**CHARTER REVIEW COMMITTEE MEETING**

**MINUTES**

**JANUARY 16, 2025**

**Present:** Peter Cunningham, Chair; Rebecca Weksner, Vice Chair; Mark Haddad, Clerk; Kristen Frank; Brenden Mahoney; Bob Collins; Michael Sulprizio

**Also Present:** Rebecca Pine (virtually); John Reilly; Dawn Dunbar, Town Clerk; Melisa Doig, HR Director; Judy Anderson

Chair Cunningham called the meeting to order at 4:30 p.m. Chair Cunningham presented the Agenda for the meeting.

**Finalize Some Recommendations**

Chair Cunningham stated that he would like to address some of the more routine proposals and consider approving them at the meeting. Mr. Haddad presented the Committee with a memorandum he prepared with a proposal to finalize some of the recommended changes (outlined below). The Committee agreed to consider these recommendations.

**Final Recommendation #1** – Amend Section 1.9: Definitions by adding the following new definition:

“Publish”, posting a document on the Town website in a prominent and accessible location, with hard copies made available upon request.

*Mr. Haddad moved to adopt Final Recommendation #1 as proposed. Mr. Collins seconded the motion. It was unanimously approved.*

**Final Recommendation #2** – Amend Section 2.11: Report to the Voters to read as follows:

There shall be published for every town meeting a copy of the warrant, together with its articles, and a report to the voters that shall contain the explanation and relevant data submitted by the proponents of each article; provided, however, that the town manager may direct that voluminous supporting material necessary for consideration of particular articles be made reasonably available for inspection at public locations before the town meeting in lieu of inclusion in the written report to the voters. The written report for each town meeting shall include: (i) the written report of the planning board setting forth its findings and recommendations as to all zoning articles; (ii) the written report of the finance committee, which shall set forth its findings, conclusions and recommendations and its reasons therefor regarding all of the monetary articles in the warrant; and (iii) with respect to each warrant article, in addition to the reports of the planning board and the finance committee, the written report of a proponent or sponsor of a warrant article and of a multiple-member body or town agency that is required to review, recommend or sponsor the warrant article by law, appointment or otherwise. The report for the town meeting shall also include, as an appendix, the capital improvement plan defined in section 6.6 setting forth the proposed capital outlay program for the ensuing fiscal year for the information and guidance of town meeting. The select board shall have the opportunity to include in the report its conclusions and recommendations, including its reasons therefore, regarding articles in the warrant that relate to its general superintendence over the administration of town affairs.

*Mr. Collins moved to adopt Final Recommendation #2 as proposed. Mr. Haddad seconded the motion. It was unanimously approved.*

**Final Recommendation #3** – Amend Section 3.2.2 (v) to read as follows:

One Member of the Select Board and the Town Manager shall sign all payroll and expense warrants.

*Mr. Collins moved to adopt Final Recommendation #3 as proposed. Mr. Haddad seconded the motion. It was unanimously approved.*

**Final Recommendation #4** – Amend Section 4.2 (i) to read as follows:

Managing, supervising, and being responsible for the efficient and coordinated administration of all town functions as may be authorized by this Charter, by-law, town meeting vote or the select board, including all appointed officials, employees, department heads and their respective departments.

*Mr. Haddad moved to adopt Final Recommendation #4 as proposed. Ms. Frank seconded the motion. It was unanimously approved.*

**Final Recommendation #5** - Amend Sections 5.3.1, 5.3.5, 5.3.6, and 5.4.1 by changing the word “clause” to “subsection.

*Mr. Haddad moved to adopt Final Recommendation #5 as proposed. Dr. Weksner seconded the motion. It was unanimously approved.*

**Final Recommendation #6** – Amend Section 5.3.1 to read as follows:

There shall be a department of finance in the town that shall report to the town manager. There shall be within the department an appointed town accountant, an appointed treasurer-collector and an appointed principal assessor. The department shall be responsible for the performance of all the fiscal and financial activities of the town. The town manager shall serve as the finance director; provided, however, that the town manager may, at the town manager’s discretion, appoint another person to serve as the finance director. The appointment shall be subject to confirmation by the select board in accordance with subsection (iii) of section 4.2.

**Final Recommendation #7** – Amend Section 5.3.7 to read as follows:

Principal Assessor - The principal assessor shall be appointed by the town manager for a term of not more than 3 years, subject to confirmation by the select board pursuant to subsection (iii) of section 4.2. The principal assessor shall have all of the powers and duties vested in the office of principal assessor by this charter, by-law or town meeting vote.

*Mr. Haddad moved to adopt Final Recommendations #6 & #7 as proposed. Ms. Frank seconded the motion. It was unanimously approved.*

**Final Recommendation #8** – Amend Section 6.4.1 to read as follows:

Budget Process - The select board, the town manager, the department of finance and the finance committee shall meet annually not later than November 30 to determine the budgetary goals for the subsequent fiscal year. The town manager shall, after that meeting but not later than January 31, submit to the finance committee and the select board a proposed budget for the next fiscal year that shall be accompanied by a budget message, a summary and supporting documents that follow the agreed-upon budget goals. The proposed budget shall be balanced.

*Mr. Haddad moved to adopt Final Recommendation #8 as proposed. Dr. Weksner seconded the motion. It was unanimously approved.*

**Final Recommendation #9** – Amend Section 6.5.1 to read as follows:

The finance committee shall, upon receipt of the proposed budget from the town manager, consider in public meetings detailed expenditures for each town department and agency and may confer with representatives of each town agency in connection with the committee’s review and consideration. The finance committee may require the town manager or any town agency to furnish the committee with such additional information as the committee may deem necessary to assist the committee in its review and consideration of the proposed budget. Not less than 14 days before the opening of the spring town meeting, the finance committee shall file with the town clerk a report containing the committee’s proposed budget and comments or recommendations regarding differences between the committee’s proposed budget and the proposed budget submitted by the town manager. Not less than 14 days before the opening of the spring town meeting the report shall be made available to voters of the town by publication on the town’s website and by leaving copies of the report in not less than 2 public places in the town. Copies of the report shall be made available to voters at the opening of the spring town meeting. The failure to file the report with the town clerk in a timely manner or to publicize the report by posting on the town’s website or in 2 public places in the town shall not prohibit the town meeting from voting on the budget and shall not affect the validity of any vote taken on the budget at town meeting.

*Mr. Haddad moved to adopt Final Recommendation #9 as proposed. Mr. Collins seconded the motion. It was unanimously approved.*

**Final Recommendation #10** – Amend Section 6.6 to read as follows:

The town manager shall annually submit a capital improvement plan to the select board and the finance committee not later than January 31. The plan shall include: (i) a clear, concise and general summary of its contents; (ii) a list of all capital improvements proposed to be undertaken during the ensuing 5 years along with supporting information as to the need for each capital improvement; (iii) cost estimates, methods of financing and recommended time schedules for each improvement; and (iv) the estimated annual cost of operating and maintaining each facility and piece of major equipment involved. The information in the plan shall be revised annually by the town manager with regard to the capital improvements still pending or in the process of being acquired, improved or constructed.

*Mr. Haddad moved to adopt Final Recommendation #10 as proposed. Mr. Collins seconded the motion. It was unanimously approved.*

**Remaining Issues**

Chair Cunningham stated that there were three remaining issues for the Committee to consider:

Park Commission

The first issue was whether or not to change the Park Commission from elected to appointed. Mr. Haddad had proposed making this change but decided to withdraw the recommendation after meeting with the Park Commission.

Mr. Collins would like the Committee to continue to consider this issue and consider including making it the Park and Recreation Commission. Dr. Weksner and Ms. Frank were opposed to adding recreation to their duties as there are several private groups responsible for recreation and they felt adding recreation to the Park Commission duties would confuse residents. They were not in favor of adding recreation. Mr. Haddad stated that he had met earlier in the day with the Friends of Prescott and there is talk of partnering with them to create a public/private partnership. The Committee liked this idea and would like to see it pursued. Mr. Sulprizio explained that he has seen this kind of partnership in other communities and it made a lot of sense. While not taking a vote, it was clear the Committee was not in favor of adding recreation to the Park Commission duties.

The Committee then considered the issue of elected versus appointed. Dr. Weksner felt that it is important to eliminate barriers for participation on various boards and committees. She felt keeping it elected is a barrier. Mr. Mahoney felt that having the Committee appointed would allow for individuals with various skill sets to be considered for appointment. Mr. Reilly spoke of the issue of vacancies being filled by write-ins on the election ballot. He did not believe this was the best way to fill vacancies. Mr. Mahoney thought it was important to have the Park Commission as part of the Department of Public Works as they constantly work together.

Dr. Weksner felt that the issue of elected versus appointed and whether or not it should be combined with the DPW needs to be debated and considered separately. After a spirited debate, the Committee decided to continue this discussion at the next meeting. Mr. Haddad said he would bring back and separate the two proposals for the Committee to discuss and debate at the next meeting.

Appointment of Police Chief, Fire Chief and Town Clerk

Chair Cunningham stated that the Select Board discussed this issue at their last meeting and stated that, while not making a final determination on who would make the actual appointment, a policy could be created by the Select Board on how the appointment process would work. He stated that Mr. Haddad would be drafting a policy for Board consideration. Ms. Pine stated that she liked the idea of a policy, but still felt the Select Board should make the appointment. She did not like the perception that the Select Board was “rubber stamping” the appointment of the Town Manager. Mr. Haddad disagreed with this perception and said the Select Board actively participates in all Department Head appointments and most certainly does not “rubber stamp” the appointment. Chair Cunningham would like to see a draft policy on how the appointment process would work before making a final decision.

The Committee decided to continue this discussion at their next meeting. Mr. Haddad stated that he would work with Ms. Pine to come up with a draft policy for the next meeting.

Personnel Board

The Committee asked that the issue of eliminating the Personnel Board be placed on the next Agenda, including if the Personnel Board is eliminated, should the Personnel Bylaw be eliminated as well. Ms. Pine also raised the issue of combining sections 3.1.3 and 3.2.1 (Select Board holding another elected office or benefits eligible position). The Committee would also like to discuss whether or not the Select Board should be able to hold another elected position.

**Next Meeting**

The next Meeting will be held on Thursday, February 13, 2025 beginning at 4:30 p.m.

**Minutes**

*Mr. Haddad moved to approve the minutes from the December 5th Meeting. Ms. Frank seconded the motion. The vote was unanimous to approve the minutes.*

*Mr. Haddad moved to approve the minutes from the December 11th Meeting. Ms. Frank seconded the motion. The vote was unanimous to approve the minutes.*

Being no further business, Chair Cunningham adjourned the meeting at 5:40 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Mark Haddad, Clerk