

CHARTER REVIEW COMMITTEE (CRC) MEETING

January 23, 2024 Meeting on ZOOM 6PM

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

Guests on Zoom: Al DiNardo, Lyle Lawrence

Discussion – Chapter 3: The Executive Branch

The Committee began with a new Chapter of the Charter – Chapter 3, the Executive Branch. Ms. Cavacco opened the discussion with the statement that the \$4,000 stipend that Select Board Members (SBMs) currently receive is far too little, and that the amount needs to reflect the time invested and responsibilities carried by SBMs. She suggested that \$20,000 for members and \$25,000 for the chair would be more in keeping with the professional nature of the job and made a motion to that effect. Mr. Pizer said he would like to see SBMs apply to the town for the money rather than receive it as an automatic “grant.” Mr. Lawlor spoke passionately about the amount of work SBMs have to do, and thought that \$50,000 and \$55,000 would be more appropriate. Chair Golden asked Ms. Cavacco if she wanted the monetary amounts in the Charter, and she answered yes.

Mr. Zupperoli then reminded the committee that any payment over \$5,000 would trigger benefits, and wondered if retirement benefits would also be involved. He asked if the SBMs would become employees of the town. There was no answer. Mr. Hutchinson observed that we pay professionals to run our town; SBMs and others choose to volunteer their time when they run for town offices. Mr. Hanlon had a number of questions: What do other towns do to compensate their SBMs? Does this belong in the Charter, or should it stay as an article on the town warrant? What about the unpaid School Committee that manages a larger budget than the SBMs? What about the Planning Board? What about the Advisory and Finance Committee that takes up considerable volunteer time? He also pointed out that if compensation has to include benefits and retirement benefits, it becomes much more than an annual appropriation. Ms. Vautrain expressed concern about Town Meeting passing a revised Charter with large compensation baked in, and suggested that the committee look into what other towns do. Ms. Cavacco stated that the amount of work in other committees did not compare with what the SBMs had to do. It was decided that a committee headed by Ms. Cavacco would look into other Towns’ compensation practices and report back; therefore, she withdrew her motion.

Public Comment:

Al DiNardo reported that he was sympathetic to the SBMs ask, but we have paid professionals managing the Town. Ms. Cavacco had cited collective bargaining as taking much of the SBMs’ time, but Mr. DiNardo said he felt that the Town Manager should be responsible for collective bargaining, not the SBMs. He felt that the SBMs do too much.

Discussion – Chapter 3: The Executive Branch (cont')

Chair Golden reported to the committee that Town Clerk, Kelly McElreath, will be bringing wording to Town Meeting to change all references to Selectmen in the Charter to Select Board Members. Currently, the Charter has a mixture of both. Section 3-1-2 of the Charter simply repeats state law, and thus was eliminated. Section 3-2, dealing with the general powers and duties of the Select Board was modified as discussed below. Some members of the committee thought that the reference in Section 3-2-1 to long-range planning should include working in conjunction with the Planning Board and other committees in town looking at long-range planning. A motion to that effect was defeated 6-3 by those who thought that the change would create confusion. Sections 3-2-2 through 3-2-4 were left intact, but there was discussion about whether the licensing responsibilities (Section 3-2-4) need to remain with the Select Board. By a vote of 7-2, an addition was made to Section 3-2-5 allowing more than one SBM to participate in collective bargaining. Currently only one member may participate in negotiations. Mr. Hanlon spoke to say that he does not think that the Select Board should be involved in the negotiations at all. Section 3-2-6 was unchanged.

Section 3-2-7 regarding the investigation of the conduct of any town department, office or agency was changed by a vote of 8-1 to include the words “to the extent permitted by law” before “a report summarizing such investigation shall be printed in the next published annual town report.” Finally, there was a motion to strike “all other elected boards” from 3-2-8 on required joint meetings with the Select Board. That motion was defeated on a close vote of 5-4.

The hour being late, the meeting was adjourned.

Specific wording for the above changes may be found in the minutes of the Charter Review Committee when they are published.

Respectfully submitted,
Lyle Lawrence

When the minutes of this meeting have been approved, they will be 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.