



**Town Council Charter
Workshop Meeting
January 26, 2022 at 2:00 PM
In Person and via Zoom**

MINUTES

Mayor MacFarlane called the Town Council Meeting to order at 6:00 p.m.
Mayor MacFarlane led the attendees in the Pledge of Allegiance to the Flag

ROLL CALL

Acknowledgement of Quorum

MEMBERS PRESENT:

Councilor George Lehning | Councilor Marie V Gallelli (*Virtually via Zoom*) | Councilor Rick Klein | Mayor Pro-Tem Ed Conroy | Mayor Martha MacFarlane

STAFF PRESENT:

Sean O'Keefe, Town Administrator | John Brock, Town Clerk

NEW BUSINESS

1. Discussion: **Charter Review Discussion**

Mayor MacFarlane introduced this topic and stated that the primary reason for the charter change would be to change the town's form of government to a council / manager form of government rather than the town's current form, which was a strong-mayor form of government. Town Administrator, Sean O'Keefe, recommended the process of "less is more" in terms of specificity of limitation as enumerated in the charter. Mr. O'Keefe explained that it is an ordeal to change a charter, so if something can be addressed in the future as an ordinance, resolution, or by contract, it would be better for the town to do so in that manner.

Mayor Pro-Tem Conroy suggested that the new charter would need to address: the process for dismissing a Town Manager; if the town would need a contract with the Town Manager; how new Boards are established; and how a vice (or Pro-Tem) Mayor would be chosen.

Councilor Lehning suggested that a new charter should address who would fill in for the Town Manager when they are unable to fulfill their duties.

Councilor Klein suggested that the percentage that the town is allowed to borrow should be addressed in a charter change. Mayor MacFarlane stated that she agreed with Councilor Klein, that the current restriction of 3% was too stringent to allow for things like drilling a new well. Councilor Lehning suggested removing the borrowing restriction entirely from the charter. Mayor Pro-Tem Conroy agreed with Councilor Lehning.

Councilor Gallelli suggested that, with the new charter, the town might want to select a new mayor by election rather than the current process of the Town Council selecting a mayor from the group of experienced Town Councilors.

Councilor Klein suggested that the charter's changes be limited to just changing to a council / manager form of government and eliminating the borrowing clause (debt ceiling). Mr. O'Keefe suggested that these issues should be separated when they are brought up for vote. Councilor Klein asked resident, Berniece Hower, her thoughts on the charter changes, as she had been on the previous Charter Review Committee.

Berniece Hower, 444 Bellissimo Place – Mrs. Hower stated that the draft the Councilors were reviewing has semantic issues with references to city and towns and councilors and commissioners. Also, Mrs. Hower stated that there were issues with the responsibilities between the Town Manager and Town Clerk. Mayor MacFarlane agreed and stated that the Town Clerk should remain responsible for the Town Seal, elections, and Town Public Records.

Doug Hower, 444 Bellissimo Place – Mr. Hower suggested that the process of the removal of the manager needed to be addressed. Mr. Hower also stated that the manager should not have the power to fire employees without approval of the Town Council.

Mayor MacFarlane recapped that the following would be addressed in the next version of the charter for the Town Council to review: process for dismissal of Town Manager; contract or agreement for Town Manager; putting the Mayor Pro-Tem back in the charter; not putting the voting of the mayor in; check for semantic errors (like city instead of town); and removal of section six (debt ceiling).

Town Administrator O'Keefe suggested adding verbiage to charter to make it clearer on creating future departments that would not be listed in the charter. Town Clerk Brock suggested that the town had already done that and gave the library department as an example. Also, it was stated in the current charter that Town Council could provide for future Executive Officers by Ordinance.

Mayor MacFarlane suggested that gaining public approval for removal of the debt ceiling from the charter would be a hard sale. Councilor Lehning suggested that the issue of the removal of the debt ceiling should be pushed due to a crisis in the town's water system. Councilor Gallelli suggested that Town Councilors should go door to door explaining the issues. Mayor MacFarlane suggested the town should mail out notices addressing removal of the debt ceiling.

Doug Hower, 444 Bellissimo Place – Mr. Hower suggested the removal of the debt ceiling should be written as bringing the town into municipal borrowing best practices.

Mayor MacFarlane stated that she would create a new red-lined version of the charter with changes by Thursday, February 10th and would have it sent out to Town Councilors for review.

PUBLIC COMMENTS

Any person wishing to address the Mayor and Town Council and who is not on the agenda is asked to speak their name and address. Three (3) minutes is allocated per speaker.

None


ADJOURNMENT

There being no further business to discuss, the meeting was adjourned.

The Meeting adjourned at 3:08 p.m. | **Attendees: 9**



ATTEST:



John Brock, Town Clerk



Mayor Martha MacFarlane