

CHARTER REVIEW COMMITTEE MEETING

September 19, 2023 Plymouth Town Hall - 1820 Courthouse 6PM In-person and Zoom

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

Public Comment:

Kevin Lynch told the Committee that it was hard to explain to fellow citizens exactly what the Committee decided each month. In response, Mr. Pizer referred Mr. Lynch to the PACTV video and regular minutes, but Mr. Lynch said that the minutes were hard to find and that he would like the major points of each meeting summarized and made available.

Committee Framework:

Chair Golden provide the members with an overall framework that defines the goals of the Committee. He wants the Charter to be living, flexible and dynamic and the government to be proactive, solving problems, communicative, transparent and efficient. The Committee would define milestones, divide and balance power, reduce redundancy, remove administrative constraints, and use plain language. While there was general overall agreement with the framework, Mr. Pizer stated that he did not want to be confined by the framework. Chair Golden said that was not his objective.

The Preamble to the Charter:

The Committee turned to the Preamble of the Charter. Ms. Vautrain stated that she likes the way the first sentence aligns with the wording in the Mayflower Compact, and Mr. Pizer added that a previous Review Committee purposefully revised the Preamble with that objective in mind. While Mr. Hutchinson appreciated the historic reference, he felt the language was too complicated and suggested, instead, that the Committee look at using the Preamble language that the Charter Commission put forth. He then made a motion to that effect. Mr. Golden opined that the Committee should look forward, not backward, but Mr. Pizer offered that the Committee will bring forward many ideas and some may well be from the defeated Charter. Mr. Bolotin objected to the list in the preamble of the defeated Charter saying that the list leaves out many things that are important to Plymouth and its residents. Why just list some? And, Mr. Zupperoli agreed noting that the preamble is an introduction and anything listed there should be followed up later in the document. A vote was then taken on Mr. Hutchinson's motion, and the motion was defeated with three in favor (Pizer, Hutchinson and Vautrain) and six against. Chair Golden felt that the majority consensus as to leave the Preamble as is. Ms. Vautrain inquired as to whether decisions, once posted, could be revisited, and Chair Golden replied that he intended to allow time at the end for reviewing all decisions.

Chapter 1 – The Powers of the Town:

Mr. Bolotin added language to Section 2 making the Town “subject to all restrictions” under the constitution and laws of the Commonwealth...A motion was made and seconded to accept Mr. Bolotin’s change. Ms. Vautrain asked whether counsel will review these changes, and Chair Golden replied that Town Counsel will review them before they go to Town Meeting. Mr. Pizer pointed out that there are instances where the Town Charter and State law conflict. Mr. Bolotin said that the Charter now will not have to repeat or cite State law. The vote on the motion was seven in favor and two opposed. The two negative votes came from Mr. Hutchinson and Ms. Vautrain. The committee looked at a number of minor changes in Sections 3, 4 and 5 involving capitalization, punctuation and change of selectmen to select board. Section 6, Definitions, was not changed, but Mr. Bolotin commented that there may be additional definitions to be added later.

Public Comment:

Mr. Lynch thought the definitions should be put in the back of the Charter like a glossary, but Mr. Bolotin stated that legal documents generally put them in the front so it is clear from the start what people are reading.

Public Engagement:

Chair Golden said he would be putting together a draft of a survey for the Town’s website and would be holding forums with specific groups when their part of the Charter is being discussed. Mr. Zupperoli had two suggestions: the survey should not have open ended responses (too difficult to tabulate) and Open Forums be listening sessions, not for debate.

Respectfully submitted,
Lyle Lawrence

The audio available to the Zoom audience was so poor that I waited until the minutes were published so I could fill in voids and make sure votes were correct, etc.

The minutes of this meeting have been approved and are available at plymouth-ma.gov website. Go to the Government tab, click Agendas and Minutes, scroll down to and click Charter Review Committee, look to the right and click the minutes icon.