

Charter Review Committee Minutes

November 5, 2020; 4:00 p.m.

Virtual-WebEx - recorded and available for viewing at the following link: <http://trurotv.truro-ma.gov/CablecastPublicSite/show/4636?channel=1>

A quorum of committee members was present: Bob Panessiti, Brian Boyle, Chris Lucy, and Cheryl Best. (Committee members William Golden and Gary Palmer were absent)

Also present were: Nancy Medoff (incoming new member awaiting approval), and some members of the public.

Meeting was started at 4:02PM and Chair Panessiti invited the public to call in and gave the necessary information to do so.

Past minutes had not yet been received by Ms. Best so Mr. Panessiti resent them and approval of minutes was tabled for later.

Chair Panessiti asked Vice Chair Boyle to lead a discussion on the first item of business, a review of charter for any areas needing update. He then shared what was previously done by the CRC, such as the decision to review appointed vs. elected boards/commissions and asked members to share any thoughts they had. Mr. Panessiti then turned the item over to Mr. Boyle.

Mr. Boyle discussed the past charter review cycle and some items that had been reviewed and updated. He shared some of the history of the Charter for the newer members, sharing that it was initially reviewed infrequently with episodic large change and that a desire for regular review with incremental change led to a standing committee. Mr. Panessiti agreed and added that as a standing committee the CRC worked when there was something to work on but otherwise there was little to do. He added that educating people on governance, as suggested by member Palmer at a previous meeting, would be important particularly since the Select Board gave the committee the charge of an annual public hearing.

Mr. Panessiti then asked the new members if they had areas they wanted to discuss or if anything was unclear. Ms. Best asked about the basis for decision-making regarding elected vs. appointed committees. She added that maintaining a representational democracy in local government was often a challenge and asked what if anything in the charter helped the town to avoid issues such as undue influence, conflict of interest, concentration of power in one area of the government, etc..

Mr. Panessiti stated that the charter is not meant to be restrictive but rather broad based. He stated that it should represent the values of Truro and that it is a necessary document for the structure of governance of the town – that values filter in through policy statements of the Select Board and he gave other examples of how that is done. [At the 11/30 meeting Mr. Panessiti clarified that his intent was to say that the Town Charter is a procedural document and not a value statement.] He clarified that the main reason for rewriting the charter was to make it current to what was going on in the town, using specific examples to elucidate that point, because it had not been updated since 1995. Mr. Boyle added that it was a much cleaner document than it had previously been and gave specific examples of how that was accomplished.

Ms. Medoff asked if there was an opportunity to anticipate the future so that it would not have to be re written again in two to three years. Mr. Panessiti gave examples of administrative and organizational changes that were made to endure.

Mr. Panessiti suggested the committee keep as an ongoing agenda item – any observations of the charter for future discussion. He then moved to the next agenda item: the process to evaluate decisions regarding elected or appointed committees. He added that he had reached out to KP Law and heard back that they

were putting something together for him, so that at the next meeting he would have a broad list of committees we could take a look at, other than Cemetery and Planning Board.

He asked if anyone had gone through the framework from the Collins Center. Ms. Best shared that she had put a document together that would allow us to collect real data on all the committees and how they were aligned with the Collins criteria. She offered to email it to everyone and described the spreadsheet and its weighting of criteria. She added that some criteria were subjective and perhaps the CRC members should fill it out and then have members of the other committees to fill it out as well, which would give us interesting insight into how the committees themselves perceive their work in the town.

Mr. Panessiti discussed the timeline to get something to the Select Board, to be voted on, to get into the Warrant and said that if we evaluated them all we would not get it done in time. He shared his opinion that we had an obligation to the town to comment on the Planning Board because there is a citizen's petition on that. He stated that he felt we would be asked to give a comment and he wanted to be prepared for that. Ms. Best suggested that perhaps we could comment that we were engaged in a thorough process to review all committees and were not prepared to comment on one specific committee at the time. She did not understand why as the CRC we needed to have a comment on a citizen's petition. Mr. Panessiti said, "We don't have to but we're going to be asked and it's appropriate we have an answer." He added that since the Cemetery Board and Planning Board were voted on to go under review twice by the CRC, he would like to see us prioritize them. He asked others for their input.

Mr. Boyle clarified the time line for a spring Town Meeting, and Mr. Panessiti stated that we need to make a recommendation in print, if we had one, by the end of February if we want to get it onto the warrant. He suggested we come up with a time line for the next meeting of what we have to do. He suggested we scope down what we plan to do - agree on a process and prioritize the committees we want to look at through that process.

Ms. Best stated that she would like to include the committees being evaluated in the process if filling out the spreadsheet. Mr. Panessiti agreed and stated the Committee at two previous meetings has already agreed to this. He then asked Ms. Best to send out her spreadsheet to the CRC members, and that we should come to the next meeting prepared to discuss and approve the framework. He added that we could reach out to the committees and ask them pointed questions or to do a 360 evaluation, using our framework, or a combination of both. It was reiterated that our next meeting goal is to formalize the framework and determine what data we would like to consider.

Mr. Panessiti said he would like to go through all the criteria and discuss any questions anyone has regarding the criteria that might generate questions for the Planning or Cemetery Board..

The next meeting was decided for November 30 with a back up for December 3.

Meeting was adjourned at 4:55PM with a motion from Mr. Boyle and a second from Mr. Lucy.

Respectfully submitted



Cheryl Best
12/15/20

