

MINUTES – CHARTER REVIEW COMMITTEE

Wednesday September 28, 2016 at 7:00 P.M.

Governor Winslow School Cafeteria

Present: Barbara Farnsworth, Alyssa McNamara Reed, Jonathan Grabowski, William Bowers, Don Gibson, Scott Borstel and Bruce Spittler

Excused: Dan Burke, Town Counsel Robert Galvin, Robert Marzelli and Board of Selectmen Liaison Steve Robbins

Mr. Bowers opened the meeting at 7:03 p.m. and announced that the meeting is being recorded by MCTV. Mr. Bowers gave a quick overview of the agenda for tonight's public hearing of the Charter Review questions. Mr. Bowers thanked the residents for coming to this forum and also gave a power point presentation which included the charge for the committee from the Board of Selectmen and the list of questions. Mr. Bowers then introduced vice-chair Don Gibson as the moderator for this evening and introduced the other members of the committee that were present this evening.

Mr. Gibson read question #1- *Do you think that there are any significant problems in the way Town government is currently controlled and managed? If so, do you have any suggestions as to how those problems may be corrected?*

Ms. Marti Morrison of 1030 S. River Street provided the following comments:

Ms. Morrison stated that because of the way the charter is written the Town Administrator is in a terrible position as he has a lot of responsibility yet he doesn't have the authority to accomplish what needs to be accomplished. Ms. Morrison also indicated that the Board of Selectmen should be enlarged from three to five members so that there could be subcommittees and they could get a lot more done.

Mr. Gibson noted that Ms. Morrison was not talking about any specific individuals. Mr. Gibson then asked Ms. Morrison how she felt about the type of government we have in Marshfield and whether or not she would prefer a mayor, Town Manager or Town Council and if we should keep the Board of Selectmen.

Ms. Morrison commented that she likes Town Meeting government and is not anxious to go to a mayor and she didn't know much about how a Town Council would work. Ms. Morrison then commented that she felt people in Town do not know where to go for information.

Mr. Gibson asked if anyone else had any suggestions or comments on Question#1 and Mr. Brian Wall of 38 Stagecoach Drive made the following suggestions:

Mr. Wall stated that he felt the Board of Selectmen needs to be enlarged to five members because the Town needs more voices. Mr. Wall indicated if two of the Selectmen are friends they

can push everything through. Mr. Wall also mentioned that he thought more parts of Town need to be represented. Mr. Gibson asked if he meant for all the precincts to be represented. Mr. Wall explained that he would like to see all six districts represented and one district could have two representatives. Mr. Wall suggested having either five or seven members on the Board of Selectmen rather than three.

Mr. Wall then stated he felt that there should be term limits as he felt that some people don't want to participate on committees, if they don't like the chair of the committee. Mr. Wall said that people feel their voices won't be heard and if there is more turnover, then there will be more participation. Mr. Wall also mentioned that he didn't think the Town Administrator should have more power. Mr. Wall commented that he doesn't want to eliminate elected positions.

Mr. Wall also complained that some agendas for meetings are not detailed enough and that if people were more informed, they would be more involved. Mr. Wall also mentioned that he did not think that the complete survey is posted on the Town's website and Mr. Bowers stated that they would look into it.

Mr. Gibson asked if anyone else had suggestions or comments and Ms. Kathy Sullivan of 112 Plymouth Avenue appeared before the Board and commented on the following:

Ms. Sullivan suggested that there should be volunteer handbooks for people who volunteer for committees so that they know exactly what is involved and how much time is required.

Ms. Sullivan commented that she thought there should be a five member Board of Selectmen as the Selectmen are liaisons to numerous committees and she thought it would be easier with five as opposed to three.

Ms. Sullivan also commented that she felt the Town was in trouble financially and that the Treasurer's office needs to get the work done.

Mr. Gibson asked if anyone else would like to comment and Greg Caille of 59 Canal Street appeared before the Board and provided the following comments:

Mr. Caille indicated that he had previously been on the Capital Budget Committee and the Advisory Board and mentioned that he thought it would be okay to move to a five member Board of Selectmen if it was done properly but he doesn't think the Town needs to go to a five member Board because of the open meeting law.

Mr. Caille suggested that the Town should be set up similar to the way the School Department is set up and that there should be a set chain of command and thinks they need to address structure within Town government. Mr. Caille said he could see both sides for either a three or five member Board of Selectmen.

Mr. Borstel compared the school committee, school superintendent, school principals and school councils to the Board of Selectmen, the Town Administrator and the Department Heads and asked if this was what Mr. Caille was referring to and Mr. Caille said yes, there is a need to clearly define the roles of the Board of Selectmen and the Board of Public Works as they are two different boards.

Mr. Gibson then asked if anyone had any comments and suggestion to Question # 2 - *What changes, if any, should be made to the way in which the annual and special Town Meetings are being conducted?*

Ms. Kathy Sullivan appeared before the committee and offered the following comments to Question#2:

Ms. Sullivan stated that she had been a member on a committee that revised Town Meeting rules and that they spent a year working on the process and one of the things they were concerned with was that the Special Town Meeting warrant should only include extraordinary articles and that she thinks Department Heads deliberately defer projects to the fall so that they can push their projects through with less people in attendance. Ms. Sullivan also commented that they she thought people put articles in the Special within the Annual so that they don't have to figure out what night the article will come up.

Mr. Brian Wall gave the following comments to Question #2:

Mr. Wall stated that the Charter should define what should go on the Special and that there should be more joint Advisory Board and Board of Selectmen hearings prior to the Town Meeting as well as more informational meetings ahead of time. Mr. Wall also stated that he felt the public should have the warrants even earlier.

Mr. Gibson asked Mr. Wall how he felt about representative Town Meeting and Mr. Wall commented that if there were representatives who were appointed then they would only care about what the Board of Selectmen has to say.

Ms. Caille then shared his comments on Question#2:

Mr. Caille said he thought financial reporting was extremely important and that people don't always have the correct information and that people need to get answers to questions ahead of time so they do not waste time at Town Meeting.

Mr. Gibson then asked about Question#3 – *What changes should be made, if any, in the way in which the warrants for the special and annual Town Meeting are opened, closed, and published to the citizens of Marshfield?*

Mr. Wall appeared before the committee and offered his comments:

Mr. Wall said the warrants should have dollar amounts listed and placeholders should not be allowed. Mr. Wall also suggested moving the meeting to May and that the warrants should have more defining information.

Ms. Morrison appeared before the Committee and asked whether or not the committee will be able to do what people want or if there are certain state regulations.

Mr. Bowers indicated that there are certain state limitations for the Charter form of government and once they begin their deliberations and make recommendations they will again do similar road shows.

Mr. Gibson then asked about Question #4 – *How can the charter of the Town of Marshfield be altered or amended to establish a local government and budgetary process that is responsive to the needs of the residents and taxpayers of the town?*

Mr. Greg Caille appeared before the Committee and mentioned that the Town needs to have a plan in place and accurate financial information. Mr. Caille said he would like to know where the transfers are published and what happens if there is overspending. Mr. Caille also asked about penalties for overspending, and that there needs to be a plan in place if something should happen.

Mr. Brian Wall appeared before the Committee and stated the following:

Mr. Wall said he manages a much larger budget than Marshfield and he starts working on it many months ahead of time and holds quality control meetings. Mr. Wall said he felt that there should be more accessible on-line information and that once the month is closed, the financial information should be published on-line. Mr. Wall also noted that they should outline how it should be made available to the general public.

Mr. Gibson then asked about Question#5 – *Would the creation of a more centralized government and budgetary process allow the town to more efficiently deliver services in a cost effective manner?*

Ms. Kathy Sullivan appeared before the Committee and made the following comments:

Ms. Sullivan indicated that the booklet at Town Meeting doesn't match the number on the Power point presentation and that they need to get better numbers. Ms. Sullivan also noted that placeholders are a problem for the DPW.

Mr. Caille offered the following suggestions:

Mr. Caille said someone should take over the oversight of the DPW because there is no accountability and mentioned the Chapter 90 article for the DPW to borrow money for DPW projects, getting roadwork done in the summer and the possibility of eliminating the Board of Public Works. Mr. Caille also mentioned that they could maintain a DPW Superintendent and

structure every department so that it falls under the Town Administrator or Town Manager and Board of Selectmen. Mr. Caille suggested that people read the study done by the Collins report.

Mr. Matthew McDonough of 98 Eames Way appeared before the Committee and thanked them for all the hard work they are doing. Mr. McDonough mentioned that he had previously been a member of the School Committee and the Board of Selectmen and that he has a different perspective because he has seen the challenges that the Town has and provided the following comments:

Mr. McDonough said he has worked on a three member Board of Selectmen and met with other Selectmen from other towns and found that it is not overwhelming to be on a three member Board. Mr. McDonough also explained that the Board of Selectmen is not afraid to do the hard work and that the Town has wonderful staff. Mr. McDonough indicated that Town Counsel is available to Boards to help teach them to make their agendas more detailed so the public will have more concrete ideas about money. Mr. McDonough mentioned that the Board of Selectmen is working on a policy so that there will no longer be placeholders in the warrant and no longer sums of money in the warrant. Mr. McDonough questioned the need to go from three to five Selectmen unless the Board was taking on additional responsibilities. Mr. McDonough then commented that the Town now has a Human Resource Director which will free some time up for the Town Administrator to concentrate on other issues.

Mr. Borstel asked Mr. McDonough why he preferred a three member Board of Selectmen instead of five and Mr. McDonough indicated that they can't talk to one another beforehand which means all decisions are made and discussed in public and if there were five there would be more of a chance of some members talking before meetings. Mr. McDonough then explained that they have a three year term and it gives each of them a chance to grow and set agendas.

Mr. McDonough also noted that he felt the Town needed a Finance Director because the DPW Business Manager and Town Accountant are not communicating and a Finance Director would have the final word. Mr. McDonough also stated that they need all the departments coming together and all should be held accountable.

Mr. Bowers then thanked everyone for participating in the public forums and stated that they will be meeting with other communities to see how the other Towns are working.

Mr. Bowers moved, seconded by Mr. Sptiler to adjourn the meeting at 8:40 p.m. The vote was unanimous.

Respectfully submitted,

Beverly Wiedemann

Documents and exhibits presented at this meeting were the following: Power point presentation.