

Observer Corps Report Town of Plymouth Charter Commission Meeting of August 5, 2021

Present: Hall, Pizer, Abbott, Keohan, Mand, Brewster, Vecchi (20 min. late). Absent: Peck, Maliguti

1. Patrick Flaherty SB – Climate, Energy, Environmental Task Force report followed by questions from Commission members and discussions about topics such as: 1. Much of cost for hiring a climate planner, studies to reveal local data, and action to prepare for &/or resolve local climate problems will come from grants. 17 other towns already have planners who are getting grants. Task Force expects to have a pool of very qualified applicants for the planner position. 2. How/if climate concerns might be addressed in the charter. Commissioners will see if/how other MA charters, towns, and conservation organizations address climate. 3. The geographic uniqueness of Plymouth – large and not built out yet: 103 square miles or 123 adding water bodies. How much open space do we have and of that how much does the town control/is town property, and what if any % should be open space. Abbott noted that in 1999 Plymouth was the first MA town to add Open Space wording in our charter. 4. Importance of citizen education regarding water conservation and who/what department is responsible.
2. Lee Hartman Director of Planning – A large department of 11 fulltime, 3 parttime and many volunteer committees plus is a member of many regional and state committees. Reminded all that grants usually require \$ matches. Questions and discussion topics: 1. Any planning item on warrant usually requires 2/3 vote, which requires a lot of preparation time and meetings, which usually limits the number of planning items to one per warrant. So any charter changes to stream line that process would be welcome. 2. Planning Dept can work as well with elected or volunteer committee members, is hard to find either to sit on Boards, getting elected requires \$\$\$, having an election for zoning board may increase its visibility. 3. Need to make sure all warrant articles are consistent with Master plan – Planning dept never submits inconsistent articles, but has no control over articles from individuals. 4. MA has a goal to increase housing but Plymouth doesn't need more, currently Ply has Safe Harbor designation, which will soon phase out, a number of 40B developers are ready to make proposals. Problem of balancing land protection with development both commercial and residential. Master Plan needs to be known and supported by citizens of Plymouth. Twice yearly Planning Dept updates online the lists of developments in Plymouth.
3. Jonathan Beder – DPW, another large dept. that has many qualified employees, that are also able to secure grant \$\$\$\$. 1. Problem of maintaining town buildings is currently being addressed; Beder supports adding Facilities Manager to charter. 2. How to improve project approval process to avoid problems not supported by community like Brook Road bridge. 3. Should there be a single maintenance dept or keep town and school separate? 4. How many homes/people can our aquifer support? Beder has no answer now but the time will come when it will tap out.
4. Public comment – Kevin Canty, as a private citizen, clarified his remarks made two weeks ago as a public citizen and made further comments. Abbott thanked him for the lecture.
5. New business – Keohan is working on the letter to invite other MA town officials, like Brookline. Discussed need to focus on determining commission recommendation in Nov - Dec, so that the Charter writing can begin spring – summer, and be ready for beginning presentations a year from

now. Discussed need for Charter meetings to be held live (not delayed) on PACTV since Commissioners were elected by the citizens; Secretary Michelle will work to secure meetings rooms and dates with that charge. Martha Vautrain Observer