



TOWN OF MADISON
CONNECTICUT 06443

MEETING DATE:

Tuesday, March 2, 2021

MEETING PLACE:

Zoom

SUBJECT TO APPROVAL

**Charter Review Commission
Minutes**

Members Present: Joe MacDougald (Chair), Liz Daly, Matthew Gordon, Noreen Kokoruda, Robert O'Connor, David Osterman, Joan Walker

Others Present: Lauren Rhines, Town Services Coordinator / Risk Manager

The committee convened at approximately 5:04 p.m.

1. Public Comment.

Fillmore McPherson, former First Selectman and current member of the Board of Finance, stated that he had a couple of suggestions for the Committee. He stated that the current Town Charter in addition to the five elected boards the Charter specifies other separate boards and commissions and he suggested that this is archaic. For the most part, the Charter should not include all of these other commissions. Perhaps the Committee should consider which other commissions actually need to be in the Charter and which should be governed by Ordinance. He also stated that there are many monetary thresholds that might need to be updated to keep up with times; they are thresholds set almost 15 years ago. He suggested that perhaps thresholds should not be flat dollar amounts but instead perhaps they could be a percentage of the budget or on a scale that increases every 5 years due to inflation. A more contentious comment he made is that he is not in favor of a Town Manager. Madison has a great number of residents who are experienced in managing and leading and this is the pool that Madison can pull from to nominate for First Selectman. It is up to the two parties to pick a good leader and manager to run the Town. He stated that in his experience in state agencies like COG and COST, the Town Managers did not contribute meaningfully to the conversations. He added that the term for the First Selectman if we stay with the First Selectman and not a Town Manager should be kept at 2 years. The CEO needs to be answerable to the people and the First Selectman role should also follow this idea. Chairman MacDougald questioned the transition from Election Day to the First Selectman taking office and he asked if Mr. McPherson had suggestions for

ways to make this a better transition. Mr. McPherson stated that Madison is the only town he could think of that transitioned so quickly; other towns used a December or January date of transition of power. He added that whoever takes over as First Selectman probably has some familiarity with the Town already and might not have a big learning curve. Noreen Kokoruda illustrated the different constraints that the current turnover creates and she stated that this may lead to the Town missing out on prime candidates. The Committee reviewed that they could look into making the incoming First Selectman an Ex-officio member of the Board of Selectmen during the transition period. Chairman MacDougald asked Mr. McPherson to comment on the overlapping duties of the Board of Selectmen and Board of Finance. Mr. McPherson stated that the Charter gives a great financial authority to the Board of Finance, which is a good check-and-balance system. However the Committee considered that if there is a dispute between the two boards then which opinion would take precedent. The Committee reviewed that they should speak to more former First Selectman and perhaps former members of the Board of Finance to see what other opinions are available. Noreen Kokoruda suggested the Committee speak to former BOF member Bennet Pudlin. Mr. McPherson concluded that he felt that a Representative Town Meeting would not work well and he used Branford as an example of why he feels this does not work. He stated that he feels that both parties try to pull together members of the RTM that may not be well-suited to run.

2. Review and take action to approve prior meeting minutes.

MOVED by Noreen Kokoruda and seconded by Joan Walker to approve the Meeting Minutes of February 16, 2021 and the Public Hearing Minutes of February 25, 2021.

VOTE: the motion was passed with six affirmative votes; Mr. Gordon was not in attendance for the vote.

3. Review Charter process moving forward and comments of the February 25, 2021 Public Hearing.

The Committee reviewed that the comments to-date have indicated that the Committee should consider the term lengths for Selectmen, the switch to Town Manager, the mechanisms for appointing appointive boards and also the transition period for the First Selectman appointment.

Chairman MacDougald stated that the Committee should consider which other boards they should hear from. He stated that the Committee should consult with the Board of Finance and Board of Education first. He added that the Committee will review the work of the Government Studies Committee and also the documents provided by Lauren Rhines.

The Committee reviewed that they had a decent turn out at the Public Hearing and they discussed how public input might move forward.

The Committee agreed to meet on March 9th, March 23rd and March 30th going forward with consideration of potentially breaking into subcommittees. Work going forward will focus on reviewing input from defined groups, review clean-up items on the current Charter and then determine substantive changes to bring to the voters.

4. Public Comment.

Fillmore McPherson of Evarts Lane stated that the Committee should speak to the Board of Finance on the 23rd of March.

5. Adjourn.

There being no objections, the Committee adjourned at 6:07 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,
Lauren Rhines
Town Services Coordinator / Risk Manager