



TOWN OF NORTON CHARTER COMMISSION

Board of Selectmen Meeting Room
Town Hall, 1st Floor

Monday, January 13, 2020
7:00 P.M.

Town Clerk Date/ Time Stamp

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2020 FEB 12 P 2:03

~MINUTES~

1. Call to Order: Roll Call, Ask / Announce Recording, Pledge of Allegiance

The January 13, 2020 meeting of the Charter Commission was called to order at 7:00 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. Public Comment – Open forum

No members of the public wished to speak.

3. Interview: Historic District Commission

Peg Dooley

- Commission's role is to keep an eye on the exteriors of the structures that are part of the Historic District
- If anyone within the Historic District wants to change anything on their property then they need to go before the commission
- Historical Commission covers anything outside of the Historic District

Nancy Federici

- Norton has a demolition delay bylaw for any building that is deemed historical which gives an additional 6-month moratorium on the demolition of the building
- Commission is currently down three seats, one of which is slated for an architect
- Have a good working relationship with Wheaton College

4. Acceptance of prior meeting minutes

A motion was made by Ms. Luciano to accept the minutes of December 30, 2019.
Seconded by Mr. Schleicher. Vote: 8-Yes; 1-Abstained (Ms. Snyder)

5. Vote on the Commission's recommendation for Legislative & Executive Branches

Motion was made by Mr. Heaney to have Town Council as the Legislative Branch of our form of government. Seconded by Ms. Snyder. Vote: Unanimous

6. Discussion and potential vote(s) of Charter elements:

a. Decisions pertaining to the Legislative Branch

The commission debated between the number of members on the Town Council as well as whether they should be elected by precinct, at large or a combination of both. Everyone felt that seven or nine would be the ideal number and they should either be all at large councilors or a combination of at large and precinct councilors (one from each precinct). The following points were raised on each of the options.

Seven Councilors

- Safer choice so that enough people want to run
- More likely to fill given participation levels in this town
- Want to have choices to make among candidates and seven would give us more choices

Nine Councilors

- Works well in terms of balance if choose three-year, staggered terms
- Downside if you have precinct councilors is that it is possible to still have a majority from a single precinct

Including Precinct Councilors

- Important that the people feel like they are going to be properly represented
- People have a contact who they can go to who is looking out for their best interests in that precinct
- Concern about having everyone from a single area running
- Want the ability to have a person representing them when a project directly affects a specific precinct
- Given the radical change we are making in the form of government, this helps people to feel that they have a voice

Only At Large Councilors

- Would like to have the best councilors we can get regardless of precinct
- Concern with precinct councilors having more uncontested races or not finding anyone from a given precinct to run
- Concern that precinct councilors will only vote for what will benefit their neighborhood versus the town as a whole
- At-large councilors are accountable to everyone in town
- Concern that 80% of the town can't vote for each of the precinct councilors

Ms. Parker offered a compromise between the at large and precinct councilors. She suggested that we place a limit so that there could be no more than two councilors being elected from any one precinct. She offered a mechanism for filling a precinct seat that does not have representation.

A final decision on the number and composition was tabled to the next meeting to give everyone more time to consider. The discussion moved to other decisions pertaining to the Legislative Branch where the following votes were taken:

- Motion was made by Mr. Schleicher to have the Town Council President chosen by the Town Councilors. Seconded by Ms. Goodwin. Vote: Unanimous
- Motion was made by Ms. Ollerhead to keep annual elections. Seconded by Mr. Heaney. Vote: Unanimous
- Motion was made by Ms. Ollerhead to have staggered terms for the Town Council. Seconded by Mr. Heaney. Vote: Unanimous
- Motion was made by Ms. Ollerhead to have a three-year term for members of the Town Council. Seconded by Mr. Heaney. Vote: Unanimous
- Motion was made by Ms. Ollerhead to have the Council President a one-year term. Seconded by Mr. Goodwin. Vote: Unanimous.

The feelings on term limits were mixed and many felt that the decision on term limits was dependent on whether there will be precinct councilors. The vote on term limits was tabled until the next meeting.

The point was made that given staggered terms, if there were a seven-member council with five precinct councilors then there would be years where you wouldn't be voting for any councilors. It was also pointed out that if there were seven members on the council then precinct councilors would not be ideal since it would mean that each person could only vote for three councilors.

b. Decisions pertaining to the Executive Branch

A brief discussion was held on the current process for hiring employees and whether department heads should be appointing those in their own departments. Discussion on the Executive Branch will be continued at the next meeting.

7. Education and public outreach ideas

Ms. Goodwin agreed to post agendas for upcoming meetings on various town Facebook groups. Ms. Parker suggested creating educational videos through Norton Media Center focused on what the commission is recommending as well as how our government currently works.

8. Adjournment

Motion to adjourn made by Ms. Luciano at 10:12 PM. Seconded by Ms. Snyder. Vote: Unanimous.

Minutes respectfully submitted by: Dandre M. Albert

Minutes approved by the Board or Committee on: 1/27/20

Chairman Signature: 