



TOWN OF MADISON  
CONNECTICUT 06443

**MEETING DATE:**

Tuesday, April 20, 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  
Ira Bloom, Attorney  
Peter Gelderman, Attorney

The committee convened at approximately 5:02 p.m.

**1. Public Comment.**

Bob Hubbard of the Ad Hoc Government Study Committee stated that speaking to the work of this prior committee, the Town Manager was given detailed consideration and a lot of the discussion led to the majority of these members to reject the concept of a Town Manager for a variety of reasons. He stated that there are towns that have moved away from Town Manager throughout the state and country with one concern being that the Town Manager moves away from a representative form of government. He stated that he has heard sound arguments for the Town Manager but his biggest concern is that moving away from a representative form of government is perilous for the future of the Town as this is the cornerstone of Madison's government. He also stated that removing an ineffective Town Manager is costly and requires legal intervention. At the end of the day, having the CEO be the person accountable to the voters is important. Mr. Hubbard also stated that the two-year term for First Selectman is very aggressive. He stated that he understands that there are pros and cons to this term length but it is difficult to get a clear optic on the performance of the First Selectman with a two-year term length. He added that it is not healthy to remove the voice of

the people and that "this is how socialism starts." He stated that the Town should probably increase the salary of the First Selectman and increase the term length.

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 April 6, 2021.

VOTE: the motion was passed unanimously.

3. Review Charter document and questions with Town Counsel, Ira Bloom and Peter Gelderman.

Attorney Bloom stated that there are small issues and bigger issues within the Charter and some of the major concerns are what to do about the CEO position (Town Manager versus First Selectman). He stated that it did seem the Town Manager would be a radical step forward, and instead the Commission might consider extending the First Selectman term to four years. Another bigger issue to address is what to do about Town Meetings and limit the number to an annual Town Budget Meeting instead of several Town Meetings throughout the year. There are also discrepancies regarding the number of signatures for a petition to Town Meeting which should be addressed. And also the quorum limits for Town Meetings should be looked at. The Board of Finance seats 6 members but an odd number membership might be better for the Town. Chairman MacDougald asked if there was a way to assess the dollar threshold amount for Town Meeting and Attorney Bloom stated that he didn't know if there was a standard amongst other towns but it was important to consider what would or wouldn't hamper the efficient running of town government. Attorney Gelderman stated that the Town Meeting form of government would also influence the need to move to Town Meeting for appropriations.

Joan Walker asked if thresholds were ever established to be representative of a percentage of the budget; and the Attorneys stated that they have only seen a fixed dollar amount included in the Charter. Ms. Walker also asked if there any appointive boards or commissions that are necessary to include in the Charter. Attorney Bloom stated that it is appropriate but he wasn't sure if it was necessary or mandated.

Noreen Kokoruda questioned whether the four-year term for First Selectman would dictate a four-year term for all other Selectmen and also whether the terms should be staggered. Attorney Bloom stated that the term lengths and staggered terms varies amongst other towns and also other towns have smaller Boards of Selectmen. Attorney Bloom stated that there would be benefit into looking into what other Towns do with their executive board terms.

Ms. Kokoruda also brought forward the idea of the Town Administrator or similar position and Attorney Bloom stated that other Towns do employ a similar position and that this is different than a Town Manager or Town Manager form of government. New Canaan for instance has an Administrative Officer or Official established within their Charter. Also, Weston has a Town Administrator and a First Selectman.

David Osterman asked if it was common for a "losing" First Selectman candidate to be elected to the Board of Selectmen and Attorney Bloom stated that it seems common practice for the "loser" to be on the Board at large.

Robert O'Connor asked for clarity regarding the "Legislative Body" and Attorney Gelderman stated that this term is established for purposes of identifying the budget authority for the Town, which is the voters, not the Board of Selectmen. The Committee reviewed how to reduce the number of Town Meetings and also ensure that the meetings held are impactful.

Chairman MacDougald asked the Committee members to draft lists of their questions or suggestions for the Charter and then asked the Attorneys to answer whether the Administrator or other same-type position needs to be included in the Charter; and also if the Town Manager position or change needs to be in the Charter and how/what would that language look like. The Committee reviewed that including language that allowed for a Town Manager in the future might be confusing for the general public. Overall the Committee will need to determine best steps forward to maintain or establish where day-to-day authority lives and how.

Matthew Gordon questioned if there was a big difference between the Town Manager and Town Administrator and whether the Administrator would solve the issues in Town. The Committee reviewed that there is a lack of continuity which has been brought forward by staff.

As a general overview, Attorney Bloom stated that his recommendations are to establish 4-year terms for the First Selectmen, a Town Administrator or similar and to reduce the number of Town Meetings.

Mr. O'Connor stated that he understood the Administrator to be more of a Chief Operating Officer; both this and the Town Manager are meant to be bipartisan and professional, but the Manager has more administrative power to move ahead and administer town initiatives (eg. appointing the Chief of Police). In Weston, for example, this role is called the Operations Director. The Committee reviewed again they would need to review the Administrator role and what parts of this would need to be included in the Charter. Attorney Gelderman also highlighted an alternate way to establish a Town Manager in State Statutes 7-98 whereby the Board of Finance would recommend the

establishment of the position to the Board of Selectmen and the position would be established for a term of at least 3 years. Attorney Gelderman was not advocating for this path but he wanted the Committee to be aware that this mechanism does exist.

Some other items the group considered was compensation for the Board of Selectmen and what items regarding compensation need to be included in the Charter. Also, the Committee asked the Attorneys to review the powers of the Board of Finance and the balance between the powers and roles of the Board of Selectmen and Board of Finance.

**4. Review and take action to approve prior meeting minutes.**

MOVED by Matthew Gordon and seconded by Liz Daly to approve the Meeting Minutes of March 30, 2021.

VOTE: the motion was passed with five affirmative votes and one abstention from Ms. Kokoruda; Ms. Walker was not in attendance for this motion.

**5. Public Comment.**

None.

**6. Adjourn.**

There being no objections, the Committee adjourned at 6:35 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,  
Lauren Rhines  
Town Services Coordinator / Risk Manager