
Meeting Minutes

Natick Charter and Bylaw Review Committee

Established, 2022 Fall Annual Town Meeting

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

Attendees:

Frank Foss, Town Moderator; The meeting was duly posted as a hybrid Zoom meeting, no virtual attendees were present.

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 Merkwitz, Member

Reports/Materials Reviewed and/or Discussed

- Natick Home Rule Charter, Revised Edition, April 2022 (includes voter approved changes through 2022)
- Natick Town General Bylaws, certified as current by Town Clerk as of date of this meeting
- 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
- 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
 - Committee notes the hybrid Zoom meeting, that disclosure of recording of the meeting should be made in the event any remote participants are present [Member Proia], there are no remote participants

- Agenda Item 2. Review of Charter Articles and Their Respective Sections.
 - Committee considers most efficient method to review Charter as well as those analogous sections of the General Bylaw

-Review of Charter Article 1 and sections thereunder.

Member Griesmer submits the following comments regarding Charter Article 1, and respective Sections for the Committee’s consideration, and potential recommendations for amendment:

Section 1-3: Executive branch is “headed by” – ambiguity of executive branch and meaning of headed by [are there other independent administration/administrative town agencies/offices that may not fit squarely under that existing formulation, i.e. School Committee/Department, etc.]

Section 1-5: Is there a contradiction with Section 1-4, see also Sections 7-3 in this regard, Section 1-6 as well as a potential savings provision [Member Proia]

-Review of Charter Article 2 and sections thereunder.

Members Awkward and Beaumont submit the following comments regarding Charter Article 2, and respective Sections for the Committee’s consideration, and potential recommendations for amendment, other member comments are noted when applicable:

Section 2-1: Should clarify that reference is to town meeting; note “act and vote” requirement [Member Griesmer]

Section 2-3: Note duplicative sentences; matter of precincts, be sure consistent with state law [Member Griesmer], Committee notes its counsel should be tasked with reviewing / updating all the General Law citations in the Charter and General Bylaws

Section 2-4(a): Should town meeting members be permitted to hold additional elective office; should the number of town meeting members be altered in connection with difficulty raising quorum for town meeting business, or can quorum requirement be altered short of revising number of town meeting members

Section 2-4(b): Consider clarifying/simplifying town meeting member nomination process, maybe better suited for General Bylaw

Section 2-6: town meeting scheduling in context of filling town meeting vacancies, clarify how the noted caucus should be conducted [Member Griesmer]

Section 2-6(b): Process/basis for removing/recalling town meeting members for cause, potential for other measures short of removal, censure, suspension, etc.

Section 2-6(d): Notice requirement, fairness/sufficiency

Section 2-9: Powers of town meeting in relation to powers of other town agencies/bodies, see General Bylaw Section 3-10 for potential conflict [Member Griesmer]

Section 2-10(a): Definition of town agency, refer to Section 7-2

Section 2-10(c): Definition of residents, implications under state/federal law; context of who may speak at town meeting

Section 2-10: Generally this Section should be revised to function more efficiently and fairly regarding presence of town departments at town meeting sessions, clarification of town officers (see Article 7), and accommodations for residents and taxpayers [Member Griesmer]

Section 2-11(d): Punctuation issue, comma following “close”

Section 2-11(b), (c): Potential conflict with General Laws relative to zoning amendments before town meeting [Member Griesmer]

Section 2-12(c): See notes above regarding Section 2-4(a), town meeting membership and quorum, potential redefinition of quorum

Section 2-12(a): Primary concern of town meeting, broader scope for more effective town budgeting purposes, see Article 5 [Member Griesmer]

Section 2-12(d): Review town meeting noticing provisions for efficiency and flexibility [Member Griesmer, Town Moderator comments that revision would assist in that officer’s duties]

Section 2-13(e): Referendum to reverse town meeting actions, 20% voter requirement

- Agenda Item 5. 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
-The Committee discusses the noted Draft Warrant Article; Member Weithman moves to approve and submit the Draft Warrant Article for the 2023 Spring Annual Town Meeting, seconded by Member Awkward, the motion is adopted unanimously

Announcements

N/A

Adjournment

Motion to adjourn was duly made by Member Beaumont and seconded by Member Awkward; the motion was adopted unanimously.

s/William Proia
Secretary – William Proia

March 21, 2023
Date of Approval
