

TOWN OF GROTON  
CHARTER REVISION COMMISSION  
REGULAR MEETING MINUTES  
JULY 11, 2016  
TOWN HALL ANNEX—COMMUNITY ROOM 2

Chairperson Dee Hauber called the meeting to order at 6:31 p.m.

I. ROLL CALL

Members Present: Commissioners Scott Aument, Kathy Chase, Jane Dauphinais, Robert Frink, Patrice Granatosky, Dee Hauber, Rosanne Kotowski, Brandon Marley, Daniel Mello, and Jennifer L. White

Members Absent: Commissioner Darcy Peruzzotti

Also present were Town Clerk Betsy Moukawsher and Office Assistant II Nathan Caron.

II. CITIZENS' PETITIONS

None.

III. APPROVAL OF MINUTES

A motion was made by Commissioner Dauphinais, seconded by Commissioner Aument, to approve the minutes of the June 20, 2016 meeting. The motion carried unanimously 10-0-0.

IV. COMMUNICATIONS

Chairperson Hauber stated that while the Charter Revision Commission membership is diverse, she is confident that it will produce results that are the best for Groton.

Secretary Aument questioned if everyone had received his communications regarding draft minutes.

Commissioner Mello stated that he is still having trouble accessing his Town e-mail. Town Clerk Moukawsher stated that she would relay this information to the IT department.

Commissioner Granatosky stated that she has received questions from citizens regarding the Commission's activity. She noted that people are paying attention.

V. NEW BUSINESS

a. Working Issues Chart

Chairperson Hauber requested that each Commissioner state his or her priorities.

Commissioner Kotowski stated that her priorities are government structure, more citizen participation including a budget referendum, managing spending to avoid large tax increases, and ethics.

Commissioner Frink stated that his priorities are government structure, issues, elections, and consolidation.

Commissioner Dauphinais stated that her priorities are government structure including the cost of government, streamlining and simplifying to reduce redundancy, consideration of consolidation of boards and commissions, and elections.

Commissioner Mello stated that his priorities are government structure, consolidation of commissions and committees, budget referendum, elections, and issues.

Commissioner Chase stated that her priorities are government structure, elections, and consolidation.

Commissioner Marley stated that he shares the same priorities as Commissioner Chase.

Commissioner Granatosky stated that her priorities are government structure, consolidation, and elections.

Commissioner White stated that her priorities are government structure, issues, and elections including the topic of referendum vs. RTM.

Commissioner Aument stated that his priorities are government structure, voter participation, elections, issues, and consolidation.

Chairperson Hauber noted that government structure appears to be the top priority for this Commission. She confirmed that the Commissioners wanted to discuss all matters as a body and not in individual committees.

Commissioner Frink stated that the current Town Council does not set policy. He noted that the current Town Council is primarily reactive. He stated that the abdication of power should be a concern. He clarified that there are ways of addressing this issue through the Charter by setting policy.

Commissioner Kotowski stated that the Town Council should have the authority to direct Town employees.

Commissioner White stated that the Town Council should request a quarterly report from the Town Manager emphasizing objectives, strategic steps taken toward attaining objectives, and accountability.

Commissioner Granatosky stated that in the past, the Town Council has not given budget direction when asked for it by the Town Manager. She noted that there have been times when the Town Manager has stated that his hands have been tied by the Town Council.

Commissioner Dauphinais stated that every year the Town Council should decide on goals, including goals related to the budget. She noted that past Town Councils have

measured the Town Manager based on set goals. She stated that strong people are needed in elected positions.

Commissioner Frink stated that the Town Council should set policy and measure results against it. He noted that the Town Manager runs the show, but the Town Council should determine what the show is.

Commissioner Aument stated that policy and leadership are paramount to the discussion. He stated that the seven-vote requirement to remove the Town Manager should be changed. He stated that Town Councilors are not equipped to evaluate the Town Manager. He stated his appreciation for the work that past and present Town Councilors have done.

Commissioner Mello stated that changes to the Charter should be made with the knowledge that the changes are lasting and are greater than currently elected personalities.

Commissioner Marley stated that he is in favor of accountability. He noted that he had an issue with the Town Manager funding the Assistant Town Manager position, not filling it, and then spending the money that had been allocated for this position on other expenditures without permission. He noted that the lack of leadership is an issue. He suggested that leadership training should be implemented for future Town Councilors.

Chairperson Hauber noted that past Town Councils had disagreements with the previous Town Manager, but that the Town Council overcame these issues. She stated that the Town Council needs to take ownership in running the town. She stated that there is a need for all elected officials to come together to make decisions. She stated that people should make better government and not more government.

Commissioner Granatosky stated that the Town is lucky to have the current Town Manager. She stated that there should be a super majority required to remove the Town Manager so personalities do not get in the way.

Commissioner Frink stated that he likes the idea of training new Councilors before they take office.

Commissioner Dauphinais stated that she supports reducing votes for the removal of the Town Manager to six votes.

Commissioner White stated that she agrees that there should be training for incoming Councilors. She suggested that the training could be conducted by the outgoing Town Councilors.

Chairperson Hauber stated that she favors staggering terms of office and limiting the number of terms elected.

Commissioner Chase stated that training for incoming Councilors should not be given by outgoing Town Councilors.

Commissioner Marley stated that outgoing Town Councilors could impart their prejudice. He stated that this could impede the training. He suggested that the Town Clerk administer training for incoming Town Councilors.

Town Clerk Betsy Moukawsher suggested that the Town's Ethics Board could administer training for incoming Town Councilors.

Commissioner Granatosky stated that she is uncomfortable with the idea of training new Town Councilors. She noted that people who run for office should be aware of the functions of the Town before running for office.

Commissioner Frink stated that CCM, Connecticut Conference of Municipalities, could set up a course for Town Councilors. The course could include subjects such as goal setting and how to implement key performance indicators.

Commissioner Kotowski stated that staggering terms would not be useful for the Town Council. She noted that training in Roberts Rules and Parliamentary procedures would reduce intimidation for Town Councilors.

Commissioner Marley stated that outside training would be useful from a non-bias party to teach procedure. He stated that the selection of candidates cannot be legislated through the Charter.

Commissioner Frink stated that a two-year term is too short. He noted that the benefit of a longer term is greater experience.

Commissioner Aument stated that it is difficult to get very much completed within a two-year term. He stated that he would support three-year terms for Town Council. He stated that he agreed that CCM training would be acceptable. He stated that the vetting process of candidate selection should be left to political parties.

Commissioner White stated that she would consider staggered three-year terms with a limit of two consecutive terms.

Commissioner Mello stated that he agreed with staggered three-year terms with no more than two consecutive terms.

Commissioner Granatosky stated that it is difficult to get nine people to run for the Town Council. She stated that limiting terms may make it difficult to find good people to run for election.

Commissioner Chase stated that she supports term limits and training from an outside entity.

Commissioner Kotowski stated that she thought more people would run for the Council if they knew that they would not be running against people who had been on the Council for countless years. She stated that she supports electing the Town Council by

district and not at-large. She stated that she supports electing the Council Mayor and the Chairperson of the Board of Education at-large.

Commissioner Granatosky stated that she supports a Council-elected Mayor and a professional Town Manager with a Town Council that sets policy.

Town Clerk Betsy Moukawsher suggested that the title of Mayor could be replaced with the title of Chairperson to reduce confusion.

In response to Chairperson Hauber's question, Commissioner Granatosky stated that she supports the RTM and likes that it is elected by district. She stated that the RTM is the most democratic part of Groton's government.

Commissioner Marley stated that the RTM is large and that he would entertain a discussion about reducing its size. He noted that the RTM worked well this year. He stated that he supports the RTM and would like to keep it.

Commissioner Aument stated that the RTM is too big. He stated that he supports committees for the RTM. He stated that he would like to have the ability to speak directly with Department Heads without first having to consult with the Town Manager.

Commissioner Dauphinais stated that she supports voting on language for potential changes to the Charter. She suggested that each change be submitted in written form. She suggested that the language for any change could include "The consensus of the Charter Revision Commission is to...".

Commissioner Kotowski stated that it is important that discussions include a budget referendum because there was an overwhelming show of support for one at the CRC Public Hearing.

Chairperson Hauber noted that a budget referendum could occur under the current system of government with the appropriate change to the Charter.

Commissioner Marley suggested that the Commission discuss one major item at a time.

Commissioners discussed conducting straw voting at the next meeting to cover topics discussed during this meeting.

Chairperson Hauber announced that the topics of discussion were:

- Staggered Terms of Office for the Town Council
- Term Limits for the Town Council
- Number of Councilors needed to remove the Town Manager
- Electing the Town Council by District
- Elected Mayor or Chairperson of the Town Council
- Size of the RTM

Commissioners made a request to invite the Finance Director to the July 25, 2016 meeting to provide a presentation of the process in creating and administering the Town budget.

A motion to adjourn was made by Commissioner Aument, seconded by Commissioner Dauphinais. Chairperson Hauber adjourned the meeting at 8:26 p.m.

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Commissioner Scott Aument  
Secretary  
Approved at 00/00/2016