



## Charter Commission

Administration Building  
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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, JANUARY 18, 2011 @ 7:00 PM RICHARD E. MASTRANGELO COUNCIL 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 Council Chamber, Administration Building. Present for the meeting were Commissioners Stephen P. Corbett, Michael Donham, John A. Donohue, Dennis J. Duff, Susan G. Falkoff, Angeline B. Kounelis, Cecilia Lenk, Pamela Piantedosi, Vincent J. Piccirilli, Jr., David Siegel, Athelia Tilson and Chair Mark S. Sideris. Commissioner Palomba arrived after the call of the roll and Commissioners Kounelis, Kohl and Lawn were absent.

2. ACCEPTANCE OF MINUTES: January 4, 2011. Commissioner Duff moved to accept the minutes, seconded by Commissioner Donham and adopted by unanimous voice vote with Commissioners Stephen P. Corbett, Michael Donham, John A. Donohue, Dennis J. Duff, Susan G. Falkoff, Cecilia Lenk, Pamela Piantedosi, Vincent J. Piccirilli, Jr., David Siegel, Athelia Tilson and Chair Mark S. Sideris.

Councilor Palomba is present.

3. Review and discussion of Article 4-2 as it pertains to the Library Board of Trustees. The Chair welcomed members of the Library Board of Trustees as follows: Mr. Michael Hanlon, Chair; Ms. Raya Stern, Treasurer; Ms. Gracemarie V. LeBlanc, Vice Chair; Ms. Anna Kuwabara, member and Ms. Katherine Button, Secretary. The Chair opened up discussion regarding Article 4-2.

The Chair indicated that the change the Commissioners are considering would mirror that of the School Committee with respect to the hiring and firing of employees.

Ms. Stern stated that in practice that is what is currently happening with the Library Director as Ms. Cole interviewing candidates and bringing

forward her choice to the Library Board. Ms. Stern stated that she is comfortable with the change that the Commissioners are considering.

Ms. Button stated that the Library Board would still want to follow past practice of meeting each new employee as they are hired.

Mr. Hanlon stated that the Library Director is inundated with resumes; she brings forward only the candidate she should want hired. He noted that the Library Board members have always supported her choices.

Councilor Falkoff stated that she is glad that the proposed change meets with the approval of the Library Board members as the change provides for consistency.

Ms. Kuwabara stated that the board wants to pay more attention to fiduciary responsibilities.

With respect to consistency, Commissioner Piantedosi inquired of the board members why they do not receive a salary as other elected officials.

Ms. Stern stated that members receive expense monies but have never requested a salary. She indicated that there is an ordinance which allows for a request for salary but the board members have never felt the need to ask for one.

Commissioner Tilson asked if there is any value to having a council liaison.

Ms. Stern indicated that there is no need for a direct connection.

The Chair thanked the board members for attending tonight's meeting.

#### 4. NEW BUSINESS

The Chair opened up discussion with respect to Terms of Office.

Commissioner Donham indicated that he has had a change of heart with respect to changing the term from two to four years; noting that state elected officials all have two year terms and that it is presumptuous of us to say that councilors should be different.

Commissioner Corbett stated that he personally favors a longer term; but that it can work either way. He noted that there is an advantage to longer terms, staggered; and stated that the accountability argument falls short; but that he can live with the current terms of office.

Commissioner Piantedosi indicated that she favors four year terms as it lends more merit to the position and that councilors are not backtracking with every new election. She noted that a four year terms would allow for more consistency in performance of work.

Commission Donohue spoke in favor of longer terms and read aloud his [Charter amendment](#).

Commissioner Falkoff stated that if no major changes come out of this commission; we should question whether this formal procedure is really needed or necessary.

Commissioner Falkoff asked if someone can answer how a person can run for Council President without the fear of losing a seat on the council.

Mr. Scalfidi stated that the answer is that the council elects its own President.

Ms. Stern stated that with respect to the Council President being chosen amongst his/her peers; everyone should be aware that the people won't be able to elect whom they wish to serve on the School Committee.

Commissioner Piantedosi stated that she supports four year terms with the Council President being elected by the public; and removing the Council President position from the School Committee.

Commissioner Donohue stated that he concurs with Commissioner Piantedosi but added that he would support the Council President position being removed if the Council President chooses to be removed from serving on the School Committee.

Commissioner Siegel stated that perhaps the Commission should consider separating the question; should there be a representative from the Council on the School Committee; and provide a reason why it should be the Council President.

Commissioner Duff stated that the Council President should serve on the School Committee as a way to better understand the School Committee budget and their needs.

Commissioner Siegel asked if the person is really aiding anybody and can the person really satisfy both bodies.

The Chair stated that a better way to understand the School Committee budget would be to have the Education and School System Matters subcommittee meet with the School Committee early on in the budget process prior to the budget being submitted to the Council.

Commissioner Lenk concurred and indicated that the School's budget represents a 1/3 of the town's overall budget.

Commissioner Piccirilli stated that the town currently has good control over the budget process and noted that the Charter works very well in this way. He further noted that the budget is outside the Manager's control;

and that the Council President has a foot in each arena and can pull the brakes on the School Committee and bring back concerns to the Town Council. Commissioner Piccirilli stated that what we have now in the Charter works better than any proposed changes we have in front of us.

Commissioner Duff concurred with Commission Piccirilli.

Commission Corbett stated that electing the Council President amongst councilors is too divisive.

The Chair asked if the Commission is ready to take a non-binding sense of the meeting vote on extending terms of office.

Commissioner Donohue moved to change the current two year term to four years, staggered terms, seconded by Commission Piantedosi.

Upon a roll call vote the motion was defeated 4-8 with Commissioners Corbett, Donohue, Palomba, Piantedosi, voting in the affirmative and Commissioners Donham, Duff, Lenk, Falkoff, Piccirilli, Siegel, Tilson and Sideris voting against. It is noted that Commissioners Lawn, Kohl and Kounelis were absent.

The Chair reminded everyone that the vote was non-binding and that three Commissioners were absent tonight.

The Chair stated that the Commissioners will continue to review proposed Charter changes in February. The Chair asked Commissioners to look at their schedules and report back to the Clerk on whether or not they would be available on either March 5<sup>th</sup> or March 12<sup>th</sup> for a Saturday meeting.

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

At a regular meeting of the Charter Commission for which a quorum was present, the January 18<sup>th</sup> minutes were adopted by unanimous voice vote on February 15, 2011.

Mark S. Sideris, Chair