
Meeting Minutes

Natick Charter and Bylaw Review Committee

Established, 2022 Fall Annual Town Meeting

2nd Floor, Room 218 – 117 East Central Street, Natick, MA
January 31, 2023 – 7:00 PM

Call to order

A meeting of Natick Charter and Bylaw Review Committee was held at 117 East Central Street - 2nd Floor, Room 218, Natick, MA on January 31, 2023, 7:00 PM.

Attendees:

Frank Foss, Town Moderator; Ken Jenney, Natick resident

Member Attendees:

Robert Awkward, Member; Saul Beaumont, Member; Paul Griesmer, Member; William Proia, Member; Christine Weithman, Member; Donna McKenzie, Associate Member; Paul Connolly, Associate Member

Member Absentees:

Anne Continelli, Member; Harriet Merkowitz, Member

Reports/Materials reviewed

- Article 25 Establishing the Committee, as adopted by 2022 Fall Annual Town Meeting
- Natick Home Rule Charter, Revised Edition, April 2022 (includes voter approved changes through 2022)
- Draft Warrant Article to be sponsored by Committee relative to the Committee's preliminary report for 2023 Spring Annual Town Meeting
- Draft Warrant Article to be sponsored by Committee relative to the Committee's preliminary report for 2023 Spring Annual Town Meeting, and relative to the Committee retaining special counsel to assist the Committee and what sums shall be provided for such special counsel
- Email from Associate Member Connolly to the Chair suggesting certain methods to divide the Town Charter and Bylaw among Committee members to optimize review and discussion of the same
- Published meeting minutes from the Government Study Committee [established by Select Board]

Committee Business

Chair calls meeting to order in accordance with duly posted meeting notice and agenda.

- Agenda Item 1. Citizens' Concerns
 - Ken Jenney a Natick resident and proponent of ranked-choice voting appears before the Committee. Mr. Jenney briefly summarizes how ranked-choice voting operates, and how it may

benefit the Town. Mr. Jenney requests the Committee consider ranked-choice voting during its consideration of potential Charter and Bylaw revisions. The Committee generally discusses the potential financial and operational consequences of adopting such a voting methodology. The Committee requests Mr. Jenney provide some written material, through the Chair, on this topic for its review and consideration.

- Agenda Item 2. Identification of Potential Charter and or By Law Issues for Further Consideration.
 - The Committee duly elects to table this Agenda Item to a subsequent meeting.

- Agenda Item 3. Town Counsel’s Role in Assistance and Legal Advice
 - Town Moderator, as Appointing Authority, and the Chair, as the Committee’s designated liaison to Town Counsel, engage in a discussion with Town Counsel, Karis North on January 24, 2023 regarding Town Counsel’s role in assisting and advising the Committee as provided for in the Town Charter and noted Article 25. During the discussion, Town Counsel suggests that the Committee work be delayed/suspended until such time as the Government Study Committee, established by the Select Board, finish its work. Town Counsel is informed that this Committee is required by the Town Charter, and an express town meeting directive, to discharge its duties and to report to town meeting, pursuant to a definitive timeline, such that delaying its work is not practical or permissible, especially not to wait for the product of an ad hoc committee created by the Select Board, evidently without a clear provision in the Town Charter or Bylaws authorizing such an ad hoc committee. Subsequently, the Committee discusses whether Town Counsel in this context is available and able to sufficiently and properly assist and advise the Committee. See also below, Agenda Item 7, Potential Spring 2023 Warrant Article(s).

- Agenda Item 4. Review of Town Charter
 - Committee discusses various ways to organize the review and analysis of the Town Charter.

 - Committee elects, as an effective division of labor, to assign specific Town Charter articles to Members, Members to review and report their findings to the Committee; provided to achieve a comprehensive review/analysis of the Charter, the Committee as a whole should be reviewing the entire Charter.

 - The Charter articles are assigned as follows for review/comment
 - Member Connolly – Articles 4 and 6
 - Member Proia – Articles 4 and 6
 - Member Weithman – Articles 3 and 5
 - Member Beaumont – Articles 2 and 5
 - Member Awkward – Articles 2 and 3
 - Member McKenzie – Article 7
 - Member Griesmer – Article 1

- Agenda Item 5. Review of Town ByLaws
 - Committee discusses various ways to organize the review and analysis of the Town ByLaws.
 - Committee notes that certain Town ByLaws sections have analogs in Town Charter Articles. Accordingly, the Committee elects, as an effective division of labor, that Members reviewing Charter Articles that have Bylaws section analogs will also review/analyze those Bylaws sections

-Review of Town Bylaws sections with no Charter Article analogs will be further discussed at a subsequent Committee meeting

- Agenda Item 6. Interview, Input and Information Process - Town Meeting, Town Officials, Town Boards and Committees, Members of Public

-The Committee discusses the potential of soliciting input from the above sources in the context of the information gleaned from the published minutes of the Government Study Committee, which has engaged in a similar solicitation / gathering of such information.

-The Committee also discusses the experiences and solicitation methods of other bodies/committees, such as the Town Seal Committee.

-The Committee voted unanimously, after motion made by Ms. Weithman and seconded by Mr. Awkward, to authorize the Chair to speak to the Town Administrator and School Superintendent to explore the possibility of Town and School department participation in such an information gathering exercise.

- Agenda Item 7. Potential Spring 2023 Warrant Article(s)

-The Committee discusses a draft Warrant Article to be sponsored by Committee relative to the Committee's preliminary report for 2023 Spring Annual Town Meeting.

-See Agenda Item 3 relative to Town Counsel's role to sufficiently and properly assist and advise the Committee. In that regard, the Committee discusses a draft Warrant Article to be sponsored by the Committee relative to the Committee's preliminary report for 2023 Spring Annual Town Meeting, and relative to the Committee retaining special counsel to assist the Committee and what sums shall be provided for such special counsel.

-The Committee elects to consider the two draft Warrant Articles and further discuss the issue at a subsequent meeting.

- Agenda Item 8. Meeting Minutes

-N/A

Announcements

N/A

Adjournment

Motion to adjourn was duly made by Mr. Proia and seconded by Mr. Awkward, vote carried unanimously.

s/William Proia
Secretary – William Proia

February 23, 2023
Date of approval
