



Charter Commission

Administration Building
149 Main Street
Watertown, MA 02472
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MINUTES

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

CHARTER COMMISSION MEETING TUESDAY, OCTOBER 19, 2010 @ 7:00 PM RICHARD E. MASTRANGELO CHAMBER ADMINISTRATION BUILDING

1. ROLL CALL: A regular meeting of the Charter Commission was called to order at 7:00 pm in the Richard E. Mastrangelo Chamber, Administration Building. Present for the meeting were Commissioners Stephen P. Corbett, Michael Donham, Dennis J. Duff, Susan G. Falkoff, Anthony Palomba, Rhiana Kohl, Angeline B. Kounelis, Cecilia Lenk, Pamela Piantedosi, Vincent J. Piccirilli, Jr., David Siegel, Athelia Tilson and Chair Mark S. Sideris. Also present is the Clerk Valerie Papas. Commissioner Lawn arrived shortly after the call of the roll.

2. ACCEPTANCE OF MINUTES: [September 21st](#) as amended and [October 5th](#). Commissioner Piccirilli moved the minutes as amended, seconded by Commissioner Duff and adopted by voice vote with Commissioners Stephen P. Corbett, John A. Donohue, John J. Lawn, Michael Donham, Dennis J. Duff, Susan G. Falkoff, Anthony Palomba, Rhiana Kohl, Angeline B. Kounelis, Cecilia Lenk, Pamela Piantedosi, Vincent J. Piccirilli, Jr., David Siegel, Athelia Tilson and Chair Mark S. Sideris.

Commissioner Palomba thanked Mr. Ward for the [spreadsheet](#) he passed out tonight.

3. Review of Article 2 as it relates to the Legislative Branch. The Chair read aloud Article 2-1 Composition and Term of Office.

The Chair opened up discussion regarding Composition.

Commission Piantedosi asked how the Charter framers came up with the 9 councilor composition.

Clyde Younger, Acton Street – stated that as a former Charter framer, the reason behind the 9 councilor composition was to give people an opportunity to run in a district, become better known and then run at large; he noted that he believed that it was based on population but on the census.

Commissioner Piccirilli – stated that the original Charter Article 9-6; addresses this specifically; it notes that there was a wide disparity within each of the precincts; and the number of precincts (11) they felt it was not possible to provide 4 temporary councilors; the precinct populations averaged out to 37,000 inhabitants.

Commissioner Corbett stated that the composition has worked out very well and the efficiency is based on individual councilors not the number of councilors.

Commissioner Donohue spoke in favor of retaining the current number; stating that with 4 square miles, nine has worked out well.

Michael Ward, 150 Spruce Street – briefly reviewed the spreadsheet he prepared for the Commission.

Commissioner Kounelis stated that some councilors, including her, are more involved in constituency work; without that constituency work she noted, she would not be an effective councilor.

Commissioner Piccirilli stated that a 9 councilor composition is adequate as Watertown is a small town. He also indicated that the Districts and At-Large compositions area good balance and works well.

Commission Lenk spoke in support of the importance of the district councilor as it relates to constituency work.

Commissioner Tilson spoke in support of the importance of retaining the 4 at-large councilors noting that a balance is needed between district work and the needs of the town overall.

The Chair opened up discussion regarding Terms of Office.

Commissioner Palomba spoke in favor of a 3 year term.

Commissioner Corbett stated that the two year term is too short and prefers a 4 year staggered term to allow the councilor to be more productive.

Commissioner Tilson spoke to term limits and suggested a 3 year term with a term limit. The councilor can run again after a term break.

Commissioner Donham concurred with Commissioner Corbett and noted that a 2 year term is too short a time.

Commissioner Kounelis noted that she is comfortable with the 2 year term.

Commissioner Donohue stated that a 4 year term would be less political and allow for the councilor to contribute greater substance.

Commissioner Duff stated that he is against the staggered terms as it is too confusing for the electorate and that the Charter Commission should strive to have the voters participate as much as possible.

Clyde Younger – spoke in support of looking at a Recall provision if the council is going to go to a 4 year term.

Commissioner Kohl spoke in support of the 4 year term; noting that campaigning is time consuming and expensive and people may not run due to this part of serving. She further noted that a short election cycle may bring populous votes.

Commissioner Piccirilli stated that when he asked his constituents about the Charter review process, the only issue people have voiced an opinion on is not extending the terms of the council. He noted that many have stated that if the councilor is doing a good job, they will get elected again. He noted personally, that with respect to extending the term it is a matter of efficiency versus accountability. He noted that he thinks that staggered terms can be worked out and perhaps the balance to the 4 year term is the Recall provision.

Commissioner Siegel concurred and noted that it is a tradeoff between efficiency and accountability.

The Chair pointed out that the School Committee chair indicated at a recent Charter Commission meeting that their 4 year staggered terms have worked well for them.

Commissioner Falkoff stated that Town Council staggered terms along with the School Committee staggered terms muddies the waters during an election.

The Chair read Article 2-2 (a) Council President Election and Term and opened up the discussion.

Commission Donohue spoke in favor of retaining the current process of having the Council President position elected by the people and serving on the School Committee.

Commissioner Kounelis concurred and noted that the position warrants an election.

Commissioner Falkoff stated that it is a terrible burden for the Council President to have to serve on the School Committee.

Commissioner Piantedosi indicated that as former Council President and School Committee member, she provided reports to the Town Council regarding what transpired at the School Committee meetings.

Commissioner Piantedosi stated that in her opinion any one councilor can be the liaison to the School Committee.

The Chair noted that the subcommittee on Education and School System Matters works very closely with the schools and often brings matters to the Council President's attention.

The Chair asked if the Commissioners would like to form a subcommittee to look in more detail at the pros and cons of 2/3/4 year terms as well as term limits and report back to the Commission at the next meeting.

Commissioner Duff spoke against a subcommittee being formed to discuss this matter.

Commissioner Lawn suggested, as a compromise, that the pros and cons be emailed to the Clerk.

Commissioner Falkoff offered to put the pros and cons into context and re-distributed to the Commissioners in a one-page document.

The Chair stated that Commissioners will email their pros and cons to the Clerk who will forward to Commissioner Falkoff to develop a one page document.

Pat Gold, Duff Street – spoke in support of the Council President position being elected by the people.

Burt Greenberg, Duff Street – noted that the Recall provision, may not be fraught with peril but it is incendiary.

4. NEW BUSINESS: The Chair stated that the Commission will continue discussing Article 2 Legislative Branch on November 16th. The Chair also stated that there will be a meeting on November 30th due to elections being on November 2nd.

Commissioner Duff moved to adjourn the meeting at 9:00 pm, seconded by Commissioner Piccirilli and adopted by voice vote with Commissioners Stephen P. Corbett, John A. Donohue, John J. Lawn, Michael Donham, Dennis J. Duff, Susan G. Falkoff, Anthony Palomba, Rhiana Kohl, Angeline B. Kounelis, Cecilia Lenk, Pamela Piantedosi, Vincent J. Piccirilli, Jr., David Siegel, Athelia Tilson and Chair Mark S. Sideris.

5. ADJOURNMENT – 9:00 pm.

At a regular meeting of the Charter Commission the minutes for October 19th were adopted by unanimous voice vote on November 16, 2010.

Mark S. Sideris, Chair.

