

TOWN OF GROTON
CHARTER REVISION COMMISSION
SPECIAL MEETING
March 6, 2017
TOWN HALL ANNEX—COMMUNITY ROOM 2

Chair Pro Tem Aument called the meeting to order at 6:42 p.m.

- I. ROLL CALL
Members Present: Commissioners Scott Aument, Kathy Chase, Jane Dauphinais (via phone), Robert Frink, Patrice Granatosky, Rosanne Kotowski, Daniel Mello, and Jennifer L. White
Absent: Chair Hauber, Commissioners Marley and Peruzzotti
- II. NEW BUSINESS
 - a. Chapter Nine

Commissioner Granatosky made a motion, seconded by Commissioner Mello, to amend Section 9.3 to reflect the following language:

9.3 Budget Development Kickoff

9.3.1: "Not later than September 30, the Town Manager shall communicate to the Town Council, Superintendent of Schools, Subdivisions, the Board of Finance and other entities that desire an appropriation from the Town of Groton, as well as the several Town advisory boards, the budget development schedule and any particular requirements for budget input for the next fiscal year.

9.3.2 Not later than October 30 the Town Manager shall provide the Town Council, Superintendent of Schools, Subdivisions, and the Board of Finance the following;

9.3.2.1 The status of the budget for the current year, actual spending vs planned.

9.3.2.2 An estimate of financial risks in the current fiscal year, both expenditures and revenues.

9.3.3.3 An updated 5 year financial forecast."

Commissioner Granatosky stated that the information contained in 9.3 should be coming from paid Town staff.

Commissioner Dauphinais stated that she agrees with Commissioner Granatosky, but the Commission needs to discuss if the Board of Finance comes before or after the Town Council.

Commissioner Kotowski noted that the Board of Finance, the Town Manager, and the Town Council will get all of the information from the Town staff; she noted that Commissions work with Town staff to develop budgets because they receive information from the Town staff.

Commissioner Frink stated that the members of the Board of Finance would be duly elected, sworn officials of the Town of Groton. He noted that he is trying to bring elected bodies more in

control of the government. He noted that is important that the public hears the budget schedule and information from the Board of Finance.

Commissioner Granatosky stated that she is not disparaging any elected individual. She stated that the budget information that is presented to the public is fact and not opinion; that is the role of the staff and not elected individuals.

Commissioner Mello referenced Cromwell's budget process.

Commissioner Kotowski stated that the face of Groton should be elected officials. She noted that there should not be an ineffective Board of Finance; it should have teeth. She noted that she does not want to undermine the Board of Finance.

Commissioner Frink reviewed the changes he proposed to Section 9.3. He noted that the Board of Finance would cooperate with the Finance Director. He reviewed the Director of Finance's job description. He noted that elected officials need to be the face of Groton.

Commissioner Mello reviewed Cromwell's budget process; budget information comes from Town staff.

Chair Pro Tem Aument stated that he agrees with Section 9.3.1.1 as proposed by Commissioner Frink. He noted that the Director of Finance is under the direction of the Town Manager. He stated that he would like the Board of Finance to be involved in the front-end of the budget and revenue estimates.

Commissioner White stated that the Town Manager is the CEO of Groton and if anyone works with the Board of Finance it should be the Manger; the Director of Finance should not be working with the Board of Finance cutting the Town Manager out of the picture.

Commissioner Kotowski stated that the Finance Director is going to be working with the Board of Finance along with the Town Manager; Commissions work with the staff.

Commissioner Frink amended the motion, seconded by Commissioner Kotowski, to the following language:

"9.3 Budget Development Schedule

9.3.1 There will be an annual schedule for the development of the budget. The schedule will include the dates and locations where the public can participate as well as key milestone dates.

9.3.1.1 The Board of Finance and the Town Manager will collaborate on developing the schedule. Not later than October 30th the Board of Finance will communicate the schedule to the public, the Board of Education and Subdivisions."

In response to Chair Pro Tem Aument and Commissioner Dauphinais, Commissioner Frink noted that the public has time to plan its participation with the October 30th deadline; he noted that dates can change.

Vote on the 2nd amended motion: PASSED

7 (Aument, Chase, Kotowski, Dauphinais, White, Frink, Mello)

1 (Granatosky)

0

Chair Pro Tem Aument reviewed the budget calendar that he proposed.

Commissioner Frink stated that he prefers the Town Council going last in the budget sequence.

Commissioner Dauphinais stated that substituting the RTM with a Board of Finance and adding a budget referendum does not simplify the budget process. She stated that if the Board of Finance has teeth, it should have the power to change the Town Manager's budget before it goes to the Town Council. She reviewed the budget timeline/information that she proposed. She noted that the Board of Finance would be before the Town Council, it would have the power to adjust the Manager's budget, and then the Town Council would receive the budget after the Board of Finance. She noted that she would also be okay with the Board of Finance making recommendations on the budget. She stated that if final budget approval is given to the Board of Finance after the Town Council, then it may as well be called a small RTM.

Commissioner Kotowski stated that one of the responsibilities of the Board of Finance will be to review revenues; the RTM does not.

Commissioner White stated that the Board of Finance and the Town Manager need to work together before the budget goes to the Town Council. She noted that the Board of Finance needs to work to develop a budget that meets the Council's vision and goals.

In response to Commissioner Chase, Commissioner Frink stated that his budget flow includes intense budget input to the Town Manager in November/December. He noted that the Board of Finance looks at the budget and analyzes if the Manager followed the guidance; it would recommend or make cuts. He stated that the Council is charged with the welfare of the Town and decides where the resources go-not the Board of Finance.

Commissioner Mello stated that the Board of Finance needs power. He noted that in Cromwell, the Town Council is first in the budget process.

The Commissioners discussed giving the Town Council the power to restore a cut with a super majority.

Commissioner Mello stated that the Board of Education and the Town's budget could be separated when the Board of Finance reviews them.

Commissioner Frink noted that Cromwell has a mandatory referendum; the people have the final say. He stated that if there is a Town Council, Board of Finance, and a referendum, we have lost efficiency. He noted that the Town Council is responsible for the welfare of the Town, it gives guidance to the Town Manager in November, and the Manager puts the budget

together, and the Board of Finance recommends cuts and gives the budget and recommendations to the Town Council.

Chair Pro Tem Aument stated that the Board of Finance should look at the Board of Education budget as well. He noted that the Board of Finance needs to get revenue input. He stated that the Board of Finance has an oversight role with teeth; it is not a mini RTM.

Commissioner Granatosky stated that people do not pay attention until they hear where cuts will be made. She stated that it would probably be better if the Board of Finance goes first in the process and then the Town Council with the power to restore cuts if policy goals are not met.

Commissioner Chase stated that if the Town Council makes the policy and gives budget direction, the Board of Finance needs to follow it.

Commissioner Kotowski stated that the only accountability is a budget referendum.

In response to Commissioners Granatosky and Chair Aument, Commissioner Frink reviewed the language he proposed for Section 9.4. He noted that a definition of “stakeholders” could be included in the glossary.

Commissioner Dauphinais noted that she agrees with the language in Commissioner Frink’s proposed language for Section 9.4.1.1.

Commissioner Chase stated that if proper guidance is given to the Board of Finance, the budget should not be changed after the Board of Finance unless the referendum changes it.

The Commissioners discussed which body should appear last in the budget schedule.

Commissioner Kotowski stated that without a referendum there is no incentive for the Town to make the hard decisions to control spending.

Chair Pro Tem Aument noted that there could be a way for the Board of Finance to have teeth if it goes before the Council, but there needs to be specific language for him to vote on it.

Commissioner Dauphinais suggested that the Board of Finance could change the Town Manager’s budget.

Commissioner White stated that the Board of Finance could provide the options to the Town Council to make significant changes to the budget that meet the Town Council’s goals.

In response to Commissioner White, Chair Pro Tem Aument noted there are legalities to be aware of.

Commissioner Frink noted that there could be a requirement for a 2/3 vote of the Town Council at the end of the budget process to increase the Board of Finance’s budget and a regular majority to reduce the budget; it gives the Board of Finance teeth.

Commissioner Mello made a motion, seconded by Commissioner Chase, that the Town Council provides guidance to the Board of Finance for the annual budget preparation.

Commissioner Frink stated that the Board of Finance should be independent from the Town Council.

Commissioner Dauphinais stated that the Town Council provides guidance to the Town Manager, the Board of Finance is between the Town Manager and the Council, and it is in the perfect position to look at the Manager's budget and give guidance on what could be cut from the budget; the Board of Finance reconciles what comes from the policy makers. She stated that when the Council's guidance conflicts with the Manager's budget, the Board of Finance is important; the Board of Finance would provide expertise and adhere to guidance.

Commissioner Kotowski agreed with Commissioner Dauphinais, and noted the Board of Finance would also review revenue.

Commissioner Granatosky stated that it seems like this splits what the Council currently does into two entities; it takes power away from the Council.

Commissioner Frink noted that the Board of Finance looks at the numbers, and the Town Council is the political entity that looks out for the welfare of the Town. He noted that members of the Board of Finance should be impartial and not have agendas.

Commissioner Granatosky amended the motion, seconded by Commissioner Dauphinais, to the following language in Section 9.4.1:

9.4.1: "The Council shall provide annual budget guidance to the Town Manager and the Board of Finance not later than January 15."

VOTE: PASSED Unanimously

Commissioner Granatosky made a motion to delete the proposed language in Section 9.2.2 of the 3-6-2017 document submitted by Commission Frink:

9.2.2: "As part of the proposed Budget or as a separate report attached thereto, there shall be a program, previously considered and acted upon by the Town Planning Commission in accordance with the CGS, listing municipal improvements and proposed capital projects for the ensuing fiscal year and for the five (5) fiscal years thereafter."

The Commission determined the language in proposed 9.2.2 is in the current Charter.

Commissioner Granatosky withdrew the motion.

Commissioner Kotowski made a motion, seconded by Commissioner Frink, to accept the language in Section 9.4.1.1 as submitted by Commissioner Frink.

9.4.1.1: "Town Council budget guidance will identify and prioritize the functions, programs, initiatives and capital projects that should be funded, or not funded, for the upcoming year and

may include an overall budget increase limit expressed as a percent, in dollars or other measure.”

Commissioner Granatosky stated that when you tell the Town Manager to come back with a zero percent, you are not letting him do his job to determine what is needed to keep the Town running properly.

Commissioner Kotowski stated that the Manager’s job is to present a budget that represents the Council’s goals.

Commissioner Mello stated that the Town Manager has a job to propose a budget that is sensible and operational.

Commissioner Mello amended the motion, seconded by Commissioner Granatosky, to reflect the following language in proposed Section 9.4.1.1:

“Town Council budget guidance will identify and prioritize the functions, programs, initiatives and capital projects that should be funded, or not funded, for the upcoming year and may include an overall budget expressed as a percent, in dollars or other measure.”

Commissioner Granatosky made a second amendment to the motion, seconded by Commissioner Frink, to reflect the following language in proposed Section 9.4.1.1:

9.4.1.1: “Town Council budget guidance will identify and prioritize the functions, programs, initiatives and capital projects that should be funded, or not funded, for the upcoming year.”

Commissioner Frink noted that it can still be done if it is not included in the Section.

Commissioner Kotowski stated that when the budget is first released, it is difficult to get information as to how the budget will affect the tax payers.

In response to Commissioner Kotowski, Commissioner Granatosky stated that the Finance Director will provide the information if asked.

Commissioner Kotowski stated that the problem has been the lack of direction, and this is an opportunity to give direction.

Commissioner Dauphinais stated that it is important to give quantitative budgetary guidance.

Commissioner Chase noted that the Board of Finance will be reviewing revenue to determine how much can be spent.

Commissioner Granatosky stated that the Town Manager determines what is needed to keep the Town functioning, the Council sets the policy, and the Board of Finance gives suggestions on how to get there while respecting the policy.

Commissioner Kotowski stated that the Town Manager is supposed to run the Town based on what the Council says.

Commissioner Mello noted that the Town Manager works with departments to determine what is needed for the Town to function efficiently and effectively. He noted that is the Town Council and Board of Finance that determines what the Town can afford.

Chair Pro Tem Aument stated that oversight is needed over the budget-including the Board of Education budget.

Vote on the second amended motion: 9.4.1.1: "Town Council budget guidance will identify and prioritize the functions, programs, initiatives and capital projects that should be funded, or not funded, for the upcoming year"

FAILED

4 (Chase, White, Mello, Granatosky)

4 (Frink, Aument, Kotowski, Dauphinais)

0

Vote on the amended motion: 9.4.1.1: "Town Council budget guidance will identify and prioritize the functions, programs, initiatives and capital projects that should be funded, or not funded, for the upcoming year and may include an overall budget expressed as a percent, in dollars or other measure."

FAILED

1 (Mello)

7 (Aument, Chase, White, Kotowski, Frink, Dauphinais, Granatosky)

0

Commissioner White made a motion, seconded by Commissioner Kotowski, to reflect the following language in 9.4.1.1:

"Town Council budget guidance will identify and prioritize the functions, programs, initiatives and capital projects that should be funded, or not funded, for the upcoming year and may include an overall budget change expressed as a percent, in dollars or other measure."

In response to Commissioner Chase, Commissioner Dauphinais stated that without quantitative budget guidance, there is no budget guidance at all.

Commissioner Frink made a second amended motion, seconded by Commissioner Kotowski, for 9.4.1.1 to read:

"Town Council budget guidance will identify and prioritize the functions, programs, initiatives and capital projects that should be funded, or not funded, for the upcoming year and may include an overall budget change from the previous year's budget expressed as a percent, in dollars or other measure."

Commissioner White stated that when the budget is finalized, it is obsolete.

Commissioner Frink withdrew his second amended motion, and Commissioner Kotowski withdrew the second.

Vote on the first amended motion:

“Town Council budget guidance will identify and prioritize the functions, programs, initiatives and capital projects that should be funded, or not funded, for the upcoming year and may include an overall budget change expressed as a percent, in dollars or other measure.”

Vote: PASSED

6 (Aument, Chase, White, Dauphinais, Frink, Kotowski)

2 (Granatosky, Mello)

0

III. ADJOURNMENT

A motion to adjourn was made by Commissioner Granatosky, seconded by Commissioner Mello.

Chair Pro Tem Aument adjourned the meeting at 8:39 p.m.

Attest:

Scott Aument, Secretary