**Charter Review Committee**

**Minutes, November 2, 2023**

**Present: Andy Hogeland, Nate Budington, Mary Kennedy, Anne Skinner, Jeff Strait**

1. Minutes of October 2, 2023 postponed until next meeting
2. Prudential District History

Jeff Strait noted that the Charter mentions the Fire District in Section 9, where the town is to have no impact on (inter alia) the duties of the district. However the ability of the town to enter into agreements for shared services; the town clerk currently helps with district elections and the tax collector collects funds. It is suggested that the specific reference to the Fire District be struck, but that generic language permitting agreements with other entities, such as HWQD, be written in.

1. Possible changes to Charter or bylaws

Suggestions one through three, five, seven and eight were approved without discussion.

On suggestion four, there was some concern to be sure it was sufficiently clear.

On suggestion 6, we propose adding ‘starting in 2034’ to that language so that no one proposes a new charter review starting in 2024!

1. Questions for Collins

Collins has responded to items 4 & 5 on the list, but not everyone has had a chance to read the report. On #4, recall provisions, there was agreement on adopting language from other municipalities to ensure approval by the legislature. As a general principle, we felt that a simple recall, as opposed to recall and replace, was adequate, given the existing mechanisms for filling vacancies. A quick note on #5 was that while Collins had a mechanism for appealing violations of the charter, they did not seem to suggest any consequences for doing so.

1. Finance Committee

Jeff Strait presented a report on the relationship of the FinCom to both the charter and the bylaws. The FinCom actually precedes the charter; originally I both prepared the budget and presented it to Town Meeting. The charter in ’56 removed the preparation part. While the charter is largely silent, bylaws have an elaborate description of responsibilities, including for capital expenditures. Jeff would like the FinCom to do more with long-rang planning. An ad hoc committee has been formed to work with all cost centers to look at debt structure planning.

1. Public Comment

Peter Beck had two comments. First he thought that the timing of future charter reviews should be more flexible – “at least every 10 years”, rather than specifically years ending in four. The committee felt it would be reasonable to make it clear that charter review could occur at other times if needed. His second point was that he hoped the committee would make a recommendation on the type of Town Meeting, and not rely on a referendum. That seemed reasonable to the committee.

1. Next meeting

Next meeting will be 12/7/2023.

Respectfully submitted,

Anne Skinner, secretary pro tem.