

CHARTER REVIEW COMMITTEE (CRC) MEETINGS

Meetings of March 5, March 12, and March 19, 2024

Your Observer Corps member was on vacation and could not cover these meetings, so the material below was taken from the recordings of these meetings by PAC-TV and the meeting minutes.

March 5, 2024 Town Hall – Ropewalk Room 6PM

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

Tonight's Committee:

Because neither Betty Cavacco nor Larry Pizer were present, alternates Steve Bolotin and Michael Hanlon were recognized as a members with full voting power for tonight's session. Furthermore, Mr. Zupperoli left the meeting around 7:45.

Public Comment: None

Guest Speaker – Steve Nearman, Chair Advisory & Finance Committee (A&F)

Mr. Nearman questioned why the Town Moderator is the sole appointee of the A&F committee members, and why the chairs of committees are not involved in the selection of new committee members.

Public Comment:

Al DiNardo stated that many towns have finance committees without the advisory function. He advocates for a strong finance committee.

Lorenzo Pizarro, a member of A&F and the Board of Health, observed that no interviews were held for either of those two appointments.

Harry Helm, Select Board member and former A&F member, also supported the chair of a committee having a say in appointments to the committee, and recalled that the Charter Commission proposed an Appointment Advisory Committee.

Tim Lawlor, also a member of A&F, echoed the idea that the chair should have a part in selecting committee members.

Discussion – Section 2-12 Advisory and Finance Committee

Mr. Bolotin discussed the appointment process in Plymouth. He noted that appointments are made by elected officials, not other appointed officials, in an effort to provide a direct link to the voter and to avoid cronyism. However, he believes that the appointment process could be more transparent. He observed that the Massachusetts Municipal Association calls the Finance Committee the single most important committee

in town government. He proposed a five-member standing Appointment Committee consisting of elected officials from the Select Board, the Planning Board, the School Committee, the COPC and the Town Moderator. As important, he stated that the vetting of potential candidates should be public. Mr. Bolotin, an attorney, drafted the proposed language to Section 2-12 that was discussed at this meeting.

Public Comment:

Al DiNardo cautioned the committee to keep in mind that A&F is a recommending board to Town Meeting, and he sees this proposal as putting distance between the two bodies.

Section 2-12-1 as modified still continues to exclude Town of Plymouth employees from A&F but no longer includes the requirement that there be no more than three members per precinct. Instead of the Town Moderator appointing all the members of A&F, an Appointment Committee constituted by one member from each of the elected bodies proposed above will select members in a public open meeting where the applicants would be interviewed. That same committee would be in charge of filling any vacancies that might occur. A&F members would select their Chair from among the members. The revised Sections were approved by a vote of 7 to 1 with Mr. Hutchinson voting No.

Section 2-12-2 dealing with hearings and reports was rearranged and now says that if A&F has failed to consider a warrant article through no fault of the article's proponent, then Town Meeting shall consider that article unless two-thirds of Town Meeting votes against doing so. That rewrite passed on an 8 to 0 vote.

As the 8:00 hour had come and gone, Mr. Hutchinson and Ms. Vautrain both left the meeting.

No changes were made to Sections 2-12-3 through 2-12-6.

New Business/Old Business: Mr. Pizer provided members with a document concerning the handbook, now known as a User Guide that would be developed for the citizenry.

Respectfully submitted,
Lyle Lawrence

March 12, 2024 Town Hall – Ropewalk Room 6PM

Committee Members Present: David Golden, Chair; Alan Costello, Vice Chair, Robert Zupperoli, Clerk (Zoom); Tim Lawlor, Laurence Pizer (Zoom), Steve Bolotin (alternate), Michael Hanlon (alternate).

Tonight’s Committee:

Because Betty Cavacco, Joseph Hutchinson, Len Levin and Martha Vautrain were not present, alternates Steve Bolotin and Michael Hanlon (Zoom) were recognized as a members with full voting power for tonight’s session.

Discussion – Chapter 2 Section 6 The Moderator:

The Town’s legal staff has advised that the Charter Review Committee cannot make [certain] changes to the Moderator’s position. The CRC did eliminate wording requiring the Moderator to “*perform other duties as may from time to time be assigned to the office through by-law or vote of the representative own meeting.*” No other changes were proposed to the Moderator section pending conversations with Town Counsel as to what, if any, additional changes can be made.

Discussion – Chapter 2, Section 10 Conflict of Interest (COI):

Mr. Hanlon related that how difficult/impossible it has been over the years to get support for changes to the COI provisions in the Charter. Most controversial is the provision that prevents Town Meeting Representatives (TMRs) who are also employed by the Town from voting on articles in which the employee or the employee’s department has a financial interest. On a 6 to 1 vote, the CRC voted to keep this provision and combine it with the one that includes immediate family members who might also have a financial interest. The CRC declined to add enforcement mechanisms,

Respectfully submitted,
Lyle Lawrence

March 19, 2024 Town Hall – Ropewalk Room 6PM

Committee Members Present: Alan Costello, Vice Chair, Tim Lawlor (Zoom), Len Levin, Larry Pizer, Martha Vautrain, Steve Bolotin (alternate), Michael Hanlon (alternate).

Tonight’s Committee:

In the absence of David Golden, Vice Chair Alan Costello led the meeting. Betty Cavacco, Joseph Hutchinson and Robert Zupperoli were not present, thus alternates Steve Bolotin and Michael Hanlon were recognized as members with full voting power for tonight’s session.

Public Comment: None

User Guide:

Larry Pizer and Joseph Hutchinson have championed some sort of guide for citizens that would enable the public to navigate and better understand town government. Messrs. Costello, Hutchinson, Bolotin and Pizer have produced the following section, and the CRC unanimously approved it.



Overseen by the Town Manager, the Town shall prepare and issue a public user guide to Town operations in a form it deems appropriate. At a minimum, such guideline shall include descriptions of:

A. Town Government Structure

What persons are elected or appointed, by whom, their terms, when they meet, and a description of their roles.

Each Town board, committee, or other subdivision of the Town (including Town Meeting) shall provide the Town Manager and maintain as current a more detailed description of its operations, including any rules, regulations, policies, practices, or procedures unique to that body.

B. Town Departments

A description of the functions of each Town department and the rules, duties and responsibilities it must follow. The guide must indicate relationships among departments. It must describe any enforcement responsibility.

C. Redress/Assistance Procedures

Identification as to how to seek assistance from the Town or propose changes to the manner in which it functions, including generally the information that must be provided, the forms (if any) which must be completed, the deadlines which must be met, and to whom and in what manner they must be submitted.

The ultimate responsibility of producing a User Guide will be the Town Manager's office. It is undecided where in the Charter this responsibility would appear.

Discussion – Chapter 2, Section 5-3 Town Meeting Members Attendance

In another change, the Town Clerk is no longer involved in the process of removing an ineligible Town Meeting Representative leaving it to the Board of Voting Registrars. That vote was unanimous.

Discussion – Chapter 3, Section 10 Conservation Commission (ConCom)

Ms. Vautrain proposed language that changed the group that appointed ConCom from the Select Board to a broader group of seven, including three from the Select Board, two from the Planning Board and two by the Moderator. She also proposed that ConCom members complete a certification training program and follow the MA Wetlands Protection Act, local wetlands by-laws and the Commission Rules and Regulations. Mr. Bolotin read an excerpt from MA state law that states that the ConCom is appointed by the select board except in towns with a town manager form of government in which the town manager makes the appointments subject to approval by the select board. Mr. Bolotin suggested that a section in the Charter be created to hold all committees and commissions created by state statute. Discussion on 3-10 is postponed until a future meeting.

Discussion – Chapter 3, Section 12 Zoning Board of Appeals and Section 3-16 Building Committee)

Discussion on both these sections was also postponed until a future meeting.

Respectfully submitted,
Lyle Lawrence