



# Watertown Town Council

Administration Building  
149 Main Street  
Watertown, MA 02472  
Phone: 617-972-6470

ELECTED  
OFFICIALS:

Mark S. Sideris,  
Council President

Vincent J. Piccirilli, Jr.,  
Vice President &  
District C Councilor

Caroline Bays  
Councilor At Large

Anthony J. Donato,  
Councilor At Large

John G. Gannon,  
Councilor At Large

Anthony Palomba,  
Councilor At Large

Angeline B. Kounelis,  
District A Councilor

Lisa J. Feltner,  
District B Councilor

Kenneth M. Woodland,  
District D Councilor

## MINUTES

### MEETING OF THE CHARTER REVIEW COMMITTEE TUESDAY, APRIL 6, 2021 AT 6:00 PM MEETING WILL BE LIMITED TO REMOTE PUBLIC ACCESS ONLY

Pursuant to Article 8, Section 8-1(b) of the Watertown Home Rule Charter, and pursuant to the Call of the Town Council President, I hereby called a Meeting of the Charter Review Committee, consisting of the Town Council as a whole and six additional voters to be appointed by the Council President, said meeting that was held on Tuesday, April 6, 2021 at 6:00 PM. in accordance with the Governor's Order Suspending Certain Provisions of the Open Meeting Law, G. L. c. 30A, §20, relating to the 2020 COVID-19 emergency and to avoid group congregation, this meeting had only remote opportunities for participation with public access provided as follows:

#### **ACCESS INFORMATION:**

- A. The meeting was televised through WCATV (Watertown Cable Access Television): <https://imd0mxanj2.execute-api.us-west-2.amazonaws.com/ssr/live/60195e83b9696d00075a2e67>
- B. Public was permitted to join the virtual meeting online: <https://watertown-ma.zoom.us/j/96419264286>
- C. Public was permitted to join the virtual meeting audio only by phone: (877) 853-5257 or (888) 475-4499 (Toll Free) and enter Webinar ID: 964 1926 4286#
- D. Public was permitted to comment through email: [vpiccirilli@watertown-ma.gov](mailto:vpiccirilli@watertown-ma.gov)

The purpose of this meeting was to discuss, consider, and act on the following:

1. Call to Order  
Council President Sideris called to order a regular meeting of the Charter Review Committee at 6:01 p.m. Those present were Councilors Caroline Bays, Anthony J. Donato, Lisa J. Feltner, John G. Gannon, Angeline B. Kounelis, Anthony Palomba, Vice President Vincent J. Piccirilli, Jr., Kenneth M. Woodland, Council President Mark S. Sideris, and members Marcia Ciro, Anne Fitzpatrick, Jonathan Hecht, Leo Martin, James Mello, and William Oates. Also present was Michael Ward, Director of the Collins Center
2. Review and Approval of Minutes
  - A. Minutes of the Charter Review Committee Meeting of [February 2, 2021](#)
  - B. Minutes of the Charter Review Committee Meeting of [February 16, 2021](#)
  - C. Minutes of the Communications Subcommittee Meeting of [March 11, 2021](#)
  - D. Minutes of the Preamble Subcommittee Meeting of [March 8, 2021](#)

Mr. Mello moved to accept the minutes of the Charter Review Committee for February 2, 2021 and February 16, 2021; the minutes of the Communications Subcommittee of March 11, 2021; and the Minutes of the Preamble Subcommittee of March 8, 2021; Councilor Woodland seconded the motion. The motion was adopted unanimously on a roll call vote.

3. Brief Overview of Forms of Government

Mr. Ward provided a basic presentation on the forms of government:

Town Council/Town Manager: The Council is responsible for the legislative functions of government and the passing of a budget. The Town Manager is the Chief Executive Officer of the community; appointed by the Town Council and answerable to the Town Council; has no veto power; is responsible for the daily administration of the Town; and executes the policy established by the Town Council. This form of government is popular in smaller cities.

Mayor/City Council: The mayor is the executive of the community and the City Council exercises the legislative function. The Mayor is directly elected by the voters and is directly accountable to them; usually has either a 2 or 4-year term; may be recalled if such a provision is included in the Charter; may veto the City Council unless the veto is overridden by the Council; and must be a resident of the City. This form of government is popular in larger cities.

Both forms of government can be successful and depends on the people in charge. A capable mayor can have a large effect on the community's ability to change; having a mayor with poor skills can have a larger negative effect on a community than a Town Council can. If Watertown selects the City form, the change will not be completed by November. If the current form of governing is selected, there are many issues that need to be discussed.

4. Discussion and Vote on Mayor or Manager Form of Government

Council President Sideris listed the rules for the public forum; he thanked all attendees for their participation.

Roberta Miller – 16 Garfield St. – She stated that she was a Town Council member of the first Watertown Town Council for two terms. She felt there is nothing in the issues raised that cannot be better addressed with a mayoral form of government. The Town Manager form provides a better opportunity for people to raise diverse opinions. It would be unwise to change; however, many good suggestions have been raised in previous Committee discussions. If implemented, many of the changes could improve services to the residents: improve communication and responsiveness to the citizens; provide improved management; and educate residents how government works and how people can be involved in government. The question is are the problems structural or due to factors that can be improved within the current structure?

Russ Arico – Fayette Street – Stated that he appreciated the current form of government and feels that people are well represented with many opportunities for public participation. Mayors have too much power and City Councils often rubber stamp the Mayor; are susceptible to corruption; often make decisions that are subject to politics; and can act as dictators.

Deborah Peterson – Westland Road – She was surprised by the extensive dissatisfaction raised by members. She would like to see the Committee focus on charter changes that address these issues and adopt the Collins Centers option of a mid-term review in order to adequately assess and address the matters raised.

Eric Kemp-Benedict – 44 Whitney Street – He favored a mayoral form of government because the Town Manager is not visible; hires people but does not hold them accountable; and can be patronizing to the views of others. The hiring of the Town Manager by the Town Council is no excuse for the lack of access, consultation, and accountability. The only way to provide transparency, accountability, and responsiveness is to implement a mayoral government.

Nancy Hammett – 119 Riverside Street – She feels the main issues facing the community are transparency and the civic engagement of town officials. There is potential in the current form of government, but the Town Council needs to effectively supervise and evaluate the Town Manager. There are problems with the balance of power, accountability, the flow of information, and the capacity of the Town Council to have sufficient administrative and research staff. She would like an abbreviated Charter reevaluation period so that questions of major importance could be revisited.

Lisa Capoccia – 41 Channing Road – She would like to see improvements made using the current form of government. A mayor would take power away from the Town Council. She would like to see the Council strengthened by having more accountability and oversight of the Town Manager and the Department Heads. Turnover can be good if it is based on performance but not if it is political change. The Town is being run by someone without a vision. Partnerships should be created with groups that have a vision to move the community forward. There should be a limit to the number of years served as Town Manager. The Council compensation of less than \$10,000 years may limit people from running who would bring more diversity to the Council.

Brian McDonald – 36 Lexington Street – As someone who has been politically involved in both local and state politics, he feels that a community with a \$150,000,000 enterprise should not be led by someone who has no competency in management or leadership. The biggest risk for a community is having a bad mayor. The Town Council/Town Manager form is the most professional for a community this size. The issue of a long-term Town Manager is that opportunities arise to consolidate power and increase personal influence. It would be helpful to create a better system for supervising and holding the Town Manager accountable. Now is not the time to make a drastic change in government.

Janice Hudson – 36 Capitol Street – After discussing this idea with many people, she feels that it is not the form of government that makes a city successful, it is the people. The Committee needs to look at what does and does not. Many people have stated issues that should be addressed: better communication, more effective evaluations, establishing diversity standards, increased amounts for employment and salaries, oversight of the police, updated Charter review process, and creation of a Preamble. A balanced budget is fantastic but that alone does not make a successful city. The current allocation of tax dollars does not always reflect the desires of residents. She urged the group to be creative and not be bound by the concept of it has not been done before; this is the Town's opportunity to be creative.

Joseph Lewandowski – 13 Templeton Parkway – He favors a mayoral government because the Town needs a change. People in the current government have become complacent and unresponsive and lacks accountability. This has created frustration to the point that the public feels the public process has a preordained outcome and is only for show. Residents feel they are not being listened to and this discourages public participation. What is being done is not working for democratic accountability.

John Airasian – Main Street – The Charter has served the Town well. A strong Town Manager allows the Town to put professionalism before politics. The Town has been

on an upward trajectory since its inception and the Town continues to progress. The Charter should be kept and improved where it is flawed.

Rena Baskin – 15 Franklin Street – She favors a change to a mayoral government because the current government is a great source of frustration. While the budget is well managed, departments are not. The current government form of government does not adequately address the needs of the community and needs to be more responsive. Direct elections of a leader puts the choice of the leader directly in the hands of the people, the ones most affected by a leader. It is time to try something different.

Nick Cunningham – 33 Carver Road – He feels that a mayoral government would be an improvement over a Town Manager. The Town Manager is insulated and is only accountable to an annual review; there is no direct public input to the person most directly responsible for controlling the Town resources; and there is no strong motive to keep people up to date. A mayor is held accountable for policy and is motivated to respond to the people.

Emma Galloway – 76 Capitol Street – She felt the Town should transition to a mayoral form of government because of the lack of transparency and accountability by the Town Manager. Strengthening the Town Council if not mandated would put many of the issues stated on the back burner. Choosing a mayor would have someone that is well-qualified who is accountable to the people.

John Oroian – 18 Carroll Street – He favors retaining the Town Council because he can provide his input on decisions made by the Town Council. He stated that issues with transparency and accountability will always be a concern because this is a matter of the individual involved. Change for change sake is not a strategy for moving forward.

Susan Falkoff – Oliver Street – She asked why people would assume the mayor elected would be the mayor each individual wants. Electing a mayor is no guarantee of success. There is the possibility of someone who cultivates power to the detriment of the community. She agreed that there is a need for improved transparency, accountability, and communication but they are not charter review matters. She hoped the committee report could make suggestions as to how the current government could be changed.

Sheppard Ferguson – Rangeley Road - People assume having a strong mayor will provide a strong vision for the city and execute it, but this is not always the case. People create the vision by active participation in city government and seeing it executed. Charismatic leaders do not automatically make good government. A Town Council can be more democratic. He considers the communication issue a major one but that too is improving, and he strongly favors retaining the current form of government.

Marilyn Petitto Devaney – She felt the Committee was doing the community a disservice; it needs to educate the town on the three forms of government. The question need not be decided at this meeting; it is premature. The Committee should review the charter and improve it.

Tyler Kemp Benedict – 44 Whitney Street – She felt that Watertown government is opaque and unaccountable. There are many equity issues and problems facing this community that are costing all people. She hoped that the Charter could be improved to work on behalf of the community.

Maria Rose – Edward Road – The form of government is less indicative of a community than the people who run it. As someone who works in a city government, she has seen

only one good mayor out of three. There are issues within the community, but this can be addressed by hiring creative and energetic people who will consider diversity in government. It may require hiring a Communications Director and diversity officer. She personally has always felt that she could communicate with her councilors and that they were responsive. She encouraged others to do so. Governance is not something to gamble on and the feeling of just trying something different is a gamble.

Robert Barnum - He does not favor taking the risk of changing government forms to a mayor despite his concerns with some Town employees and the Town Manager's lack of response to his concerns. A Mayor would have all of the power. The Town Council can hold the Town Manager accountable more easily than a Mayor where the electorate must wait for a recall or the next election. The professionalism required of a Town Manager helps to secure the municipality's success. If you disagree with a mayor, his/her vision for the community will be counterproductive to your vision.

Tia Tilson/Maria Saiz – Tia stated that the mere fact that the Committee is discussing the form of government indicates a failure of the current management system. As someone who has a background in Public Administration, she is concerned as to how the Town got here. She feels the essential question the Committee should be asking is how to reconstruct balance between the Town Manager or Mayor and The Council. The decision on the type of government should be delayed until the balance of power question is decided. This will make a difference and allow the City to be a responsive one.

Bob Airasian – The key issues people have spoken about are transparency, communication, and accountability. These seem to be personal points of frustration based on individual interactions, but they are not sufficient reasons to change the form of government. No form of government is perfect, and he stated that he is not convinced a mayoral system will provide the answer. It appears that politics holds more sway in a mayoral government; something that is not needed in the community. It appears that the need is to review the current government form which has served the community well and improve it.

Teddy Kakoros – 99 Jensen Road – Due to the conditions of the pandemic, it seems unwise to continue this discussion but to revisit in 3-5 years.

Chris Pend – He stated that he was not sure which form of government he supported, but the issues raised come from residents seeking a more effective, responsive and transparent government. People are seeking a leader with a spirit of accountability rather than the entrenched Town Manager and Councilors. There is a need for new ideas. Having a successful community is more than having a balanced budget. Any changes to the charter or ordinances should reflect metrics for diversity, public engagement, and equity. If there is a fear of a mayor, is it because the fear of a bad mayor arises from a lack of faith in their fellow citizens to be an effective leader or is it that residents cannot be trusted to choose a good leader.

Jill Ruers – She only learned of the meeting today when she saw a sandwich board. There seems to be a lack of sufficient communication and is another example of poor communication. She asked the Committee not to vote on this matter and wait for more people to be able to attend due to the gravity of the matter.

Joseph Rotella – 157 Common Street – He stated he had concerns about who is making decisions for the city which is one of changing demographics and a rising number of diverse populations. The Town is about 75% white, but the membership of the Committee does not reflect the makeup of the community. The current Town Manager is not accountable, and the Town Council does not hold him accountable. He

urged the Committee to pause their considerations so that the Committee can have a more diverse membership that represents the Town.

Len Holt – 44 Grenville Road – In listening to comments of the speakers, there are not many who are discussing the accomplishments of the Town – the creation of a sufficient surplus to revamp the elementary schools without an override. This affects the Town in the future and that is success. Based on this, the government form should remain as it is. While improvements can always be made, change for its own sake is not a better method. Changing to a mayor with the potential of frequent changes can prevent people from completing successful long-term planning.

Michael Wilkins – He felt that this decision should be postponed. Notice should have been sent to citizens in the same manner that tax bills are sent. The notice provided was insufficient for this large a decision.

Alan Epstein – 58 Spruce Street – When he was working with the Town's School system, he felt that oversight by the Town Manager was lacking. He did not favor going to a mayoral government. Also, it does not appear that the issue of needing additional managerial personnel with a mayor has been discussed.

In the Q&A's comments included

- There is a need for a strong mayor based on the lack of transparency with the current Town Manager
- There is a strong desire to formalize a Human Rights Commission as a quasi – governmental entity
- Most people are concerned that the Town Manager is not responsive, but this is his job
- There was a request not to have a vote tonight because most do not know about the meeting. Many are concerned about the Town Manager's uncaring attitude and lack of transparency and vision.

Mary Russo – She agreed that a vote should be postponed as it is not in the best interest of the Town. Rushing the vote creates a lack of transparency. She encouraged change but to rush into a decision on this matter is doing a disservice to all. The Committee should work on the charter, then pursue the larger question of the form of government.

Marcy Murningham – She believed that the Town is having the wrong conversation at the wrong time. She stated that form follows function and the structure used is only as good as the purpose and the principles that upholds that form. The charter is a blueprint brought to life by the community values and the purpose of government. More profound discussion is needed to find remedies. The answer lies in service to the common good and the desire to think of the big picture.

Ben Unger – 141 Common Road – As a newer member of the community, he has had interaction with the Town, and it has been positive and professional. He wanted to remind people to consider evolution not revolution and that there are consequences to major changes that need to be considered.

Elodia Thomas – Marion Road – The proper balance of power is askew in the legislation and guidance that the community is seeking. There are many positive changes occurring in Town. Watertown is a complex small city that is growing. She does not favor overthrowing what is in existence but proposes that the Committee go back through the charter making some solid changes and reassessing the results of the changes.

In the Q & A, these matters were raised:

- This is a huge vote, why leave it in the hands of the few
- Why are current or previous Town Councilors serving on the Committee
- The Town Manager should be evaluated annually and should reapply for the position every few years
- There was a thank you to the Town Council for their hard work
- No one should be in the position for such a long period as it does not lead to anything positive
- The conversation regarding government thought and commentary has been impressive
- There is a need for better town management
- The Charter should provide powers for a stronger Town Council with stricter accountability of the Town Manager

Councilor Piccirilli read an email from John S. Airasian. He wrote that Watertown has improved considerably once the Town Charter was implemented and the Charter has served the Town well and should be retained. Many accomplishments have been achieved with the Town Council:

- Acquisition of the Commander's Mansion
- Building the Senior Center, the Police Station, the Arts Center
- Renovating the DPW yard
- Purchasing and renovating the Arsenal so that it was removed from the Superfund list
- Renovated Victory Field
- Improving streets and sidewalks
- Improving the membership of the Commissions and Boards through the nomination process
- Creation of several dog parks
- Instituting recycling
- Adding a Computer Center in public housing
- Increasing the funding of Schools
- Increasing federal and state funding and grants
- AAA Credit Rating
- Paying down the pension
- Joining the GIC Insurance
- Three Schools being built or renovated
- Capital Improvement Program
- Renovated two fire stations
- Enhancing the 911 System
- Energy Conservation and the Municipal Buildings

Council President Sideris opened the discussion to the Committee members.

Member Fitzpatrick stated she wanted to respond to a citizen who submitted a question and had not yet received a response. She had not responded to him because the message had not been forwarded to her. Council President Sideris stated that the messages were being updated daily and it needed to be checked daily. She apologized to the citizen for not answering as she was unaware of the process.

Councilor Feltner raised a concern about the process of deciding the form of government and asked as to whether other hybrids of the forms of government could be considered. In response, Mr. Ward stated if the Committee were to model itself after Cambridge and Lowell, a form similar to Watertown's, or if it were to have a Town Manager with an Assistant Manager and/or a Chief Operating Officer then that is something that be done. If, however, the Committee were to consider a Mayor with a

Chief Operating Officer that is not something that could be accomplished within the current time limits; it would require the creation of a new charter. Council President Sideris stated the purpose of this decision is to build a framework for the Committee to then pursue an objective.

Councilor Gannon felt after years of municipal experience that the Town Manager form of government was better. He observed that a Town Manager is a professional educated in municipal management and experience. He is trained for the role; it is one element that allows for longer term planning process for a community and his ability is judged by the Town Council. Mayors often do not have a body of professional education of complex municipal issues and are untrained. Successful mayors are those who hired professionals. A pitfall of mayoral government is that election favors rewarding people in order to get reelected, and some appointments are not always the best choices. There is less of a sense of collegiality in a City Council than a Town Council because any of the Councilors could be seeking to be the next mayor. Serving at the pleasure of the Mayor may reduce the selection of the best job candidate.

Credit agencies can change bonding ratings due to frequent mayoral turnovers as it may show financial instability. Cities in crisis needing assistance lose some direct community control when fiscal control board or overseers are appointed. A Town Manager offers stronger financial stability.

Watertown is lacking a strong citizen engagement initiative. The Charter can strengthen the oversight of the Town Manager and it can be amended to attempt to have more citizen engagement. The Charter should confirm the appointment of key department heads rather than leave that to the Town Manager solely.

The Town will be receiving about \$7.5 million under the American Rescue Plan that could be used for improving communication and providing for a 311 system if the federal guidelines allow for this.

A Town Manager form of government is stronger and more accountable.

Member Ciro stated that over time she believes that a Town Council/Town Manager is better because it is a strong form of governing and has less of a political component than a mayoral form of governance. She did state that she is concerned that the issues raised may not be addressed and felt that some do not want to change or feel everything is just rosy. There is a need to improve the appointment process; there should be a split so that balance of power is spread out. Having a Town Manager too long in a job is an issue. The job has been viewed as that of a bean counter and that worked well for many years, but due to the Town's growth, something else is needed. Changes do need to be made in the Charter to address these concerns if the Town stays with the current form of government. She hopes her fears that these issues might not be addressed are proved wrong by the Charter changes.

Member Fitzpatrick mentioned that during the discussion she checked the website and noticed neither the questions or the poll had been updated since March 14, 2021. She wanted people to understand that any lack of response on the Communications Committee part was because the information had not been updated.

She then spoke to the question at hand and stated that while the selection of a form of government is a significant question, it is only one component and that the open issues can be addressed regarding accountability and transparency. The Town Council should be allowed to call in department heads and the Town Manager to respond. The performance review process should be transparent. There should be a mandatory state of the city review and a town hall forum. The Town Council compensation structure should be improved. There should be more administrative support for the Town Council. Access by a Councilor to information should not be based on favors or favoritism. Bean counting is good, but Watertown needs to do better than that; this is where Watertown falls short. Many do not want to change

government but do not know how to create changes unless Watertown switches to a mayoral system. The Town is ready for a different approach with a need for accountability and transparency. Much can be done; she requested attendees to stay involved and engaged to make the needed changes. She believed simply changing to a mayoral government would not create the desired effects; however, she felt there should be no fearmongering about a mayor by those who felt the public was not sufficiently smart select a mayor.

Councilor Bays addressed the issue of delaying the vote on the form of government. The Committee has been working for a long time and if it continues to delay the question, the Committee would not be able to complete the review of the charter and attempt to create processes for addressing communication, accountability, and transparency. The Committee needs to start considering the issues with the next meeting. Having a mayor does not necessarily address the issues brought forward.

Member Hecht felt the Committee has been appropriately patient and has learned from residents what their concerns are. In order to address the problems, there is a need to create a framework to move forward. He favored the current government with revisions to the Charter.

He felt changing government requires a greater need than has currently been stated and there is a need for broader support than exists now. When Watertown changed to a Town Manager, there was consensus from the populace for a need to restructure the form of government: a lack of professional town management and a lack of clear lines of authority. In 40 years, these issues have been addressed and the government was responsive to the needs of that time. Government needs to evolve to meet current conditions. The population is more diverse and there is an increased expectation of response from the citizens. Local government needs to recalibrate, to improve public engagement, to strengthen the Town Council, to establish a vision, and to monitor the implementation of that vision. These changes can be done effectively within the current framework.

Councilor Kounelis stated there are two corner offices at Town Hall and the East Wing reports to the electorate. She agreed there are communication gaps and changes are needed to the charter, such as the communication amongst legislators and legislators and the administration. There are incidents when information is not timely, but it is timely and informative if an item is on the agenda. A Councilor is unable to be everywhere; therefore, he/she does need to rely on staff. The legislative function is not a daily activity; however, it is common courtesy to be kept informed of the daily activity. Whatever concerns people have can be addressed within the charter. It works well and is inclusive for those who want to participate. The Town Council needs to be made stronger; the current form allows for a strong Town Management. While no form of government is perfect; the current form of government should be retained. It is important though overall to make some major changes of operation to address the concerns raised.

Member Oates stated that he has had experience with all forms of government and understands the dynamics of them. He felt that voices are somewhat unified looking for change and to make improvements to make Watertown better. Watertown does do more than just bean counting, but there are things that need change. Throughout the past meetings, he has not seen any compelling reason to change the form of governance. He stated he became part of the Committee to do something that positively impacts the city. This is the fourth review of the Charter, but it has not changed much in that time. He felt that the Committee needs to be review comments that relate to the charter and address those issues about engagement, responsiveness, accountability, transparency, vision, and balance of power. He was confident the Committee could do it and have the debates needed to contribute to the

improvement. If the committee feels there is not sufficient conversation, it can review Section 8 to continue the discussion. The current form of government is sound and should be continued with the changes made where needed.

Councilor Donato stated that he believes the current government has served the Town very well and that the Committee should focus on a thorough review to address resident concerns. He was confident that it can be achieved.

Councilor Palomba thanked all those who attended or participated. He felt that the Town cannot postpone the discussions and the Committee needs to drill down into the questions. In reviewing comments, he received from residents, he found the same issues seem to concern people whether they have lived in Watertown for 6 or 40 years.

6 Year Resident  
Transparency  
Accessibility  
Diversity  
Equity  
Accountability  
Communication  
Forward Thinking

40 Year Resident  
Accountability  
Transparency  
Communication  
Responsiveness  
Equity  
21<sup>st</sup> Century Thinking

He felt the choice of government is an issue of democracy and accountability. Whether the government has a Mayor or a Town Manager, there are those who are incompetent or ineffective in either position and there are those who excel in those positions. He favors a mayoral government because a mayor is directly elected to head the government and is accountable to the electorate. The Town Manager is not accountable to anyone. Based on the desire for increased democracy, he would be voting for a mayoral form of government.

Member Mello stated that the Town should stay with the current form of government and make the needed changes to the charter. He favored a mayor forty years ago due to a mayor's accountability to the people. Over time, he has come to understand the value of having fiscal strength. Since Proposition 2 ½ was introduced, there has only been one debt exclusion in Watertown. In those forty years, the Town is building two new schools, renovating another, built a new police station, renovated two fire stations, built a new library, and renovated DPW among other changes. There are problems with the government; there is a need for more communication; the Town Council should have more power. If citizens feel a need for a change, they should create a new commission and work to change it just as it was done forty years ago.

Councilor Piccirilli stated that the real question is whether the government should change to a mayor? If so, it would be a fundamental change requiring a new charter and would mean that the current governmental structure is incapable of meeting the needs of the citizens. The basic question is does Watertown want an inclusive progressive form of government or one where it is a winner take all form of government? The criteria for judging this are

1. Policy - Does the community want a government that is made by consensus or by one person? The Town Council allows for a diversity of views as opposed to one person deciding the policy.
2. Professional Management - Does the community want an executive officer who is there based on what they know or on who they know? The ability to run a town should be based on experience and not be a popularity contest.
3. Separation of Powers – Is the government capable of discouraging the trading of favors for political support or political favoritism?

4. Accountability of the CEO – Is it easy for the CEO to be removed? If needed, a Town Manager can be removed if the person is ineffective. Or is it difficult as with a mayor due to inherent power of office.

He stated that a Town Manager is the better choice. What kind of vision does the community want: a government that encourages progressive principles movement or one that is a throwback to the 19<sup>th</sup> cent and consolidates power in one person?

What kind of vision do citizens want? There is no perfect form of government, but does Watertown want to change what has served it so well for forty years. There is no fundamental flaw in the current structure of government to justify a change.

Councilor Gannon stated that the city manager was created out of crisis when a mayor was unable to deal with the crisis. A person who was a professional was put in charge to resolve the matter. He felt there were many opportunities for people to continue to be engaged in the continuing discussions as to how to improve the current charter.

Council President Sideris stated that this is an opportunity to decide how the Town moves forward. Once the decision is made, the Committee can review what can be addressed. The same issues have been listed consistently, and the Committee should take the opportunity to make significant changes to the charter such as strengthening the rule of Town Council and how the Town engages with its citizens. This is the time to try to do things better and all should strive for that. All people need to be open to the changes the community is demanding.

Councilor Piccirilli moved to remain with the current form of government; Mr. Mello seconded the motion. The motion was adopted on a roll vote by a vote of 13 in favor, 1 against, and 1 present. All members voted in favor of the motion except for Councilor Palomba who voted against the motion and Councilor Feltner who voted present.

5. Discussion of Next Steps

Mr. Ward stated that significant substantive changes could be made; however, the challenge is the time left. There may be six meetings left. He proposed 2 meeting on the legislative process and two meetings on the executive. The leftover items could be split in the remaining two meetings. In that order focus on the issues, he suggested beginning with the legislative article and things related to it for the next two meetings. Mr. Ward requested that members get their priorities and comments together and he would compile them so that the Committee could focus on these issues in the next two meetings.

A question was raised about delaying the timeline until March when there would be debt exclusion referendum. Mr. Ward stated he did not know of anything that would prohibit that. Council President Sideris stated that he would like to discuss the matter with the Town Attorney as the makeup of the Town Council could change in that period and there might be concerns raised from the new Town Council.

It was suggested that proposed changes be accepted but that they should not be ranked in order to allow for brainstorming sessions instead.

A concern was raised that the suggestions should not just go to Mike or the Council Clerk but that all members should see them because members would like to consider the ideas presented.

Council President Sideris stated that Mr. Ward and he would meet to define an approach.

6. Communications Committee Update

- A. [Funding Request](#) for Charter Review Committee Flyer

Ms. Ciro stated the Committee had written a brochure regarding the Charter Review and the Committee would like to get it approved so that it can be distributed. She hoped that it would help people to become or stay involved in the review process.

Many members stated their appreciation for the work done and the quality of the brochure.

A question was asked how the leaflet would be distributed. Councilor Gannon stated that it would be a traditional leaflet drop to the homes to 15,000 households by volunteers. Using the tax bills, the notices would only go to the owners and exclude some citizens. Councilor Gannon then asked if people were interested, he would welcome their assistance in distributing the brochure.

A question was raised as to how many quotes were received and why was a Holbrook printer used. A suggestion was also made that the process should be in the minutes. Councilor Gannon stated that the Committee solicited quotes and received two written ones with the Holbrook printer charging the least. The bids received were \$1,800 and \$1,450. The lowest responsible eligible bidder was selected. Using the Uniform Procurement Act as a guide for items less than \$5,000, vendors were telephoned and emailed for prices. Ms. Ciro, a graphic designer, completed the work on the brochure. Member Fitzpatrick stated quotes were received for color and black and white; the color was preferred. A local printer was asked for a quote, but the cost was about \$2,000. Council President Sideris stated that because the Committee had no budget, if the request passed, he would then need to discuss the matter with the Town Manager. Council President Sideris stated that the addition of a budget for the Committee should be included in the Charter changes.

Councilor Woodland moved that pending approval from the Town Manager, the Committee recommends that the Town Manager fund the request as presented; Councilor Piccirilli seconded the motion. After a brief discussion, it was revised by Councilor Woodland to be a motion that pending the approval of the Town Manager to approve the design of the flier as presented with the removal of references to the April 6, 2021 meeting and to correct the spelling of Councilor to Councilor to be in alignment with the Charter, the Committee recommends that the Town Manager fund the request as presented. The motion was passed unanimously on a roll call vote.

B. Charter Review Committee [Communications Flyer](#)

Minutes for this item are incorporated in Item 6A

Councilor Palomba stated the Preamble Committee met and minutes of the meeting would be presented at the next meeting. The meeting that was to be held on April 5 was cancelled. He stated that he made a request of Mr. Ward for information for the committee. The meeting is scheduled in May.

7. Adjournment

Councilor Piccirilli moved to adjourn the meeting; Councilor Feltner seconded the motion. The motion was adopted unanimously on a roll call vote. The meeting adjourned at 9: 43 p.m.

The [questions and answers](#) for this meeting.

Minutes were prepared by Marilyn W. Pronovost.