

CHARTER & BYLAW REVIEW COMMITTEE

10 MECHANIC STREET BELLINGHAM, MASSACHUSETTS 02019

Charter and Bylaw Review Committee Meeting Minutes – June 14, 2023

Members In Attendance via roll call: D. Martinis, K. Grant, J. Altomonte, L. Sposato, B. O’Connell, and J. Collamati via Zoom, B. Salisbury arrived 6:05

Absent: S. Garten, J. Flannery,

Others present: B. Cornell-Smith Interim Town Administrator

The meeting was called to order at 6p by Chairman Martinis

Chairman brought to the attention of the committee that Mrs. Flannery has not attended any meetings and in the past year and half and not responded to emails.

Chairman brought those in attendance up to date on concerns raised by residents and by members.

The first order of business was to approve the meeting minutes that had been previously sent to the board. Motion made by K. Grant second by J. Collamati. Discussion by B. O’Connell, and J. Altomonte resulted in passing over the minutes waiting until the next meeting.

The next item we reviewed was to go over member concerns so that we can address them as a committee.

B. O’Connell: documentation was handed in on 5/10 only two hours before the meeting. He also felt that there should be more public input so the public can see what the committee has done.

L. Sposato; felt that just moving it to town would ultimately result in the voters not voting in favor of it. He is upset that the discussion of moving the board of health from of 3 members to 5-member board was not discussed. He explained when he uses the term significant changes, he means the volume of changes including the description of Acting Town Administrator. We discussed asking the BoH to attend a meeting to discuss.

Mrs. Altomonte asked Chairman Martinis what changed between January and May 10th that we needed to call a meeting. Chairman Martinis explained that on April 1 when we had the sudden leave of Mr. Fraine, the select board had to seek advice of our counsel and make decision for the continuation of government. It became clear that there was no procedure in for when the town administrator had to take leave without a “vacancy” in the position. There was also a need to make sure the details of the Acting Town Administrator were clearer cut. She also had a concern that the live document that we were working off was not dated. She asked if this could be done.

Chairman went through a timeline of our process for the Charter and Bylaw. Charter had been completed in July 2022 except for the discussion surrounding the board of health. We will revisit this. This is recorded in the July 11, 2022 minutes.

K. Grant suggested creating a list of action items for the board to discuss and go forward with.

B. Salisbury stated that as a board we did a lot of work and good work for a long time. We have made some good changes that he hopes are not lost while we re-examine the charter document.

J. Collamati stated that he agreed with Mr. Salisbury and that we should be moving forward and not looking back.

Chairman Martinis then opened the floor for citizen input.

M. Hennessey, Muron rd.: wanted to ask the committee to place in the minutes that Mr Raineri had some concerns. He also indicated that 4-3-1 is repeating twice when you also look at 4-2-12. We let him know that we have sent these concerns to our Town Counsel for review and opinion. He also wanted to speak in favor of having a 5 member BoH.

Mr. Simpson Valleyview rd.: He is here tonight and wanted to express that he still doesn't know why there was an argument and what the changes are.

K. Hamway Weathersfield rd.: He wants to know where each of us stands on the residency and education requirements of Town Administrator.

K Grant began by stating that she felt it very important to have both education and experience. Every other positional dept head, along with all assistants are required to have at least a bachelors if not a masters. Almost all municipalities are now requiring an MPA to even be considered. She also felt that removing the residency requirement gave the town the best chance to hire the best TA,

J. Altomonte feels that education should not have more weight than experience.

J. Collamati stated that he was in favor of a TA needing to have a minimum of a Bachelor's degree and several years of experience with no resident requirement.

B. O'Connell feels it should be a hybrid of both.

L. Sposato does agree with what others have said and looks at experience as well as education.

B. Salisbury agrees with the members but that in today's world where people work all over, we would be hard pressed to attract the best candidates if we do not remove the residency requirement and add education qualification minimums. Originally it was voted unanimously to leave the education in. Minimum qualifications do matter. Mr. Salisbury would also like to hear the town counsels' opinion. Chairman referred to the wording in the original charter. Chairman states that he has spoken to 5 different town administrators to discuss what they do. He feels that by limiting the pool to residents only, it limits the pool of candidates. He also reviewed multiple job descriptions on the MMA.org website and all require bachelor's degree in public administration and at least 3 years of municipal management experience. Town Counsel also states towns are hiring only those with education.

Pastor Baron South Main Street: asked that Mrs. Cornell-Smith state her opinion. She stated that Mr. Fraine insisted on how important education is. He has even asked that some employees who could potentially move up in the municipal sector go and take the Suffolk University Municipal program. Pastor Baron also supports the education requirement. He would also like to know if the committee will start to document the changes. Chairman did tell him that we absolutely would. Chairman will also ask town counsel to do a different method of "red lining".

B. Hall, High Street: Agrees with what everyone has said. He feels it should be a master's degree as you would be the CEO of a 70MIL business, it is absurd to lower the bar and that projects weakness.

Mr. Salisbury suggested deciding on using one version of the charter and then breaking up the discussion and issues into multiple meetings.

Additional Notes:

Member Sue Garten would like the following to read into and added into the minutes:

"Hi Don.

I am unable to attend the meeting tomorrow. There are a couple of things that I would like added to the minutes. I believe that the residency requirement should be waived. I also want to keep the requirement of a bachelor's degree for a new town administrator. I believe that any candidate should have experience in public management. Also, I would like to talk about the "added language" in more depth at a future meeting."

Additionally, resident Bill Bissonnette asked that the following be read into the minutes: "I agree with The Charter Review Committee that Article 4-1-2 Appointment Removed the requirement for the TA to reside in Bellingham. Let me share some history with your committee on the position of Town Administrator. Before we had a Charter, we had Executive Secretary position. Our first one worked for a short time and left to work in Westwood. I was on the Select Board, and we reviewed many resumes to fill the position. Denis Fraine came to the top. He lived in Boston after he was discharged from the Air Force. The rest is history. The Select Board needs to have a broad view to appoint the Town Administrator. Regards. Bill Bissonnette"

Maureen Connor: She stated that we should have wording for a relevant degree in any job posting. Mrs. Grant stated that job postings would have the added language of a public administration degree or relevant degree to position that is being posted.

Mr. Connor noted that the gray area that led the committee to the position in which we are now is the leave of Mr. Fraine. Town Counsel had noticed a flaw in our charter that needed to be corrected. He also added that the language that KP Law suggested is not specific to Bellingham but rather broad based and used by multiple municipalities.

The last order of business was to set another date for the meeting. Committee decided on Wednesday July 12 at 6p. We will be asking KP Law to have an attorney here for our meeting to discuss.

Mr. Connor suggested that we place into the minutes our timeline. Chairman has stated the timeline and cycle would be to have another meeting in August and have the charter wrapped up at that point. September would be reserved for any housekeeping items.

Motion to adjourn at 8:15p. KG/BOC

Respectfully Submitted

Kelly Grant