
Meeting Minutes

Natick Charter and Bylaw Review Committee

Established, 2022 Fall Annual Town Meeting

2nd Floor, Room 218 – 117 East Central Street, Natick, MA
May 23, 2023 7:00 PM

Call to order

A meeting of Natick Charter and Bylaw Review Committee was advertised to be held at 117 East Central Street - 2nd Floor, Room 218, Natick, MA on May 23, 2023, 7:02 PM. A quorum was present.

Public Attendees:

Frank Foss, Town Moderator

Member Attendees:

Saul Beaumont, Member; Paul Griesmer, Member; Harriet Merkowitz, Member; Christine Weithman, Member; Robert Awkward at 7:32 PM, Member; Paul Connolly at 7:08 PM, Associate Member; Donna McKenzie, Associate Member at 7:07 PM.

Member Absentees:

William Proia Member, Anne Continelli, Member

Reports/Materials Reviewed and/or discussed.

- Natick Town General Bylaws certified as current by Town Clerk as of date of this meeting.
- Financial Management Review, Division of Local Services, MA Department of Review, dated February 10, 2023, addressed to Natick Select Board, under signature of Sean R. Cronin, Senior Deputy Commissioner [DLS Review]
- Draft Committee Report to Spring 2023 Town Meeting
- RFR for Special Council

Committee Business

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

- Agenda Item 1. Citizens' Concerns
Member Weithman asked if any timing on the town governance committee report would be available with the answer potentially summer 2023.

- Agenda Item 2 RFR for Special Council. The document was sent to 5 firms: KP Law P.C.; Murphy Hesse, Toomey & Lehane, LLP; Brooks and DeRensis, P.C; Mirick O'Connell Attorneys at Law; Brennan, Recupero, Cascione, Scungio & McAllister, LLP.
-Member Griesemer mentioned that at least 3 of the firms plan a response. In the next meeting the committee will plan for interviews. The interview timeline was scheduled for June 9-23, 2023.
- Agenda Item 3. Discussion of Three methods for Changing the Town Charter; Member Griesemer shared discussions with community members who were unclear regarding the process for considering a Charter Commission. A member of the community who is a current member of the Select Board has requested signature papers to seek a Charter Commission for the town of Natick. Once the required number of signatures has been received and validated, the town would hold an election to determine if a new charter commission would create an entirely new charter. If, in a future election, the electorate votes affirmatively to create a charter commission, then the voters would simultaneously elect the charter commissioners who would write the new town charter. During this process, the Charter Commission is only required to hold one public hearing. The new charter, presented to the voters, would not be brought before the town meeting. Members are considering whether the CBRC would participate in discussions with various groups on the pros and cons of having a Charter Commission rather than use the other two methods to amend the current Natick Charter.
- Agenda Item 4. Outreach, Interview, and Information Process; CBRC members are asked to communicate with member Griesemer by Friday May 26, 2023, on the town groups they wish to seek comment from on the various by-laws that pertain to their area of government. It was discussed that some of the issues raised in the CBRC report to Town Meeting will require the use of the Special Council to follow up on items.
- By-Law Review began. The committee has covered Natick town By-Laws Articles 1-3. Moderator Frank Foss suggested considerations for the committee to bring back to fall town meeting warrant articles such as a revised size for town meeting [this matter would require special legislation in addition to passing town meeting]. Moderator Foss would provide follow-up to the committee on various towns and the size of their elected town meeting membership. With respect to Article 3 of the By-Laws, Moderator Foss suggests the committee consider re-writing section 11 Motion for the Previous Question such that an alternative process would be used by Town Meeting to 'move the question'.

Moderator Foss also suggested CBRC consider a warrant article for a By-Law change to appoint town meeting members when an insufficient number of town meeting members are elected from select precincts. The current process is inefficient and extremely time-consuming.

The town moderator also requested that the CBRC review the Precedence of Motions in Article 3 of the by-law. Several motions require a 2/3 Majority vote rather than a 2/3 Vote. The moderator and town council have discussed that this number of votes [2/3

majority] is one more vote above a 2/3 vote. Changing this number of Votes Required to a 2/3 vote would provide clarity. In this warrant article the town meeting would remove the word majority from the By-Law table.

Adjournment

Motion to adjourn was duly made by Member Merkowitz and seconded by Member Weithman, the motion was adopted unanimously.

Submitted by/



Member Christine Weithman

Originally voted 6/20/23.
Rescinded on 8/22/23. Re-voted on
8/22/23 with unanimous approval
Date of Approval