

Charter Commission Meeting 8/11/04 approved on 10/6/04

Hopkinton Charter Commission meeting, August 11, 2004

Call the meeting to order at 7:07.

Meeting with Marilyn Contreas (617- 573-1359), Dept of Community Affairs since 1968, which provides assistance to charter commissions and keeps home rule charters approved or proposed. She brought Mashpee (2003) and Grafton (1987) for examples.

She explained that home rule is limited, that towns cannot assume functions retained by the state. All state laws that are directive apply to Hopkinton and set boundaries. The charter should clarify the structure of boards, commissions, and agencies. Try to keep document to the basics. Status of special acts: make a conscious effort to repeal or retain in the wording of the Charter.

Ms. Contreas suggested that legal council review the preliminary report. Plan for a document to last 25 to 30 years.

Techniques to improve the town input: Invite elected officials and boards and commissions to discuss the form of government. Usually no input until after preliminary report. Surveys do not work well. Give yourself leeway to make changes in structure. Talk to other charter commissions. When considering changing to a town manager, invite those who have done that process. Charter review at 10 years. Bylaw review commission to follow.

Michele Gates (audience participant): how is a special act treated? Silence in the charter assumes that the special act stays

Town Manager: many different descriptions as there are no state laws defining. Appointed by BOS. May or may not have a term, may have a contract. Finance, dept oversight, labor relations, coordination. Some have extensive appointment authority. Reverse confirmation is a possible technique. Manager appointments become effective in 15 days if not rejected by board of selectmen.

The attorney general will review all charters to assure compliance with state laws..

Bylaw commission should be established following the acceptance of a charter.

Question from audience: what is a strong manager? A strong manager makes more appointments, centralizes power, and could have fewer elected officers. (Selectman, school committee and moderator must be elected.) Finance committee reviews the budget, does not write the budget.

Charters get voted down if disenfranchised person balks or town does not accept big change.

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Spending will be for newspaper printing of preliminary report and for Town Council review, as well as public hearings, postage and mailing.

Department head meeting - Daugherty and Irvin will distribute surveys

For 10-month schedule, do we need more meetings?.

Motion for a meeting on Wednesday, Sept 22, 2004. Unanimous

Clerk from Ashland and chairman from Bellingham are willing to come.

Agenda item to review charters to pick a model. Discuss elements missing from the chosen model.

Adjourned at 8:30 p.m.