



TOWN OF MADISON
CONNECTICUT
06443-2563

MEETING DATE:

Wednesday, January 14, 2015

MEETING PLACE:

Town Campus - Room A

SUBJECT TO APPROVAL

**Charter Review Committee
Special Meeting
Minutes**

Members Present: Joan Walker (Chair), Bill Gladstone, Diane Stadterman, Dotty Bavin (Vice Chair) and Deb Heinrich.

Not Present: Scott Scherban, Jim Deephouse

Others Present: Alma Carroll, Director of Town Services; Dave Anderson, Town Planner;

The subcommittee convened at approximately 6:42 p.m.

1. Public Comment.

None.

2. Review and take action on prior meeting minutes.

MOVED: by Dotty Bavin and seconded by Bill Gladstone to accept the minutes of January 9, 2015.

VOTE: This motion was approved unanimously.

3. Discuss draft language for Extended Town Meeting

Ms. Heinrich discussed that the language came from Attorney Bill Bloss who helped put official language to the Extended Town Meeting concept. She reviewed the discussion from the prior meeting and summarized that the committee agreed that they would want all town meetings called to be Extended Town Meetings and the Extended Town Meeting would be open for

four business days after the public meeting, with one of these four days being extended office hours for residents to cast their vote.

She reviewed the changes as follows:

Sec. 2.1.2 to read:

At least 10 days prior to the call to order of the meeting, there shall be notice of any Town Meeting published in a newspaper having general circulation in the Town. The Board of Selectmen shall make up the call of the meeting and publish notice thereof, listing the items of business to be considered and the times, dates and location for the extended town meeting. Where other legal notice or publication is required by this Charter or the General Statutes, it shall be published in a newspaper having general circulation in the Town.

Sec. 2.1.3

There shall be a Town Meeting moderator who shall be elected at each Town Meeting by the majority of the members present at the call to order of the Town Meeting. Duties of the moderator shall be defined by ordinance.

Sec. 2.2.4

Voting shall be allowed by all electors present at the meeting and at the Office of the Town Clerk during normal business hours provided that voting hours at the Office of the Town Clerk shall be from 6am-8pm on at least one of the four voting days as determined by the Board of Selectmen for four business days starting the first business day following the call of the meeting, as set forth in the call of the meeting. The extended town meeting shall automatically adjourn at the conclusion of that period. A recording of the initial meeting will be made available to voters. Any vote cast by a qualified elector during the period of the extended town meeting shall count toward the quorum requirements of this Chapter and whether the question(s) presented is/are carried.

Ms. Stadterman stated that this revised language was plain and simple and that the committee just needed to consider when the clock starts.

Ms. Bavin also questioned the timeline and stated that theoretically, the meeting needs to be taped and it would have to be ensured that the video runs on MCTV for the next 4 days.

Mr. Gladstone stated that the committee also wants the ability to make the video available through the Town Website.

Ms. Heinrich stated that it is very easy to take a digital recording and post it to the website within a short amount of time. She stated that she would be

concerned about having a meeting, then a gap, then opening the extended voting. She suggested that if the timeline was a concern then the voting could be extended for more than 4 business days.

Ms. Stadterman stated that in that case, the language would need to be changed.

Ms. Heinrich stated that the details would be in ordinance.

Mr. Gladstone stated that in the event of a failure of technology, the timing will be as written and it will be the responsibility of the elector to find information.

Ms. Walker suggested that the minutes, at least, would have to be available to the public the following business day from the Call of Order. She stated that the town meeting could be held and there could be an emergency that prevented the video recording of the meeting.

Ms. Stadterman stated that the minutes taken at Town Meeting currently only reference the votes cast, and Mr. Gladstone added that the minutes are published until a meeting is adjourned, so technically since the Extended Town Meeting is not being adjourned, there would not be any minutes available.

Ms. Heinrich responded that these details can be in the Ordinance and not in the Charter.

Ms. Walker stated that the committee should aim to be as transparent as possible. The language is being added to the Charter to inform the public that they may not be informed until after the Town Meeting and we need to have consideration for this in the Charter.

Mr. Gladstone stated that the language and details should be in Ordinance because they are going to change and this will give the town the ability to make revisions in the future. The committee should put as much into ordinance so that there is the flexibility to get it right.

Ms. Walker responded that the committee should still include language in the Charter which stated that the BoS is required to have documentation of the information presented at Town Meeting, the very next business day. She felt that this requirement should be in the Charter, not in the Ordinance.

Ms. Stadterman stated that if the language is added to the Charter then the committee would have to also define what "documentation" means. The committee discussed requiring a transcription of the Town Meeting to be published, and the limits of this means of communication.

Herb Gram of Boston Post Road stated that he would find it impossible for people to go to a vote subsequent to the meeting that they missed without having the details of what was discussed.

Ms. Walker added that during the meeting there is more debate that goes on with the public than is what is listed on the call of the meeting.

Ms. Heinrich questioned if the committee wanted to put this in the Charter as ten years from now, we may have some new kind of technology which may render current technology obsolete.

Ms. Walker suggested that language be added that said “a synopsis of the discussion will be published” and the details of how it is published should be in the ordinance.

Ms. Stadterman stated that the committee should include the call of the meeting in the Charter but it is imperative to include the information availability in the Ordinance. That way, there is more flexibility in its use and wording, and in the ability to make changes.

Ms. Heinrich suggested again adding “a synopsis of the meeting will be available”.

Ms. Stadterman cautioned that a synopsis depends on how someone writes it. It can be open to interpretation, whereas a recording has no bias.

Ms. Walker stated that the onus is on the BOS to ensure that the recording is out there.

Ms. Stadterman suggested adding language to state that a recording will be made available during the extended voting period, with the details of how the recording will be made available in the Ordinance.

Mr. Gladstone expressed concern about a technology fail and stated that there needs to be more flexibility in case technology fails us.

Ms. Bavin added that when someone takes minutes there is always their interpretation of the events. She suggested that if video recording fails, the meeting can be recorded via tape recorder.

Ms. Walker responded that the word “recording” means digital, video, written, etc. and that there are many ways to “record” a meeting. The committee should still make sure that there is someone at the meeting doing the typing and the videography. Then in the ordinance, the committee can detail what “recording” means and the want for video recording.

The committee agreed that they were okay with this inclusion.

4. Public Comment.

Anne Pember of Warpas Road stated that in reading through the Extended Town Meeting documents, the impression she had is that the town does not receive adequate public participation. She stated that she was concerned about whether the voting extension would improve participation and also was concerned about the voting during business hours because many residents work during the day.

Ms. Heinrich stated that she was hoping that the presentation the committee prepared for the Public Hearing would address these concerns, and she also noted that the white paper regarding the Extended Town Meeting had changed since its distribution to the public.

Ms. Walker then asked if anyone else had a comment that they would like to add to this discussion. She clarified for those present that the committee had chosen to hold a meeting and the Public Hearing in the same evening. She noted that on January 9th the committee had met and had decided that an additional meeting was needed to review the language for the Extended Town Meeting concept. Since the meeting was held within less than 30 days from the date it was called, it was considered a Special Meeting and therefore the agenda could not be opened to include more topics. She also informed the public present that each Charter Review Committee meeting opens and closes with public comment, and the committee welcomes comment throughout the meeting as well. She urged those present to come to any of the future meetings. She also stated that detailed meeting minutes as well as the list of review items the committee has addressed are published on the town website. As well, the committee will be publishing their suggested changes in a red-lined version of the current 2006 Charter and a clean version of the proposed 2015 Charter.

5. Adjourn

There being no objections, Chairwoman Joan Walker adjourned the meeting at 7:15 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Lauren Rhines
Recording Secretary