



Charter Commission

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Commissioners:

Mark S. Sideris,
Chair

Stephen P. Corbett
Michael Donham
John A. Donohue
Dennis J. Duff
Susan G. Falkoff
Anthony Palomba
Rhiana Kohl
Angeline B. Kounelis
Cecilia Lenk
Pamela Piantedosi
Vincent J. Piccirilli, Jr.
John J. Lawn, Jr.
David Siegel
Athelia Tilson

**ADOPTED MINUTES
CHARTER COMMISSION MEETING
TUESDAY, MAY 18, 2010 @ 7:00 PM
RICHARD E. MASTRANGELO CHAMBER
ADMINISTRATION BUILDING**

1. **ROLL CALL:** Present for the meeting were Commissioners John A. Donohue, Dennis J. Duff, Susan G. Falkoff, Anthony Palomba, Rhiana Kohl, Angeline B. Kounelis, Cecilia Lenk, Pamela Piantedosi, Vincent J. Piccirilli, Jr., John J. Lawn, Jr., David Siegel, Athelia Tilson, Stephen P. Corbett and Chair Mark S. Sideris. Also present was Clerk Valerie Papas. Commissioner Donham was absent. .
2. **ACCEPTANCE OF MINUTES:** [April 20th as written](#), [amended April 20th and May 4th](#). The Chair noted that the April 20th minutes were Tabled at the last meeting. Commissioner Duff moved to accept the minutes as amended, seconded by Commissioner Corbett and adopted by voice vote. Commissioner Kounelis indicated for the record that the amendments were authored by Commissioner Falkoff. Commissioner Duff moved the minutes of May 4th as written, seconded by Commissioner Donohue and adopted by voice vote.
3. **MATTERS OF BUSINESS:**
 - a) Informational Presentation by John S. Airasian, former Charter framer. Mr. Airasian opened his remarks noting the following accomplishments since the inception of the 1980 Charter: the building of a senior center, arts center, library, public works facility, fire station, and police station. As well as numerous improvements to our parks, schools, streets and sidewalks. He commented that out of the 351 cities and town in Massachusetts, none are in better shape than Watertown.

Mr. Airasian highlighted important reasons why he continues to support this form of government including: the town manager/council form of government keeps the manager isolated from the politics of the town; the hiring and/or appointment process of boards, commissions and departments heads by the manager allow for a streamline, effective and efficient form of government and the current and longtime manager Michael Driscoll has the financial and management skills necessary to administer the town's business and has a long history of guarding the town's purse strings as if it were his own.

Mr. Airasian reviewed the process that resulted in the 1980 Charter change noting that the framers met weekly for more than a year. He stated that with the invaluable assistance of Michael Curan, the 1980 Charter was the result of many compromises between those who wanted a town manager/council form of government; those who favored an elected mayor and others who favored town meeting. He pointed to the election of a council president as a halfway point for those who favored an elected mayor and the establishment of district councilors as a compromise to those who wanted a town meeting form of government. The two-year term for elected officials was in response to those who felt that the manager would be too far removed from the electoral process. Mr. Airasian highlighted the trend of the governmental body. Prior to 1920 the town held open town meeting, the purest form of democracy. That was followed by a representative town meeting; and in 1980 a strong town manager/council form of government. Other communities have evolved in similar ways. Mr. Airasian spoke against the mayor/council form of government due to the elected official not having to the skill set or financial/management education or experience. It was also noted that the mayoral form of government has been favored mostly by the larger cities in the western part of Massachusetts.

Mr. Burt Greenberg, Duff Street acknowledged John Airasian and Louis Andrews for their many years of public service.

- b) Review of Charter, Article 5 Financial Procedures: The Chair opened up discussion of Section 5.1 and 5.2. Commissioner Piantedosi indicated that she would like to add to section 5.1, a formal invitation to our state representative and state senator, seconded by Commissioner Duff.

Commissioner Lenk spoke in support of having the manager provide additional budget updates throughout the year. Commissioner Palomba concurred and also spoke in support of strengthening that language and strengthening the role of the council with respect to the budget process in general. Commissioner Corbett concurred and noted that it is important that the Council take the lead on the budget.

There was a discussion on initiatives versus capital expenses and policy goals and measurements. Commissioner Piccirilli stated that under state law, it is the chief executive officer's responsibility to develop the budget not the legislative branch. Commissioner Piccirilli summarized his understanding of initiatives and capital expenses as it relates to the budget process. After a lengthy discussion regarding initiatives, policy goals, and performance measures, Commissioner Falkoff requested Commissioner Piccirilli prepare a re-draft of section 5.2 summarizing his comments and send the paragraph to the Clerk for dissemination to members for

discussion at their next meeting, seconded by Commissioner Piccirilli and adopted by voice vote.

The Chair announced that due to budget hearings, there will be no meeting on June 1st. The Chair outlined the June 15th agenda. He noted that the commissioners will hear a presentation from a non-supporter of the town manage/council form government. Commissioner Piantedosi moved to continue with section 5 on June 15th, seconded by Commissioner Duff and adopted by voice vote. The Chair noted that if time allows, Chapter 6 may be discussed as well.

ADJOURNMENT – 9:00 pm. Commissioner Duff moved to adjourn the meeting at 9:00 pm, seconded by Commissioner Piantedosi and adopted by voice vote.

For a complete transcript of the meeting, a dvd is available upon request.