

Charter Minutes 6/17/19

Call to Order: Excused. Mike, Pat, Martha. Jill Acting Chair

Motion to Adopt Agenda w/ Edit of date correction – Joe, 2nd Peter, Unanimous

Motion to Approve Minutes of 6/3/19 – Joe, 2nd Peter, Unanimous

Discussion: Should we flag the charter for non-sub stuff that the Town Council can do and submit to the voters separately...this will allow us to focus on the bigger picture stuff

Question about what the council can and can't do with the charter with out a commission. General agreement that as long as the Town Attorney agrees that its non-substantive (ie grammatical, etc) that each revision could be made by the TC and submitted to the voters for approval.

Discussion of the nuts and bolts of how the public hearing would run and a general discussion of the different bullet points in Michaels presentation draft.

Question about should we solicit town staff suggestions at meeting as we have had some feedback from both Town Planner Michelle Gagnon on the Planning Board as well as Town Manager Cornell Knight on the budget process.

Joe – We should probably isolate staff suggestions from citizen input so as not to make it seem that we are weighting it unequally.

Discussion – What is it we are really trying to do here and how do we show that intent.

Chris – It's important to make it clear that we are not trying to "eliminate" the Warrant Com. or citizen review. We are looking for a way to create something new that is more effective while incorporating all the functions of Warrant in the new structure. Just because something isn't called the Warrant Com. anymore doesn't mean that all the things it does aren't still there.

Discussion - What is meant by Goals?

General agreement that our goals are to: Retain Town Meeting Form of Govt., Encourage Citizen involvement in government, look to the future and how technology needs to play in our process...ie electronic tallys, remove compensation amounts from the charter as that shouldn't be the place for it.

Jill – We need to make sure that the Charter is comprehensive yet not too bulky

At the public meeting it needs to be clear that we are still working on what we want our final suggestions need to be and it important to have good attendance at the meeting to get feedback.

Are there ways we can get the word out better than just a typical public notice? Jill agreed to try and get something to the paper ASAP before deadline if at all possible.

Anna – What are the holes to poke into our ideas and what is causing us to suggest this as opposed to what was previously proposed by the Warrant? Is there another way to create this efficiency that seems less invasive and controversial?

Other bullet points in presentation-

Discussion of what “strength of process means”. There was uncertainty since Michael is not present.

What does “First View” mean? One thought that it means this is only our first go at this idea. Another thought that it refers to the proposed structure providing a first view to the committees before the TC.

“Moving Forward” - Letting public know our timeline and that we will continue to have meetings.

Budget Process-

There was a lengthy discussion of the Budget Process as it relates to the proposed budget committee. Several concerns were raised.

- Does it actually reduce the number of meetings and make things more efficient?
- Will it require a meeting to reconcile the differences in opinion between the TC and the Budget Committee?

Jill – Does the BC have the scope of vision that the TC does on the budget since they are the ones that it flow out of based on their policy decisions. Thus shouldn't the budget comm get the budget second and not first? Doesn't seem appropriate for them to see it first. The TC is responsible for the creation of the document and if the BC sees it first they are in essence the document creators sending it to the TC. Doesn't see this as the proper way.

Chris – and Julie. – So if the BC sees it second how is that any different than the current WC process?

Joe – Okay with BC seeing it first

Anna – How does the BC seeing it first make the process any better?

Jill – Further argument for BC to see it second

Joe – TM already works under the guidance of the TC so the budget is already a Council document

Anna – Seems like this bogs down the process.

Chris – Doesn't see issue with BC seeing it first as long as there is a chance to reconcile since if there are differences in opinion in the end it will be reflected in the warrant recommendations.

Joe – Discussed pros and cons of the budget flowing up or down to council... and that he can think of situation where it would make sense to flow from the Council to the BC and so he is flipping his opinion on the matter.

Peter- since they both see the budget at the same time in a presentation he feels it solidifies it as a council budget and sees no problem with the flow from BC to TC because regardless of the way it flows it's still the Council who ultimately places it on the Warrant. Also in favor of a budget reconciliation process between the Council and BC

Julie – If we go from council to BC it seems the same as it is just now just with less people. While the current warrant structure has lots of meetings with the sub committees that could be made more efficient, she likes the largeness of the group and the diversity of input they bring. Would be in favor of the Council seeing the budget first and then passing it to BC because that's the process she's used to.

Further debate followed with Jill asserting that she doesn't see it appropriate for the Council to see the budget second.

Solicit feedback from Councilor Erin Cough who was present at the meeting on her opinion:

- What's the purpose? Is it to have objective eyes on the spending of the town or is it to review the policies of the Town Council?
- If it's the first objective we need simultaneous review of the budget to maintain objectivity.

Jill – In her opinion the initial review of spending decisions should be the responsibility of the TC. The BC function is different than the planning board or school comm. Which flow from them to the TC.

Chris- So then is the BC just a different name for a smaller warrant comm with a more narrow scope of focus?

What does all this mean for the Public Hearing? We still have big question marks about the BC and in the end are we attempting to create a new process or just make a smaller more refined warrant comm.

Going to be important to get public input about this at the meeting

Discussion of Planning Board.

Joe- Has come to the conclusion that he doesn't feel that election of planning board members is appropriate.

General discussion of the Elected vs appointed ideas at the last meeting, Public input on this will be nice too.

Continued discussion of Review of Initiatives and Referendums.

Anna – The brick wall for her is the stuff that doesn't slot easily. Like Art 4 in the last Town Meeting

Chris- The climate right now in town strongly suggests that people really value the suggestions of Warrant Comm on the articles and that it would be foolish to completely remove suggestions on Initiatives.

Julie- Agrees with Chris

Jill and Peter – Not in favor of recommendations of committees on cit. init.

So who reviews then?

Anna – We can't punt on this it's a huge obstacle in the new proposed structure and its why we need warrant as it is.

Joe – is there a hybrid of this that would allow for it to happen?

Jill – The highest authority in town is the voters and init already come from a signif percentage of them. That in it self is the recommendation in her mind so it doesn't need anyone weighing in on it otherwise

Chris- Since a cit. init. Already comes from the highest authority in town ie (a percentage of cit.) and it can either be enacted by council or not... if it is placed on the warrant isn't that defacto rejection of that init. already? And if it is doesn't that mean that technically there is already an opinion on it regardless of if its published or not?

Anna- What about a 4th "governance Comm?

Jill – in the end we need this well organized and we need to be unified as a body because voters are going to look at our work and make a judgement

Question – Are we allowed to modify the number of voters required to create an init? Right now is 10% of the voters in the last gub. Election.

Julie – Why would we want to make it harder?

Suggestion from Cornell Knight - maybe we aren't quite ready for a Public Hearing since we have so much that is un settled.

Joe – We don't have to advocate we just need to seek input.

What if we treated this as more of a workshop?

Anna – Motion: The CC recommends that the Warrant Committee be smaller and not voted as a slate and that the meeting and review process will be shorter and condensed. Its duties shall continue to be review

2nd Julie

Chris - This motion seems to throw out the entire discussion we've had over the past 6 weeks.

Jill- Seems to be too specific at this moment since we are still trying to decide how to proceed

Anna – Means for the motion to be a way to encapsulate what we are trying to do.

Vote – 2 yea (anna, Julie) Nay (Peter, Chris, Jill, Joe)

Question – so is this in fact more of a workshop than a hearing?

We haven't had a full comm. Meeting in a while should we meet before or after the hearing to firm some things up?

Jill – Will uses the side by side charters done by Chris to help illustrate where we are at now.

When is next meeting? General agreement to decide that next week at the public hearing as the 4th of July is coming up.

Motion to Adjourn – Unanimous.