

TOWN OF GROTON  
CHARTER REVISION COMMISSION  
REGULAR MEETING MINUTES  
March 13, 2017  
TOWN HALL ANNEX—COMMUNITY ROOM 2

Chair Pro Tem Aument called the meeting to order at 6:32 p.m.

I. ROLL CALL

Members Present: Chair Hauber, Commissioners Scott Aument, Kathy Chase, Jane Dauphinais (via phone), Robert Frink, Patrice Granatsoky, Rosanne Kotowski, and Jennifer L. White

Absent: Commissioners Brandon Marley, Daniel Mello, and Darcy Peruzzotti

II. APPROVAL OF MINUTES

A motion was made by Chair Hauber, seconded by Commissioner Chase, to approve the minutes of the February 13, 2017 meeting. The motion carried unanimously.

A motion was made by Chair Hauber, seconded by Commissioner Chase, to approve the minutes of the February 27, 2017 meeting. The motion carried unanimously.

A motion was made by Commissioner Granatosky, seconded by Commissioner White, to approve the minutes of the March 06, 2017 Special Meeting.

Commissioner Frink suggested that the Commission maintain a version of the proposed changes to the Charter by chapter; he questioned if it could be on the Town's server.

Commissioner Granatosky suggested that all of the changes be reflected on one document.

Commissioner Kotowski made a motion, seconded by Chair Hauber, to correct the minutes of the Special Meeting March 06, 2017 page eight, paragraph one, to add her name to the Commissioners voting in favor of the motion. The motion carried unanimously.

Commissioner Mello arrived at 6:42 p.m.

III. CITIZENS' PETITIONS

Peggy Adams, 30 Circle Avenue, Groton, read letters that she has received from non-resident taxpayers who are interested in having the chance to vote on Groton matters. She noted that there were three letters to the editor about this issue.

In response to Ms. Adams, Commissioner Kotowski stated that she had e-mailed Town Clerk Moukawsher regarding previous language of the Charter that allowed non-resident taxpayers to vote on Groton matters. She noted that she speaks with three people in Ledyard who own property in Groton and are interested in the non-resident taxpayer issue.

#### IV. COMMUNICATIONS

- a. Chair Hauber: None
- b. Secretary Aument noted that he received communications from Peg Adams and Betty Russ
- c. Members:  
Commissioner Mello referenced an article from The Day regarding the Town of Salem's Board of Finance approving a reduction in the Board of Education's budget.

Commissioner Kotowski stated that she would be interested in how Salem's Board of Finance reduced the Board of Education's budget with the minimum budget requirement.

#### V. NEW BUSINESS

- a. Chapter Nine
- b. Definition of Elector
- c. Consolidation of Board and Commissions
- d. Budget Referendum

Commissioner Dauphinais referenced Commissioner Frink's proposed Charter Section 9.4.1.1. She stated that she supports the following language: "Town Council budget guidance may identify and prioritize the functions, programs, initiatives and capital projects that should be funded, or not funded, for the upcoming year and will include an overall budget change expressed as a percent, in dollars or other measure." She noted that quantitative guidance is important.

Commissioner Frink stated that he would like to keep the language as "will" in both places. He stated that if you are not prioritizing and identifying functions, you are not giving guidance. He stated that there will be strategic planning sessions that include Town staff and stakeholders.

Commissioner Granatosky stated that as the policy setters, the Town Council should be prioritizing programs, functions, initiatives, and CIPs.

Commissioner Mello stated that people do not want to be a part of a Board of Finance if they do not have a say in the budget if the Town Council can overrule them in the end.

Commissioner Kotowski stated that requiring a super majority for a Town Council to override the Board of Finance could be a compromise.

Commission Dauphinais stated that the Manager's professionalism can come into play when he develops a budget that meets the Council's guidance.

Commissioner Mello questioned what the power of the Finance Board will be.

Chair Pro Tem Aument noted that he likes having a 2/3 super majority for the Council to override the Board of Finance as a compromise.

Commissioner Dauphinais made a motion, seconded by Commissioner Kotowski, to approve the following language in 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 will include an overall budget change expressed as a percent, in dollars or other measure.”

In response to Commissioner Mello, Commissioner Dauphinais stated that “will” means “must.” She noted that this motion does not have any bearing on the role of the Board of Finance.

Chair Hauber stated that the Town Attorney will give the Commission guidance on proposed language.

Commissioner Granatosky noted that she is opposed to the Town Council telling the staff to come in at a percent.

The Commissioners discussed the roles of the Town Council and the Board of Finance.

Commissioner Dauphinais stated that the Board of Finance will be in the position to suggest alternative ways of meeting guidance. She noted that it is the Town Council as the policy making body that sets the guidance.

Vote on the motion to accept the following language of 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 will include an overall budget change expressed as a percent, in dollars or other measure.”

Vote: PASSES

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

3 (Granatosky, Mello, White)

0

Commissioner Granatosky referenced proposed Section 9.4.2.1. She noted that there needs to be clarification: what is the format of the planning sessions and budget workshops; who are the stakeholders?

Commissioner Frink referenced San Luis Obispo’s budget workshops as the gold standard. He noted that in Manchester, Connecticut, budget workshops occur with various departments. He stated that stakeholders could include Town staff, subdivisions, and consumers of a certain Town service. He stated that budget workshops would be inclusive with facilitators. He noted that there would be a back-and-forth conversation with the public in the budget workshops, whereas there is not at a Public Hearing.

Commissioner Kotowski stated that she likes that there would be a conversation among citizens, the Board of Finance, and the Town Council in budget workshops.

Commissioner Mello questioned where a Board of Finance would be in the budget process and what its role would be. He noted that in Cromwell, the budget workshops are conducted by the Board of Finance.

Commissioner Frink stated that the Town Council is the policy setting body, and it would conduct the budget workshops. He noted that once the budget comes from the Town staff, the Board of Finances reviews it from a financial sensibility standpoint.

Commissioner Granatosky made a motion, seconded by Commissioner Mello, to amend the language in proposed Section 9.4.1.2 to the following:

“In preparing the annual budget guidance the Town Council will conduct strategic planning sessions involving town staff and the Board of Finance, Superintendent of Schools, Board of Education, and subdivisions. The Town Council will hold at least one public hearing and may hold one or more budget workshops. The dates of such public hearings and budget workshops will be scheduled in accordance with section 9.3.”

In response to Commissioner Kotowski, Commissioner Granatosky stated that the budget workshops should be separate from the Public Hearing.

Commissioner White agreed with Commissioner Granatosky that the budget workshops should be separate from the Public Hearing, and she noted that the Public Hearing would occur after budget guidance is given.

Commissioner Kotowski stated that the taxpayer could have a conversation at the budget workshops, and that would make a difference.

Commissioner Mello noted that the Public Hearing could occur first, which is where the guidance is given, and then the experts work on the budget.

Commissioner Frink noted that the existing commissions could be used more. He stated that an example would be the Parks and Recreation Commission would be the stakeholders with the parks and recreation department. He noted that hundreds of citizens could attend a budget workshop. He stated that the term “stakeholder” could be defined in the glossary.

Commissioner Kotowski stated that there could be Citizens’ Petitions at the strategic planning sessions.

Commissioner Dauphinais stated that it would be a mistake to define stakeholders in this section; it could be included in the glossary. She noted that Commissioner Frink is introducing robust public process in this stage of the budget.

In response to Commissioner White, Commissioner Frink stated that the Public Hearing could occur before the budget workshops.

Commissioner Chase stated that if the Public Hearing occurs first, the public’s input would be known before the budget workshops occur.

Commissioner Granatosky stated that it is necessary to define who the stakeholders are in the Charter so that all of the key people are included in the budget workshops. She noted that depending on whom serves on the Town Council, the inclusion of stakeholders at the budget workshops may not be as inclusive as she would like.

Commissioner Kotowski stated that if the Council is not being inclusive, then the Councilors could be voted out.

Commissioner Granatosky noted that the Council could choose to not include people as stakeholders for two years, and that is why she wants the definition of stakeholders to be clear.

Commissioner Mello moved the question

Vote on moving the question: PASSED

8 (Aument, Hauber, Chase, Dauphinais, Frink, Granatosky, Mello, White)

1 (Kotowski)

0

Vote on the motion to accept the following language in Section 9.4.1.2:

“In preparing the annual budget guidance the Town Council will conduct strategic planning sessions involving town staff and the Board of Finance, Superintendent of Schools, Board of Education, and subdivisions. The Town Council will hold at least one public hearing and may hold one or more budget workshops. The dates of such public hearings and budget workshops will be scheduled in accordance with section 9.3.”

Vote: FAILED

1 (Granatosky)

8 (Aument, Hauber, Chase, Dauphinais, Frink, Kotowski, Mello, White)

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Commissioner Mello made a motion, seconded by Commissioner Frink, to include the definition of “stakeholders” in the glossary of the Charter.

Commissioner Mello noted that he would like to include the following in the definition of stakeholders: the Board of Finance, Superintendent of Schools, Board of Education, subdivisions, and others.

Commissioner Granatosky noted that her concern is that the definitions in the glossary are noted as illustrative and not definitive.

Commissioner Frink noted that he is opposed to defining stakeholders this evening; there are industry definitions that he would like to research first.

Commissioner Frink amended the motion, seconded by Commission Dauphinais, to include the “stakeholder” in the glossary with the definition to be defined later.

Commissioner White stated that she supports including the definition now with the possibility of revisiting the definition later.

Commissioner Granatosky noted that she wants “stakeholder” defined.

Vote on the motion: To include the “stakeholder” in the glossary with the definition to be defined later.

Vote: PASSES

8 (Hauber, Aument, Chase, Dauphinais, Frink, Kotowski, Mello, White)

1 (Granatosky)

0

Commissioner Mello made a motion, second by Commissioner Kotowski, to amend Section 9.4.1.2 to reflect the following language:

“In preparing the annual budget guidance the Town Council will conduct strategic planning sessions involving town staff and stakeholders from the community. The Board of Finance will hold at least one public hearing and may hold one or more budget workshops. The dates of such public hearings and budget workshops will be scheduled in accordance with section 9.3.”

Commissioner Mello stated that he believes the Board of Finance needs to take control of the budget process.

Commissioner Granatosky noted that the motion separates two planning sessions between two bodies.

Commissioner Frink reviewed the proposed Budget Calendar that he created.

Commissioner White stated that the Board of Finance should be managing the workflow process; it drives the process.

Commissioner Frink stated that the Board of Finance bases its opinion off numbers.

Chair Pro Tem Aument stated that the Board of Finance does not set policy, but it helps the Town Council with budget guidance.

Commissioner Mello stated that the Board of Finance should do more than crunch the numbers. He questioned why the Board of Finance could not have power.

Commissioner Dauphinais noted that if the Board of Finance has the authority to change the Town Manager’s budget, then the Town Manager is not presenting the budget to the Council/the body that has given the Manger guidance on the budget. She stated that the Board of Finance is advisory, almost an expert subcommittee of the Council, and advises the Council on creative ways to meet budget guidance.

Commissioner Granatosky suggested determining the role of the Board of Finance.

Commissioner Frink stated that the Board of Finance should not be driven by the public’s wants and needs; that is the Town Council’s job. He noted that the Board of Finance would get the Manager’s budget and evaluate it to see if it meets the budget guidance. He stated that if the Town Manager’s budget exceeds budgetary guidance, then the Town Council could change the budget with a 2/3 vote.

Commissioner Mello stated that he is concerned if the Board of Finance is advisory only. He noted that the towns he has researched have Board of Finance with power.

Commissioner White noted that having a Board of Finance as advisory only is concerning.

Chair Pro Tem Aument noted that there can be a Board of Finance and a Town Manager. He stated that it may be an issue to get people into an elected, non-paid position if the Board of Finance has no teeth; the Board of Finance needs to have some say on the budget. He stated that the Board of Finance is looking at the numbers on a more consistent basis.

Each Commissioner reviewed the sequence of the budget that he or she prefers.

Commissioner Granatosky noted that everyone agrees that the Town Council should give policy advice/guidance to the Town Manager; the Town Council is the policy setting body, and the Town Manager proposes a budget.

Chair Pro Tem Aument stated that the Commission should look at budget scenarios/the timeline at the next meeting.

#### VI. ADJOURNMENT

Commissioner Kotowski made a motion to adjourn, second by Chair Hauber. Chair Pro Tem Aument adjourned the meeting at 8:34 p.m.

Attest:

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Scott Aument