

**MINUTES
TOWN OF GROTON
CHARTER REVISION COMMISSION
SEPTEMBER 10, 2007
TOWN HALL ANNEX – COMMUNITY ROOM 2**

1. Members Present: Shirley Dunbar-Rose, Stan Dziurzynski, Robert Frink, Nancy Moffat, Richard Moravsik, Frank “Mick” O’Beirne, Ed Stebbins and John Wirzbicki.
Members Absent: Ray Munn
Also Present: Town Clerk Barbara Tarbox, RTM Moderator Natalie Billing, and Office Assistant Elga Concepcion.

2. The meeting was called to order at 7 p.m.

3. A motion was made by Chairman O’Beirne, seconded by members to approve the meeting minutes of **August 27, 2007**. The motion passed with seven in favor, with one abstention (Stebbins).

4. COMMUNICATIONS

a. The Chairman reported that he received correspondence in support of maintaining the Representative Town Meeting (RTM) and an email regarding communications between citizens and commission members.

b. Secretary: No report.

c. Members: Wirzbicki received an email from a Town Councilor in support of the RTM.

5. CITIZEN COMMENTS

Janice Waller-Brett, 140 Hynes Avenue, a former RTM member, is in favor of the RTM and feels that it is a good “checks and balances” system.

6. OLD BUSINESS

None.

7. NEW BUSINESS

a. **RTM Discussion:**

Moderator Billing stated that it is fortunate to have an elected body, the RTM, that is larger than the Town Council or Board of Education (BOE). She reviewed the following advantages to having an RTM: members are elected by district and more representative of that population; it is a good system of checks and balances; it is able to receive input from citizens after action is taken by the Town Council; and it is able to make informed decisions before matters go to referendum.

Responding to Chairman O’Beirne, the Moderator stated that the budget approval timeline can create a “bottleneck” for the RTM. There needs to be more time between when the Council finishes with the budget, and when the RTM starts its deliberations.

Responding to Commissioner Dunbar-Rose, the Moderator stated that she would prefer that the RTM have discretion over choosing an Assistant Moderator and added that this matter need not be included in the Charter; it is more appropriately handled in the RTM Rules.

Moderator Billing discussed the protocol of filling RTM vacancies and agrees with the current procedures in the Charter.

Responding to Commissioner Stebbins, the Moderator cited examples which do not reflect the RTM being a “rubberstamp”.

Responding to Commissioner Frink, Moderator Billing stated that it could be difficult to find the individuals needed to serve on a Board of Finance.

Responding to Commissioner Wirzbicki, Moderator Billing stated that she would support a Charter change which would enable the RTM to transfer monies between accounts as long as the Town Manager’s budget was not exceeded.

Responding to Chairman O’Beirne who asked about the present \$2,000 limit, Moderator Billing suggested that the RTM only need to authorize transfers greater than \$25,000 or possibly \$50,000.

The Chairman referred to page 12 of the Town Charter which references the Power of Initiative (Sec. 3.7). He indicated that the RTM has not exercised this power in his fourteen years of service as a Town Councilor and requested members’ feedback as to whether or not this item should remain in the Charter.

Chairman O’Beirne reported that he has received input suggesting that the Moderator be formerly established as an ex-officio member of the Town Council with or without limitations.

(A short recess was taken at 8:15 p.m.)

Commissioner Dunbar-Rose requested members’ feedback on changing “Representative Town Meeting” to “Representative Town Members” and increasing the minimum budget appropriation or transfer amount to \$5,000. She asked members what the impact would be if there was a district composed of only 500 people and it was to stand alone (either with or without representation) or be combined with another district. Dunbar-Rose provided the details of a possible scenario in the event of a budget referendum.

Responding to Commissioner Dziurynski, Moderator Billing stated that RTM members are in touch with the residents in their district, and feels that the “spirit” of the RTM is being fulfilled.

Town Clerk Tarbox shared her input based on her years of service on the RTM and reiterated that the number of RTM members could be reduced but not by a great deal. She reviewed the sizes of various districts and corresponding voter population. The Town Clerk and Chairman discussed statutes regarding minority representation and stated that she does not believe the RTM to be a “rubberstamp” for the Council.

A few of the members expressed their concern and hesitation in voting for the retention of the RTM.

MOTION

A Motion was made by the Chairman, seconded by Moffat, that **the RTM shall be retained in the Groton form of government.** The Vote on the Motion was six in favor (Dunbar-Rose,

Dziurzynski, Moffat, Chairman O'Beirne, and Stebbins), one opposed (Moravsik), and one abstention (Frink).

Commissioner Moravsik stated that he wanted to keep the possibility of a budget referendum and a Board of Finance on the table. Responding to Moravsik's comments, the Chairman clarified that the Motion to retain the RTM does not prevent a budget referendum from occurring.

Commissioner Dunbar-Rose suggested that members review State statutes related to the organization of a Board of Finance.

b. CRC contacts with Town Staff:

The Chairman verified with the Town Manager that members may contact department managers as long as they make arrangements/appointments in advance. Chairman O'Beirne added that it would be helpful if members submit their questions to Town staff before meeting with them.

The Town Clerk will provide copies of the "Code of Ordinances" and Supplements 1-5.

The Chairman reminded members to work on writing their individual sections of the Charter.

Commissioner Frink reviewed his spreadsheet which represents the budget process of nine Connecticut towns.

8. ADJOURNMENT

Motion to adjourn at 9: 10 p.m. was made by Wirzbicki, seconded by Stebbins, and so voted unanimously.

Shirley Dunbar-Rose

Secretary

Approved: September 24, 2007.