

Charter Review Committee (CRC)
Town of Groton, Groton, MA 01450 978-448-1100

Meeting Minutes - July 29, 2015 **Approved**

Present Jane Allen, Michael Bouchard, Michael Manugian, Bud Robertson, Stuart Schulman, Scott Harker

Not Present Robert Collins

Recorder: Stephen Legge

Audience Russ Harris, Barry Pease

Chairman Manugian called the meeting to order at 7:02 PM.

Mr. Harris informed the Chair that he will be recording the meeting.

The minutes of July 8, 2015 were accepted, as amended, by unanimous vote.

The minutes of July 22, 2015, as amended, were accepted by unanimous vote.

Mr. Harker announced that he would be resigning from the Charter Review Committee for reasons of personal health. July 29 would be his last meeting. Mr. Harker commented that he thought Mr. Manugian and the Committee would do a fine job. The committee voted unanimously to accept Mr. Harker's resignation, effective immediately. Mr. Harker abstained from voting.

A member of the audience asked if the Finance Committee would have the ability to reappoint the member (Mr. Harker was a Finance Committee appointee). Mr. Schulman stated that the charter is silent on this point. He recommended that the Finance Committee reappoint a member. After some further discussion, the Committee unanimously voted to ask Mr. Manugian to notify the Board of Selectmen and the Finance Committee of Mr. Harker's resignation, and to ask the Finance Committee to appoint another representative.

The topic of handling anonymous public input was discussed. Previously, the committee had stated that it would accept anonymous comments, subject to the constraints of being anonymous. This was differentiated from comments received with the name requesting to be withheld. At the July 22 public hearing, Ms. Collette stated a concern that the committee was exposing itself potentially to inappropriate comments. Mr. Schulman suggested anonymous comments be "thrown out". Mr. Robertson thought the committee should review anonymous comments for suggestions of discussion value. Mr. Bouchard stated a concern with posting inappropriate comments of the committee's web page. Mr. Manugian suggested that these comments be

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brought to the committee before posting. However, all submissions would be managed in accordance with the Public Records Law.

Ms. Allen asked, in the context of withholding submitter names from the public list of comments, if submitter identification is public. Mr. Bouchard respond that submitter identification is part of the public record and is discoverable. Cell phone numbers and emails are generally considered to be “personally identifiable information” and not discoverable.

Mr. Pease, from the audience, stated that he did want his name on the website with his comments. He thought this encouraged dialogue. Mr. Schulman stated that adding names with the comments on the website was awkward in that the committee stated at the public hearing that this would not be done. The consensus of the committee was that names would be included on the committee’s webpage.

Comments received to date

Three comments have been received as of July 29, all from Ms. Baxendale. The first idea was to have a phone line to, presumably, participate in public meetings and as a way to offer comments. The committee voted not to implement this suggestion. The committee requests that charter comments be in writing. Comments in writing allow the submitter to express the idea completely, and gives the committee a documented submission upon which to act.

The second suggestion was to ask “if it was possible to have on the internet and radio as well as TV for those on vacation or at work”. The town does not have the capability to stream meetings on the internet or on radio. The Town does have a static internet storage capability, through the VIMEO service. However, there is not enough capacity to store these additional meetings (beyond the meetings already “vimeoed”). The Charter Review Committee meetings are broadcast live and rebroadcast daily at 10 am and 2 pm. A later rebroadcast time will be explored. (ed note: the rebroadcast times have been modified to be 10 AM and 5 PM as of July 30.)

A third suggestion was to ask if the next public meeting could be held on a Monday when the selectmen are not meeting”. The committee’s meetings are scheduled for Wednesdays at 7:00 pm, as this was the time when all members were available. The committee affirmed this meeting time. It was pointed out that, starting in early September, the Board of Selectmen will be reverting to their weekly meeting schedule on Monday nights.

Communications Plan

Mr. Manugian suggested a draft communications plan for the committee. Some of the input received at the public hearing indicated the need for an enhanced effort in reaching out to the public. Mr. Manugian and Mr. Bouchard had appeared on a segment of Around Town on July 23 to promote the activities of the committee, and encourage public involvement. The committee generally agreed with Mr. Manugian that committee members appear on venues such as Around Town on a regular basis. Committee members should rotate assignments. Mr. Bouchard will ask Jane Bouvier if the committee could participate in a segment before the September 18 deadline for comments.

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The Groton Electric Light Commission is donating up to \$500 to sponsor a flyer form the committee to be mailed with the light bills. Mr. Bouchard and Mr. Schulman will develop the flyer. Members were asked to submit ideas. The target is to send the flyer out with the August 31 electric bills.

Further discussion about different channels of communication. The committee discussed releasing news information about progress to the Groton Herald, The Groton Line, Lowell Sun and Nashoba Publications (Groton Landmark). The goal is to get the word out to as many as possible. Mr. Bouchard is maintaining an email list of submitters who can be issued these information releases as well. Mr. Manugian felt that the committee needed one person to be the communications coordinator to ensure consistency and minimize confusion.

Mr. Pease suggested the committee look at the school superintendent's email blog. This is a large list. Perhaps the committee could use this list (with permission). The Women's Club, Garden Club, Boy and Girl Scouts, the Council on Aging and "Talk with Tom" were also suggested as organizations who could help get the word out. It was suggested that we not ask to use mailing lists, but for a contact who could forward the committee's communications to the lists. Mr. Manugian will update the communication plan to reflect this discussion.

Should the committee receive comments outside the scope of the charter (for example a comment about the building permitting process), these comments would be directed to the appropriate agency.

The committee continued its review of the charter through Section 6-3.

The next meeting is scheduled for August 5 at 7:00 PM.

The meeting was adjourned at 9:01 PM.