



Charter Commission

Administration Building
149 Main Street
Watertown, MA 02472
Phone: 617-972-6470

MINUTES

CHARTER COMMISSION MEETING TUESDAY, JANUARY 4, 2011 @ 7:00 PM RICHARD E. MASTRANGELO CHAMBER ADMINISTRATION BUILDING

Commissioners:

Mark S. Sideris,
Chair

Stephen P. Corbett
Michael Donham
John A. Donohue
Dennis J. Duff
Susan G. Falkoff
Anthony Palomba
Rhiana Kohl
Angeline B. Kounelis
Cecilia Lenk
Pamela Piantedosi
Vincent J. Piccirilli, Jr.
John J. Lawn, Jr.
David Siegel
Athelia Tilson

1. ROLL CALL: A regular meeting of the Charter Commission was called to order at 7:00 pm in the Richard E. Mastrangelo Council Chamber, Administration Building. Present for the meeting were Commissioners Stephen P. Corbett, Michael Donham, John A. Donohue, Dennis J. Duff, Susan G. Falkoff, Anthony Palomba, Rhiana Kohl, Angeline B. Kounelis, Cecilia Lenk, Pamela Piantedosi, Vincent J. Piccirilli, Jr., David Siegel and Mark S. Sideris, Chair. Commissioner Tilson was absent. Commissioner Lawn arrived shortly after the call of the roll.

2. ACCEPTANCE OF MINUTES: November 30th (Tabled) and December 14th. Commissioner Donham moved the minutes of November 30th as amended, seconded by Commissioner Duff and adopted by unanimous voice vote with Commissioners Stephen P. Corbett, Michael Donham, John A. Donohue, Dennis J. Duff, Susan G. Falkoff, Anthony Palomba, Rhiana Kohl, Angeline B. Kounelis, Cecilia Lenk, Pamela Piantedosi, Vincent J. Piccirilli, Jr., David Siegel, and Mark S. Sideris voting in the affirmative.

Commissioner Donham moved the minutes of December 14th, seconded by Commissioner Duff and adopted by unanimous voice vote with Commissioner Duff and adopted by unanimous voice vote with Commissioners Stephen P. Corbett, Michael Donham, John A. Donohue, Dennis J. Duff, Susan G. Falkoff, Anthony Palomba, Rhiana Kohl, Angeline B. Kounelis, Cecilia Lenk, Pamela Piantedosi, Vincent J. Piccirilli, Jr., David Siegel, and Mark S. Sideris voting in the affirmative.

3. Review of the Charter. The Chair stated that tonight's meeting will focus on two previously discussed articles for which further discussion is warranted. The Chair opened up discussion regarding **Article 4-2** as it pertains to the Library Board of Trustees and **Article 2** as it pertains to the Legislative Branch.

Commissioner Falkoff noted that she is at peace with the Library Board of Trustees being elected but questioned whether it makes sense to have the Board hire and fire all library employees rather than the Library Director.

Commissioner Piccirilli concurred that the Library Director should hire, supervise and fire all library employees and noted that the Massachusetts Board of Libraries recommends that the Library Director hire and fire employees.

Commissioner Duff strongly advocated for keeping the Library Board of Trustees elected but noted he sees both sides of the issue with the hiring and firing of library employees whether it lies in the hands of the Board or the Director.

Commissioner Donohue also concurred with having the Library Board of Trustees remain an elected body and in favor of having the Library Director hire, supervise and fire employees rather than the board.

Commissioner Lenk and Kounelis concurred.

Commissioner Siegel indicated that he would like to see the issue of vacancies tightened up to reduce the need for a special election.

Commissioner Lenk concurred and noted that a special election can cost the town approximately \$15,000.

Commissioner Sideris stated that he will extend this discussion and invite the Library Board of Trustees to the January 18th meeting.

The Chair opened up discussion regarding Article 2 as it pertains to the Legislative Branch.

Commissioner Piantedosi spoke in favor of four year terms for at large and district councilors and not to have the Council President serve as the 7th member of the School Committee and rather have an at large councilor or chair of the Education and School subcommittee Matters subcommittee serve instead.

Commissioner Falkoff agreed that the Council President should not automatically serve on the School Committee

Paul Fahey indicated that the provision of the Council President serving as the 7th member of the School Committee was an initial compromise between a town council/town manager form of government and a mayor. His personal view is to have the council choose who they want to serve amongst themselves.

Commissioner Falkoff suggested a language change to the Charter in which the town council selects a person to serve amongst its members.

Commissioner Donham spoke in favor a four year terms in staggered terms and having a person chosen amongst and between the town council as the 7th member of the School Committee.

Commissioner Donohue spoke in support of four year terms, staggered every two years and to take the position of Council President out of the electoral process and have the person chosen amongst his/her peers every two years.

Commissioner Piccirilli indicated that he is conflicted about changing this; noting the historical relevance and the need to avoid a power struggle amongst councilors for the position. He suggested the Commission should not rush into this lightly.

Commissioner Kounelis spoke in favor of retaining two year terms and the Council President serving on the School Committee. She read an excerpt from a letter written by a former Charter framer, John Airasian who expressed this view as well.

Commissioner Duff concurred.

Commissioner Corbett spoke in support of 4 year terms and noted that voting a person to serve on the School Committee can be divisive.

The Chair stated that it is necessary for the Commission to justify any changes to the Charter and to only address provisions in the Charter that are clearly not working.

Pat Gold, Duff Street – concurred with the Chair.

Burt Greenberg, Duff Street – also concurred stating that if the Charter is not broken, don't change it.

Commissioner Lenk stated that she is leaning towards retaining the two year terms noting that it gives councilors the opportunity to meet with their constituents more often and that four years is too long a period not to hear from your constituents.

Commissioner Falkoff agreed that there is a down side to four year terms.

4. NEW BUSINESS: The Chair reminded Commissioners that the deadline for forwarding amendments to the Clerk is Friday, January 7th.

The Chair indicated that he will invite the Library Board of Trustees to the next meeting scheduled for January 18th to discuss powers and duties; and continue discussion on the filling of vacancies.

5. ADJOURNMENT – **9:00 pm.** Commissioner Duff moved to adjourn the meeting, seconded by Commissioner Donham and adopted by unanimous voice vote with Commissioners Stephen P. Corbett, Michael Donham, John A. Donohue, Dennis J. Duff, Susan G. Falkoff, Anthony Palomba, Rhiana Kohl, Angeline B. Kounelis, Cecilia Lenk, Pamela Piantedosi, Vincent J. Piccirilli, Jr., David Siegel, John J. Lawn, Jr., and Mark S. Sideris voting in the affirmative.

The Charter minutes for January 4, 2011 were adopted by unanimous voice vote on January 18, 2011.

Mark S. Sideris, Council President