

## **Charter Commission Minutes of August 24, 2005 Meeting**

The meeting was called to order by Chairman Marie Eldridge at 7:04 p.m. in the second-floor conference room at the Hopkinton Fire station. Also present were Mary Pratt, Tom Irvin, Gary Daugherty, Doris Carver, Bruce Karlin and Beth Herlihy.

Review of Table of Contents. Motion to accept as written. Unanimously approved.

Review of Introduction. Dr. Karlin commented that he would like to see two points given more emphasis in the introduction. The first point is that we consulted with dept. heads, town officials, town employees etc. He felt that the Charter will be more accepted by the public if they are aware of all the input we received. The second point to emphasize is an explanation of what Home Rule is and why it is the major reason for voting for the Charter. It removes an unnecessary step when the town wants to make changes.

Tom suggests that we move the last sentence of the overview paragraph up into the first opening paragraph. Also move the third paragraph of the "Explanation of the Proposed Charter" into the opening paragraph as well.

Dr. Karlin also suggests that in the third paragraph of the "Explanation of the Proposed Charter" we remove the word "interfere" as it had a negative connotation.

Mary suggested that we remove from the "Statement of Major Differences," point #2, the line "thus does not increase the number of town employees." She feels that we can not make this guarantee.

Marie suggested that in the "Statement of Major Differences" point #5 we delete "degree of autonomy" and change the word "codify" to "reflect."

Conclusion: Mary questions the use of the word "overburdened" and Dr. Karlin stated we should mention that we are removing an unnecessary burden from the town's volunteers. We should emphasize the shift of work from part-time personnel to full-time employees.

Gary suggests that we add the definition of Home Rule to the definitions section of the Charter. Marie stated that she will look for a succinct definition of Home Rule for the commission to consider.

Marie explained that the DOR will be presenting a formal report at some point directly to the BOS, but in the meantime they have reviewed the charter and would like to present their observations to us at our next meeting. A discussion ensued regarding the date and time of our next meeting. Tom made a motion to meet on August 31<sup>st</sup> at 7 p.m. Doris seconded the motion. Unanimously approved.

Marie presented our options regarding the printing of the charter. We can have an insert printed by Action Copy or we can have the Independent print it directly in the paper.

7:47 p.m. Bill McRobert enters the meeting.

A lengthy discussion ensued regarding our printing options. Dr. Karlin made a motion to empower our chairman and co-chairman with the decision-making authority to decide which option would be best. Tom seconded the motion. Motion passes unanimously.

Dr. Karlin motioned that Gary print 100 copies of the Charter for general distribution. Mary seconded the motion. Motion passes unanimously.

Discussion regarding scheduling a Public Hearing(s) in September. Public Hearing notices need to be published in the paper 10 ten in advance. Tom volunteered to take responsibility for booking a room at the High School. Dr. Karlin made a motion to schedule two public hearings, one on September 21<sup>st</sup> and the second one on September 28<sup>th</sup>. If these dates are not available then Tom should schedule whatever dates are available. Tom seconded the motion. Motion passes unanimously.

Dr. Karlin inquired about whether members of the commission could present, at the hearings, dissenting opinions on various changes proposed by the commission. He also asked about the criteria for submitting a minority report. Marie explained that a minority report is issued at the end of the process and is written by members of the commission who are asking voters to vote against the entire charter for the reasons that they provide. A discussion ensued regarding how potentially damaging the voicing of dissenting opinions could be if offered during the hearings. The hearings are meant to be a time to gather input from the public and are not meant to be a debate. It can be reasonably assumed that the public will realize that the entire commission did not agree on every issue discussed in the charter. The commissioners then all agreed not to voice opposing opinions at the hearing, but any questions asked by the public should be answered openly and honestly.

Discussion regarding a game plan for the public hearing. The following points were raised:

1. Need to emphasize that now is the time to speak up and let your voice be heard.
2. State the ground rules for speaking
3. Layout the schedule of how the charter will proceed.
4. Present a summary of "How we go to here."
5. Print dates of public hearing in the Independent.
6. Explain the difference between a strong and a weak chief.
7. Give a power point presentation on the major changes we are proposing.

Tom, Marie and Gary will put a game plan together keeping in mind the above points.

Questions from the public:

Nancy Peters recommended that we include a definition of a strong and weak chief in the charter.

Eva Beatty suggested we consider using a moderator for the public hearings.

Nancy Peters strongly urged against stating dissenting opinions at the public hearing.

Meeting adjourned at 8:55 pm.