

## CHARTER REVIEW COMMITTEE MEETING

September 5, 2023 Plymouth Town Hall Shallop Room 6PM In-person and Zoom

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

Chair Dan Golden opened the meeting by informing the committee members that the Town Moderator declined to reconvene the Charter Review Nomination Committee for a number of reasons; hence the recommendation of the CRC that alternates have full voting power was not heard. As a result, alternates do not have voting power unless one or both are substituting for a member who is absent or has a conflict of interest and is not voting. However, Mr. Golden stated that alternates can participate fully in the discussion and can make proposals. And, although it will not be counted, alternates may also indicate how they would have voted. The committee then unanimously approved the rules for alternates. Mr. Bolotin was nominated as the first alternate, and the vote was unanimous. Mr. Hanlon will be the second alternate. Mr. Bolotin then assumed the role of a voting member due to Ms. Cavacco's absence.

### **Public Comment:**

Kevin Lynch called for better communication from the Town.

### **Diagnosing Problems with the Current Charter:**

Mr. Bolotin referred to Mr. Pizer's comment in the previous meeting that the current Charter references state law occasionally but not consistently. He also pointed out that in some places the Charter goes into great administrative detail; he questioned whether that was necessary or whether town bodies should be given more flexibility. Mr. Zupperoli felt that the role of alternates on all town bodies may need definition, and that the members of these town bodies should have overlapping terms so that there would always be members with history and experience. Ms. Vautrain stated that she wants to explore the balance of power between the executive and legislative branches, and that the committee should compile a list of those people it wants to hear from. Our strong Town Manager form of government conflicts with some of the things we currently do, according to Mr. Pizer.

A lengthy discussion ensued regarding following up on articles passed by Town meeting. Mr. Zupperoli felt it is not a problem because the Advisory & Finance Committee (A&F) has mechanisms in place to take care of articles that have been approved, but others disagreed, and Mr. Costello and Mr. Hutchinson give examples of major items that had not been followed. Mr. Levin questioned if follow-up needed to be in the Charter, but Mr. Bolotin felt the committee needed to describe how and by whom approved articles are followed. He ventured that maybe (A&F) already does too much, and perhaps they shouldn't be "Advisory."

Mr. Hutchinson stated that the committee needed to keep in mind the various layers of local government: Charter/By-Laws/policies/norms and customs when amending the Charter. Ms. Vautrain suggested that it be the COPC that has oversight of articles passed by Town Meeting. Mr. Zupperoli then described the many steps taken by Advisory and Finance before Town Meeting. He does not want to change A&F and reiterated that the necessary mechanisms are there to follow up.

Mr. Hanlon then volunteered a number of suggestions. Information requested of the Select Board should not be ignored by that body. Legislative branch requests (e.g. Fin Com) for information from the executive branch is not always forthcoming, and he wants to know how this can be remedied. Voter turnout for town elections is poor, and he wants to see if the committee is willing to push local reps to change State law so that the Plymouth elections take place on Election Day in the fall. He also wants to ramp up presentation forums so sponsors of articles don't have to attend 18 precinct meetings to make their case. He did acknowledge that the Town Moderator and the COPC have done forums. He also mentioned that the COPC had a legislative oversight committee but it died.

Mr. Levin thought that all committees need mission statements.

Then, Mr. DiNardo, a Town Meeting Member from Precinct 17, stated that A&F is the eyes and ears of the town's citizens. Emily Tompkins, who mentioned that she was a new PALWV member, wanted to be sure that the Charter was accessible from a language point of view so that it could be clearly understood by residents. She also pointed out that the average citizen cannot possibly follow all the committees.

### **Topics for Future Meetings:**

Chair Golden informed the committee that it would be dealing with the Preamble and Chapter One at the next meeting. In response to a suggestion by Ms. Vautrain that the committee could likely do more than those two sections in an evening, he said that he is going slow now that we are in the Town Meeting cycle. Mr. Hutchinson had a suggestion he said would make things easier: because the work of the Select Board is wrapped into the Master Plan, the Master Plan is important for the town's future and that the Master Plan should be a guide for the Town, most especially for the Select Board to set policy.

### **Miscellaneous:**

1. Recordings of the committee's meetings will eventually be available on the committee's homepage.
2. As a result of the Attorney General's Office letter to the Select Board and ZBA an updated rules memo will be in the committee's package moving forward.
3. Chair Golden also mentioned that the town has replied to the AG's letter.

Respectfully submitted,

Lyle Lawrence