

Observer Corps Report Town of Plymouth Charter Commission Meeting of October 25, 2021

(Oct 4 meeting was canceled due to preTM conflict)

Present in person: Abbott, Malaguti, Brewster, Keohane. Online: Hall, Mand

Chair Abbott read a welcoming statement for the 2 – 3 student participants that will hopefully be present next meeting, reminding us all that the youth of our town will be carrying the mantle for our government and next charter as well as suggesting that the students participate in discussion of all matters during meetings.

Discussion of following items, noted in previous meetings, for possible inclusion in the new charter, whatever form it takes. Throughout, the discussion freely flowed to other subjects, as noted.

- a. Redistricting process- consensus is that this should be in the charter with possible details such as
 1. Performed in a transparent manner by both legislative and executive branches.
 2. Done more frequently than q. 10 years, especially if precincts grows as large as 6000 citizens (4000 is the max per state laws), IF state law permits. Town Counsel and Sec. of State have been contacted for their advice.
 3. More frequent reprecincting, if necessary, may increase voter turnout.

Also discussed – 1. Should Ply have a stable number of TMM regardless of the number of precincts? 2. Should Ply have a committee that knows all charter details and makes sure that it is always followed. Example of Charter and Bylaw detail that was not followed Fall 2021 Town Meeting: TMM should receive information about all warrant articles 14 days prior to meeting. 3. Make sure Charter is clear and uncomplicated so it can easily be followed. 4. Does Ply have too many committees? Maybe not, as committee membership can contribute to more citizen involvement, but maybe Ply should return to practice of reviewing activity of every committee at beginning of TM and disband inactive ones.

- b. Use of Town Counsel – 1. use pre-TM to review all warrant articles and help petitioners write their articles correctly. 2. List all T.C. opinions in a book, available to all Town employees and citizens. 3. Cost? Maybe Ply is underutilizing T.C. 3. Ply is a large Town and needs a large firm of municipal lawyers who specialize in various municipal areas. 4. Should Ply/SB review T.C. services q. 3 years?
- c. Avoid Special Elections – 1. Either appoint next highest voter getter to vacancy, if possible, until next election or appoint someone, who did not run and agrees not to run for that seat in next election, until next election.
- d. Number of TMM- See a. Also discussed 1.
- e. Town Meeting role in approving Bargained Contracts- See a. Also discussed 2.
- f. Improving distribution of financing info to TMM- Since TMM take final responsibility of approving the budget, they should receive and understand all financial information as early as possible pre-TM. Therefore, consider having TMM, such as Precinct chairs be on a “Fin Com”. Disband our current A and FC. Brookline has a 30-member Fin Com, including 16 TMM, that builds the budget. Aware that A and FC puts in many hours and is very informed. Concerned about many 15-0 votes, and that there isn’t more Budget discussion at TM, like before, when

Spring TM was for Budget articles and Fall TM for other (Advisory) articles, such as Zoning. Should A and FC be only FC? Like Arlington, where 21 members are appointed by 3 different people?

Public comment

Anatol Zuckerman presented 5 areas of concern followed by 5 recommendations. His statement will be posted on the Town Hall web site under Charter Commission.

TMM Claire Montanari recommends, via email to Hall, read into record by Hall, that elected position vacancies be filled by next highest vote getter, until next election.

Further Discussion

Term Limits- Appear in many other town charters and may contribute to increased voter turnout and increased number of candidates VS letting voters set term limits at the ballot box, such as the recent Planning Board election after the Bump Rock Road issue and vote.

Town Hall hours of operation and several important committees meeting the same night.

Next Meetings- Monday Nov. 1 and 15 and 29 and Dec 13, subject to change.

Report submitted by Martha Vautrain