



TOWN OF NORTON CHARTER COMMISSION

Monday, September 21, 2020
7:00 P.M.

Town Clerk Date/ Time Stamp

RECEIVED
TOWN CLERK
2020 OCT 29 P 4:14

Remote Participation Only (Public Welcome):

<https://us02web.zoom.us/j/81111854783?pwd=emhGTDJaYkFHN3RCSnptTTBFeFhUZz09>

Join via Phone (one tap mobile):

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Meeting ID: 811 1185 4783

~MINUTES~

1. **Call to Order: Roll Call**

The September 21, 2020 meeting of the Charter Commission was called to order at 7:06 PM, by Ms. Laura Parker, Chair.

Members Present: Ms. Janey Goodwin, Mr. Dave Heaney, Ms. Denise Luciano, Ms. Sandy Ollerhead, Mr. Kevin Schleicher, Mr. Keith Silver, Ms. Kerry Snyder, and Mr. David Wrenn.

2. **Acceptance of prior meeting minutes**

Motion was made by Ms. Luciano to accept the minutes of September 14, 2020.

Seconded by Mr. Silver. Vote: Ms. Goodwin – yes; Mr. Heaney – yes; Ms. Luciano – yes; Ms. Ollerhead – yes; Ms. Parker – yes; Mr. Schleicher – yes; Mr. Silver – yes; Ms. Snyder – abstain; Mr. Wrenn – yes. MOTION CARRIES.

3. **Discussion of administrative items, if any**

Mr. Toole reached out to Ms. Parker to request that she attend the Norton Democratic Town Committee to discuss the recommendations of the Charter Commission. She suggested holding off until those recommendations are final so that she is not presenting potentially erroneous information.

4. **Public Comment - Open Forum**

No members of the public wished to speak.

5. **Continuation of public hearings feedback discussion**

Ms. Parker read into the record four emails from Norton residents who supported at-large councilors.

Bonnie Yezukevich wrote that her major reason for supporting at-large councilors was that with precinct councilors voters would have no say in the election of 4 of the members of the Council elected to represent them. She further stated that she feels it is the duty of all Town Council members to represent everyone in town.

Aimee Sawyer stated that she wants the best, most engaged, most willing to contribute people in this town to run for office. She wrote that if we want the best representation, it shouldn't matter that the person lives in my precinct, it should matter that they are willing to read my email, respond to my concerns and address my issues.

Mary Steele stated that there are very limited issues that affect one part of town without affecting every part of town. She believes a Town Council made up of at-large members will allow all voters to have say in all the members of the Town Council.

Jack Conway stated he feels that further restricting potential candidates based on their geographic location in town adds an unnecessary hurdle in a time when we should be encouraging as much civic engagement as possible.

Ms. Goodwin reached out to seven people who had previously expressed their support of precinct councilors. Four of those people said that this issue was not a deal-breaker for them and that they would still support the charter regardless of the choice. The other three stated that it was a deal breaker for them and one said that he would actively recruit people not to vote for the charter. The main reasons given for supporting precinct councilors were that they didn't feel that at-large would be diverse enough, they were worried about it being one group of people with the same views and opinions, and that there was nothing to prevent seven people running from one area. They also felt that it would encourage more people to run knowing that they have people within their district to support them.

Ms. Snyder continues to believe that having precinct councilors sets us up for the future as our town grows and diversifies and ensures minority voices get to be heard. She stated that she fully supports the draft charter and the work that the commission has done and is putting forward.

Mr. Heaney clarified that this decision can be revisited in the future without needing a newly elected Charter Commission. Ms. Goldberg went through a summary of the options for amending a charter.

Other members of the commission reiterated their positions and spoke about the value of revisiting this discussion. Ms. Parker asked whether anyone would like to make a motion to change the makeup of the Town Council. No motion was made.

Ms. Parker brought up an email from Andrea Downey asking why we chose to change the Housing Authority from elected to appointed and asked that the commission speak to Town Counsel. Ms. Parker assured her that the change was on the advice of Town Counsel and pointed out that the Commonwealth will consider Norton a city based on the change to a Town Council.

The following edits were made to the charter:

- Include language about the start dates for all of the elected positions other than the Town Council
- Add language to clarify how a vacancy is filled in the event of a recall
- In Section 2-5(d)(i), change "as well as the Town Accountant" to "excluding the Town Accountant"

Mr. Wrenn and Ms. Luciano asked to revisit the conversation about the start date for Town Council. They are concerned about the lame duck aspect of waiting until July 1 to start their term. The rest of the commission was comfortable with the way the current charter is presently written with regards to the Town Council start date being July 1st after an April election. Ms. Parker asked that everyone go back to re-watch the meeting on February 10th to listen to the original discussion on this topic.

6. Review of AG's opinion (with Lauren Goldberg)

Based on the Attorney General's feedback, the following edits and additions were made:

- In the absence of an appropriation for a Town Council clerk, the Town Clerk shall serve as the Council Clerk
- Change "Board of Election Commissioners" to "Board of Registrars" in section 7-3(d)

7. Updating preliminary to final report

Ms. Goldberg suggested that the final report reflect any feedback, input and change that led to revisions in the final proposed charter. She also suggested including recommendations of things that are worthy of future consideration. Ms. Parker brought up that the role of alternates was previously discussed as including in the final report.

Ms. Snyder will get the draft to the commission prior to the meeting on October 5th so that group can review it prior to that meeting. Ms. Parker will forward the final charter once she receives it from Ms. Goldberg and asks that everyone read through it one last time in advance of the next meeting.

8. Next Meeting: October 5, 2020

9. Adjournment

Motion was made by Ms. Snyder to adjourn the Charter Commission meeting at 8:58 PM. Seconded by Mr. Heaney. Vote: Ms. Goodwin – yes; Mr. Heaney – yes; Ms. Luciano – yes; Ms. Ollerhead – yes; Ms. Parker – yes; Mr. Schleicher – yes; Mr. Silver – yes; Ms. Snyder – yes; Mr. Wrenn – yes. MOTION CARRIES.

Minutes respectfully submitted by: Sandra Ollerhead

Minutes approved by the Board or Committee on: 10/5/20

Chairman Signature: Sandra L. Parker