager Robert Menicocci.

Present via Zoom: Jeff Johnson and Nate Budington

Others: Charles Bonenti, Library Trustee

Chairman Andy Hogeland called the meeting to order at 1:30 P.M.

1. Taking of Minutes

Due to an agreed upon procedure to rotate minute taking among the membership, Mary Kennedy agreed to complete the minutes for the October 20, 2022 meeting.

2. Approval of Minutes

Nate Budington noted a clerical error in #6 and it was agreed to remove the word "putting" The minutes of September 22, 2022 were approved by a roll call vote of 6-0-1 with Kennedy abstaining due to absence at that meeting.

3. Review of lessons from MSA webinar.

There were positive reviews from the members that watched the seminar via the zoom link Andy Hogeland shared with us. Andy stated he took the following takeaways from the seminar; Strong town manager, consistent problem with low turnout at town meetings, looking at how department heads are appointed, outreach to civic and community groups for their input, that consultant help is good and also that there should be structure for periodic reviews of the charter.

4. Discussion of scope of assistance from consultant.

Andy Hogeland sent out two documents for Consultants, one from Edward J. Collins Jr. Center for Public Management and a copy of a proposal to the Town of Adams from Community Paradigm Associates, LLC. It would be good for a consultant to read over the existing charter and see what is working and what is missing. We discussed the different ways to approach this with a consultant. It was agreed we should talk to town boards and department heads to solicit input and this should be done before hiring a consultant. Nate Buddington felt in this process we should address the voices of residents in town who do not feel represented in Williamstown's current form of government.

It was agreed as a first step to draft ten questions to use for interviews with town boards and department heads for a baseline before we meet with the public. Joe Bergeron, Jeff Strait and Mary Kennedy will meet to draft a list of questions to bring to the committee for discussion at the next meeting.

Andy Hogeland suggested having a consultant attend one of our meetings to give us a presentation on what other communities are doing across the State. Following that, the committee would focus on the top five items or so to make some choices on what the focus will be. Andy will bring an outline to the next meeting asking what we would like a consultant to do. Joe Bergeron suggested the consultant look at our current charter and have them pick out some items that no other town does or should do and the reason why. In addition, the consultant should look if there are some items in our charter that should be modified and what options exist for that process.

5. Discussion of ideas for process and community engagement.

Discussion followed on outreach to the community once we move forward with outreach. Jeff Johnson offered to reach out to the MSA to see if he can bring some information back to the next meeting as well as getting suggestions from those directing the CARES project on reaching different voices in town. Thoughts of putting a survey in the tax bill or annual town census to reach out to residents, or as a separate mailing, with the result depending on how soon we are ready for an outreach mailing.

Nate Budington commented that the language of the charter is not easy to read, and suggested that we also look at the presentation of the charter becoming a bit clearer in the language we use in it.

6 Other Business

Charles Bonenti, Member of the Library Trustees stated that there have been many imbuquities in power between the town and the library administration They have recently agreed to form a financial advisory committee and would like to work with the Charter Review Committee to hope to clarify their relationship with the town.

7 Adjourn

The meeting adjourned at 2:30 P.M.

Next meeting will be Thursday, November 3, 2022 at 1:30 P.M. Meeting will take place in the third floor meeting room of the municipal building.

Respectfully submitted,

Mary C. Kennedy