Charter Review Committee

Minutes for July 6, 2023 Meeting

Williamstown Municipal Building

Members Present: Jeffrey Johnson, Jeff Strait, Anne Skinner, Nate Budington, and Mary Kennedy and Town Manager Bob Menicocci, *ex officio*

Members via Zoom: Joe Bergeron and Andy Hogeland

The meeting was called to order at 1:36 P.M.

Taking of Minutes - Mary Kennedy agreed to take the minutes

Approval of Minutes - The minutes of June 15, 2023 were approved 6-0-1 with Jeff Strait abstaining.

Review of Draft Interim Report and discuss process for finishing it -

The committee thanked Andy for the excellently detailed report that he presented to us.

Anne Skinner felt we need to emphasize that this is a report of what we’ve done and not a proposal for the revised charter. She would like more emphasis on what belongs in the charter and what should be a bylaw.

Jeff Strait felt it would be useful to have an introduction explaining what the Charter is and detailing the roles of the Town Manager, Select Board and Town Meeting. He commented it would be helpful to acknowledge that prior to 1956 there was no Town Manager and the decision to adopt the current Charter was a decision to professionalize the operation of town government and thus ceded specific responsibilities to the Town Manager. Putting in that perspective would be helpful to explain why we have this current charter.

Nate Budington was concerned about many references to the survey, of which respondents were unrepresentative of who actually lives in town. Would like to get a wider response from the town so we have something more complete.

Joe Bergeron suggested having a preamble about the survey and how it was conducted, and the efforts that were made to get it out and use it as a lever to get more people to complete it at upcoming events in town.

Committee would like to see specific answers to those respondents who were 60 years and older

Jeff Strait would like to see some discussion on the role of the Finance Committee, in conjunction with the Selectboard, particularly in the budget process. Also the timing for submission of articles should be clarified for the recommendations to be included in the warrant.

Discussion ensued on the process we can use to submit our edits on the draft report without violating the Open Meeting Law. The committee agreed to edit the draft via Word. Andy will take the lead of our edits and Joe will assist him in clearing up any differences of opinions The document then can be turned into a dozen slides for the public outreach forums. Joe stated he is confident with Andy's ability to synthesize the information and get it into a usable format, consequently he will not submit edits, but rather take his energy in getting the info ready for presentations for forums, and also put onto slides.

The consensus of the committee is to not make recommendations just yet , we should wait and see what comments we get with arguments both ways and let the public talk to us for a few months in the fall and then come back and either recommend or not recommend. Would like to get a completed report done by the end of January and then work on articles for Town Meeting.

The Board and committee members' response to the survey was twenty participants. That will be included in the report, as well as the employee's response. Jeff Johnson expressed concern about how many town committees put out a lot of work and studies, and when it's complete residents aren’t aware of the work that's been done.

At our next meeting in August we will discuss our outreach process and public forums. It was suggested we talk to members of the Comprehensive Plan Committee on their outreach process as they received a good cross section of town.

Joe will go through the comments that respondents made in the submitted surveys to include a summary in the report. Andy would like all members' comments submitted to him by July 16th.

Future Meeting - National Night Out is August 1st, from 3:00 PM-7:00PM at the Spruces. Committee members will split time manning a table there. There will be some print out of survey slides to share with residents.

Next meeting will be Thursday, August 3, 2023 at 1:30 PM.

Adjourn - The meeting adjourned at 2:20 PM.

Respectfully submitted,

Mary C. Kennedy