

CHARTER REVIEW COMMITTEE MEETING

August 9, 2023 Plymouth Town Hall Shallop Room 6PM In-person and Zoom

Committee Members Present: David Golden, Chair; Alan Costello, Vice Chair (via Zoom) Robert Zupperoli, Clerk; Betty Cavacco, Joseph Hutchinson, Timothy Lawlor, Len Levin, Laurence Pizer, Martha Vautrain, Steve Bolotin (alternate), Michael Hanlon (alternate).

Rep. Matt Muratore began the meeting by going over the timing and the purview of the Charter Review Committee (CRC). The committee's work will be available for the Fall 2024 Town Meeting, and if accepted it must be presented to the State Legislature for final approval. (There is no statutory requirement that the Attorney General review the changes.) He added that the committee can add or take away responsibilities and hoped that the changes that the committee makes will make the Charter more effective.

Kelly McElreath then reviewed the Open Meeting law regarding posting of meetings and communication between members. Mr. Golden added that it was unlikely that the committee would need any executive sessions. Ms. McElreath then mentioned that the Town had signed a contract (\$17,000) for a review of the Charter to be sure it had no conflicts within itself, and to be sure the by-laws were consistent with the Charter. Mr. Pizer said that a decision needs to be made as to whether references to Mass General Law (MGL) need to be in the Charter. Currently, references to MGL are inconsistent.

Public Comment:

Steve Lydon noted that Public Comment was toward the beginning of the meeting and wondered about comment on specific discussion items.

Committee Rules:

Chair Golden and the group then discussed Committee rules. Public comment will be allowed during discussion items; however, the Committee voted unanimously to limit each speaker to three minutes. He cautioned members to be careful what they say on social media. Suggested changes won't be tracked unless voted.

When the role of the alternates was mentioned, Ms. Cavacco said that the Town Moderator had stated that it was up to the Committee to decide how to run the committee, therefore it could determine the role of the alternates. There then ensued a long discussion regarding the powers of the alternates. Kate McKay, Attorney with Reservitz Bergeron, had given an opinion that it is the appointing committee that had the authority to give voting privileges to the alternates, not the committee itself. A motion was made to recommend to the appointing committee that the alternates be elevated to full members with voting power. The motion carried on a vote of 6-3 with Vautrain, Pizer, and Hutchinson voting no. Al DiNardo, a Town Meeting Member, felt there could be a legal challenge to alternates swaying a vote.

Miscellaneous:

Funding for support of the CRC will be voted at the Fall Town Meeting by an increase in the overtime budget of \$8,834. That amount will provide 165 hours in FY'24 for Michelle Turner's administrative services.

The Committee has its own page on the Town website to communicate with the public: <https://www.plymouth-ma.gov/1237/Charter-Review-Committee>. There was further discussion as to how to keep the public informed about the recommended changes. It was suggested that the CRC keep the Committee of Precinct Chairs (COPC) up to date so they could take information back to their caucuses.

Mr. Hanlon suggested getting ideas from town officials, the Town Moderator, as well as town employees and the unions. Mention was made of "tweaks" to the authority of Town Meeting Members. Ms. Cavacco also suggested that the CRC look at things that were identified as good in the failed Charter.

New Business:

Scheduling of the CRC meetings needs to be redone.

Respectfully submitted,

Lyle Lawrence, LWV Observer Corps

(Readers, for more information: When the minutes of this meeting have been approved, they will be available at Plymouth-ma.gov. Go to Agendas and Minutes, scroll down to and click Charter Review Committee, look right and click minutes icon.)