



Watertown Town Council

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

ELECTED
OFFICIALS:

Mark S. Sideris,
Council President

Vincent J. Piccirilli, Jr.,
Vice President &
District C Councilor

Caroline Bays
Councilor At Large

Anthony J. Donato,
Councilor At Large

John G. Gannon,
Councilor At Large

Anthony Palomba,
Councilor At Large

Angeline B. Kounelis,
District A Councilor

Lisa J. Feltner,
District B Councilor

MINUTES

MEETING OF THE CHARTER REVIEW COMMITTEE TUESDAY, AUGUST 3, 2021 AT 6:00 PM MEETING WILL BE LIMITED TO REMOTE PUBLIC ACCESS ONLY

ACCESS INFORMATION:

- A. The meeting will be televised through WCATV (Watertown Cable Access Television):
<http://vodwcatv.org/CablecastPublicSite/?channel=3>
- B. Public may join the virtual meeting online: <https://watertown-ma.zoom.us/j/96419264286>
- C. Public may join the virtual meeting audio only by phone: (877) 853-5257 or (888) 475-4499 (Toll Free) and enter Webinar ID: 964 1926 4286#
- D. Public may also comment through email: vpiccirilli@watertown-ma.gov

The purpose of this meeting is to discuss, consider, and act on the following:

1. Call to Order

Council President Sideris called to order a regular meeting of the Charter Review Committee at 6:02 p.m. Those present were Councilors Caroline Bays, Anthony J. Donato, Lisa J. Feltner, John G. Gannon, Angeline B. Kounelis, Anthony Palomba, Vice President Vincent J. Piccirilli, Jr., Council President Mark S. Sideris, Marcia Ciro, Anne Fitzpatrick, Jonathan Hecht, Leo Martin, and James Mello. Mr. William Oates arrived at 6:12 p.m. Also present was Michael Ward, Director of the Collins Center.

2. Review and Approval of Minutes

- A. Minutes of the Charter Review Committee – [April 6, 2021, As Revised](#)
- B. Minutes of the Charter Review Committee – [June 15, 2021](#)
- C. Minutes of the Charter Review Committee – [June 29, 2021](#)
- D. Minutes of the Charter Review Committee – [July 6, 2021](#)

Mr. Mello moved to approve the minutes of April 6, 2021, as revised, June 15, 2021, June 29, 2021, and July 6, 2021; Councilor Piccirilli seconded the motion. The motion was adopted on a roll call vote of 13 in favor and 1 as present. All members voted in the affirmative except for Ms. Fitzpatrick who voted present.

3. Discuss Feedback on Proposed Charter Changes from KP Law and the Collins Center

Mr. Ward stated that he would review the redlined version and go article by article.

Councilor Palomba stated the History should be updated to reflect that there were changes made in 1990 that should be reflected in the History.

Member Ciro questioned whether the guiding principle of safety and tranquility was to be changed to accountability and transparency. Mr. Ward stated Accountability and Transparency was an added principle. Ms. Ciro accepted that explanation.

Article I had nothing new since the last discussion. Mr. Ward suggested the sentence "For the purposes of classifying Watertown in those instances where laws of the Commonwealth may distinguish between municipalities classified as "towns" and other municipalities as "cities," it is intended that this charter shall be construed as providing a city form of government." be retained. If the vote passes the name change of Watertown as the City of Watertown, then the language would no longer be needed.

Mr. Ward stated that a definition of "Department Head" was added and is a standard definition: "Department Head – the words "department head" shall mean a person having responsibility and oversight for the operation and management of a city department." He also there was an updated definition for "Local Newspaper" to read: "Local Newspaper – The words "local newspaper" shall mean a newspaper or electronic or other media of general circulation within Watertown, with either a weekly or daily circulation Any information require to be published in a local newspaper shall also be posted in the city website."

He noted a typo that referred to the charter as the chapter and stated the definitions would be reordered to be in alphabetical order.

In Article 2, there was an edit of eliminating the word "remove" and inserting the word "move" to clarify the phrasing. In Section 2-3 Compensation, the wording was changed to make it parallel with the wording in Chapter 39 §6A of the Massachusetts General Laws to add the words "increasing or decreasing". In the language relating to public comments being responded to in Section 2-5 (v), he suggested changing the last sentence from "Any information prohibited from disclosure by the state public records law shall be exempt from this section." to read " If any information requested is prohibited from disclosure by the state public records law, the city's reply shall so state." This is intended as a clarification.

In section 2-7 (c), there was an open question as to whether consultants be included in the analysts section. This is a matter that needs resolution.

In section 2-8 (d), it was suggested to change the text from "The clerk of the council shall regularly post on a dedicated space on the city website and place on file in the city clerk's office all council votes, resolutions, ordinances, appropriation orders, and loan authorizations." to "Following each council meeting, the clerk of the council shall post on a dedicated space on the city website and place on file in the city clerk's office all council votes, resolutions, ordinances, appropriation orders, and loan authorizations."

A question was raised as to whether an organization chart should also be added. Mr. Ward understood the reasoning for wanting one but did not feel this rose to a charter level matter. It was suggested by Council President Sideris to add it to the list of matters the council will deal with separately.

In section 2-9 (a) and (b) regarding the filling of vacancies, changed the word "appoint" in each section to "elect."

The rationale for the change is that if a body is selecting a person for itself, it does so by electing the person and not by appointing that person.

Councilor Feltner indicated that a similar change should be made in 2-9 (c) and (d) as well. Councilor Palomba understood the rationale for making the word change but felt that it created confusion. The section discusses an election by the citizenry and by the Town Council. It was suggested that the changes be removed and brought up if legal counsel felt there was a need for such clarification.

Mr. Ward suggested Section 2-11 Human Rights Commission was in an unusual location and had no timeline for institution. It was suggested that the section should be added to Section 9-7 Human Rights Commission and read:

“Within eighteen months of the voters’ acceptance of this amendment, the city council shall adopt an ordinance establishing a Human Rights Commission. Such ordinance shall address the composition, terms, powers, and responsibilities of the commission.”

The rationale for changing the location is that there is no other carved out board in the legislative section; it does not relate to legislation, and a timeframe should be created. Section 9 is usually where items in transition are placed.

Some members felt that it made sense to establish a timeline because it acted as an impetus to establish the Commission in a timely manner. The specifics would help the council to frame the commission.

Councilor Bays, who suggested this change, felt the point of this section was to show its importance and preferred that it remain in 2-11; however, she was flexible as to its placement. Others agreed that it is a simple statement defining the city and it should be in prominent a prominent place to indicate its importance as a duty of the council. To move the section would bury it and deemphasize the Commission’s importance and Council’s need to create it.

Councilor Palomba moved to retain the suggested language in Section 2 with the suggested change of 24 rather than 18 months to develop the ordinance; Councilor Palomba seconded the motion.

During the discussion, it was suggested that a date certain, such as December 31, 2023, should be used. As this was not part of the motion, that suggestion needed to be delayed.

Councilor Bays suggested leaving the language in Section 2 and adding the transition information relating to the ordinance specifics in section 9. The following was suggested:

“Within 24 months of the voters’ acceptance of this amendment, the city council shall adopt an ordinance establishing a Human Rights Commission in accordance with the provisions of Section 2-11. Such ordinance shall address the composition, terms, powers, and responsibilities of the commission.”

Councilors Palomba and Piccirilli withdrew their original motions; Councilor Palomba moved to retain sentence relating to the Human Rights Commission and section 2 and add in section 9 regarding the specifics of the ordinance with the date of completion to be by June 30, 2023. The Amendment read:

“By June 30, 2023, the city council shall adopt an ordinance establishing a Human Rights Commission in accordance with the provisions of Section 2-11. Such ordinance shall address the composition, terms, powers, and responsibilities of the commission.” The motion was adopted unanimously on a roll call vote.

decided? Remains in

4. Discuss Final Edits to Proposed Charter Changes
5. Vote on Recommended Changes to Send to Council
6. Discuss Final Report
7. Vote on Final Report
8. Any Other Matters Needed to Finalize the Changes and Report
9. Review and Make Edits to Final Report Text
10. Adjournment