

**Charter Study Committee**

**Regular Meeting**

**November 17, 2011**

**Municipal Center - Room 300**

**Minutes**

**PRESENT:** Robert Cornish, Richard Drezek, Stephen Martino, Scott Saunders, Thomas Warnat, Christopher Wazorko,

**ABSENT:** Robert Berube

**STAFF:** Robert E. Lee, Town Manager, Daniel Grasso, Intern

**Guests:** Plainville Board of Education Chairman Andrea Saunders

**1. Call to Order**

The meeting was called to order at 6:39 p.m.

**2. Approval of Minutes**

*Motion to approve the minutes of the November 3 meeting, was made by Mr. Saunders.*

*Second by: Mr. Wazorko*

*All those in favor 6, Opposed 0, Motion passed unanimously*

**3. Discussion of Town Charter**

Mr. Lee distributed a draft report of the Charter Study Committee to members. The draft report summarized the history of the Charter Study Committee, the recommendations the Committee will be making to the Council and the items the Committee did not take action on.

Mr. Drezek read the section on the budget process to the audience. He pointed out that the Committee will be recommending the following proposals to improve the budget process to the Council.

- **Eliminating the all-day vote and reverting back to the Town Meeting.** The Town Meeting format allows for voters to participate in the budget discussion and to hear various points of view. It allows for people to clarify the elements of the budget. It also allows the Town Council to hear first-hand concerns of the public with respect to the proposed budget in the event that the budget is defeated.

- **Eliminate the all-day vote and allow the Town Council to set the budget.** This process is followed by three of the four towns surrounding Plainville (Southington, Bristol, New Britain). It is noted that voter turnout for the budget over the last four years has been: 2011-9%, 7%, & 5%; 2010 - 13%, 11% & 6%; 2009 – 8.1%; 2008 – 9%, 8%, & 4%.
- **Eliminate the third vote/allow Town Council to change the budget after the third vote in the event that the budget is defeated.** The flaw in the current system is that the third vote is “meaningless” as it cannot be changed in anyway after the budget is defeated. Voter participation in the third referendum has been dismal: 2011-5%, 2010-6%, 2008-4%, 2007-9%, 2006-5.5%, 2005 – 7.5%
- **Farmington “model”** -Under the Farmington Charter – only two referendum votes before the Town Council can set the budgeted amount with the stipulation that it be “lower” than the rejected budget. Requires 15% participation. The recommended budget can be amended at a Town Meeting as long as 300 persons are present and 2/3rds approve any changes up or down.
- **Glastonbury “model”** – the Town Council adopts a budget and sets the mill rate. If people are unhappy with that decision, a budget referendum petition signed by 8% of the voters must be filed within 21 days. There is a maximum of one budget referendum per year. The petition must state whether the budget should be “less” or “greater” than the one approved by the Town Council. A referendum is then held. If a majority votes “yes” and a quorum of 18% vote then the “council shall adopt...a new budget that shall be in accordance with the results of the referendum.” As long as 18% vote – the majority that votes determines whether the council must adjust “less”, “greater”, or stay as proposed.

Mr. Saunders stated that we aimed to come up with five options for the Council and we have done that. He also stated that he would like to provide the Council with more information from Glastonbury on the turnout at their referendum.

Mr. Lee stated that he would provide the turnout information in Glastonbury. Mr. Lee also said he would provide the adopted budget in Farmington and Glastonbury as well as the year to year budget increases so the Council will be able to compare to Plainville.

*Motion made by Mr. Warnat to forward the items under budget process to the Council.*

*Second by Mr. Martino*

*Pass Unanimously (6-0)*

The Committee then moved on to discuss the section in the draft report titled “Suggestions Supported by the Charter Committee.”

1. Allow for a summary of an Ordinance to be published in the newspaper after adoption (rather than the entire Ordinance).

Chapter 3-Section 8

2. Eliminate the language that P&Z shall prepare and revise annually" the Capital Improvement Plan. Chapter 5-Section 3
3. Change Dog Warden to Animal Control Officer  
Chapter 6-Section 3a
4. Simplify language regarding the health department requirements so there is no confusion with respect to having the option to participate in a regional health district. Chapter 6-Section 6
5. Add language that would combine the financial functions of the Town and the Board of Education.

*Motion made by Mr. Wazorko to accept numbers 1-4 under Suggestions Supported by the Committee.*

*Second by Cornish*

*Pass Unanimously (6-0)*

A discussion of item #5 under Suggestions Supported by the Committee Combining the BOE and Town Finance Departments followed. Mr. Warnat said that he agreed with the concept but would have liked to have heard from places where this was tried and was not successful. After some further discussion, it was pointed out that the Town and the Board of Education have a year before the Charter Revision Commission files its report. They will have time between now and then to investigate places where this hasn't worked.

Mr. Warnat again stated that he agreed with the concept and that both departments should begin to work together.

Mr. Lee stated the auditors are generally in favor of the concept of combining finance departments. He also stated that when he discussed the issue with members of the CTCMA all of them said they would like to combine their finance offices, but that they all felt that their boards of education were not willing to allow it.

*A motion was made by Mr. Martino to send Item #5 to the Council.*

*Second by Mr. Cornish*

*All those in favor 6, all those opposed 0, Motion passed.*

A discussion followed on whether to add the appointment of Constables , rather than electing them, as an item to send to the Council.

*A motion was made by Mr. Wazorko to change constables from elected positions to appointed positions.*

*Second by Mr. Cornish*



*All those in favor 6, all those opposed 0, Motion Passed unanimously*

*A motion was made by Mr. Wazorko to also appoint the Library Trustees instead of electing them.*

*Second by Mr. Warnat*

*All those in favor 6, all those opposed 0, Motion Passed*

Mr. Drezek then read the Options Not Supported by the Committee.

*Mr. Martino made a motion to accept and pass the draft report*

*Second by Mr. Saunders*

*All those in favor 6, all those opposed 0, motion passed*

The Committee then decided there was no need to hold the December 1 meeting, so the meeting was cancelled.

#### **4. Adjournment**

*Motion to adjourn: Mr. Martino*

*Second by: Mr. Wazorko*

*All those in favor 6, all those opposed 0, Motion passed.*

*Meeting adjourned at 7:30 p.m.*

\*This is the final meeting of the Charter Study Committee.

Submitted by Daniel Grasso, Intern

**RECEIVED**

NOV 29 2011

*Carole Skutty*  
TOWN CLERK