

The eighteenth meeting of the Uxbridge Charter Review Committee, held on a Zoom platform, was called to order by Chair Patrick Stephan at 6:39 PM, Monday, March 15, 2021.

REC'D UXB TOWN CLERK
2021 MAY 11 PM 12:27

Members Present: Patrick Stephan, Chairman; Ray Talke, Clerk; including Committee Members: Atty. Rob Knapik, Dr. Joann Lindenmayer, Ron Parsons and Melissa Desmarais.

Members Absent: Chief Jeff Lourie, Michael Potaski and Barry Desruisseaux.

Participating remotely from office: Donna C. Hardy, Assistant

Open Public Forum: Ms. Hardy was the only individual present for Citizens' Forum.

OLD BUSINESS:

Meeting Minutes: The meeting minutes will be postponed for discussion to the next meeting on April 5, 2021.

Input from the Community:

Dr. Lindenmayer received comments about the topic of a separate Water and Sewer Commission from an Uxbridge resident who wishes to remain anonymous. The Committee discussed that some of the comments related to budgetary expenses and should be addressed by the BoS. However, the overriding issue is whether a Water and Sewer Commission, should it be established, would have policy-making authority.

NEW BUSINESS:

Deliberation of topics – Board of Selectmen:

Chairman Stephan suggested having a discussion about changing the name of the Board of Selectmen based on comments from several interviewees and members of the Committee. The Committee was generally in favor of changing the name to "Select Board" with further discussion and input related to how to refer to individuals on a Select Board.

Deliberation of topics – Elections:

During the interviews, Ms. Franz recommended that the number of signatures in the second step of the removal process of a Town Manager should be changed from 20% to 10% of our voters from the prior May Town Election and allow thirty (30) days for

these signatures to be gathered rather than two (2) weeks. The timeframe to gather recall petition signatures should be extended. A recall petition should have a lower threshold than currently exists. The committee members had differences of opinion as to whether the Charter language should be changed or left as-is. It was suggested that the verbiage in the Charter should be changed from “qualified voters” to “registered voters”.

Deliberation of topics - Finance Committee:

During the interviews, there was a discussion about the number of members on the Finance Committee and if the advisory role of that Committee should be limited to finance topics and if vetting of non-financial topics could be allowed.

There was further discussion about whether some members of the Finance Committee should be appointed and the others should be elected, as stated in the current Charter. Mr. Maharay, Town Moderator, recommended some options in his interview with the Committee. Deliberations will continue about this issue regarding membership of boards and committees in town.

Some Finance Committees in surrounding towns do not deal with non-finance or non-budget articles; however, the Uxbridge Finance Committee does make a comment for each article presented before them. A request to change the verbiage from “shall recommend” to “may recommend” could be applied to individual Articles reviewed by the Finance Committee.

It was suggested that members of the Finance Committee should be familiar with town budgetary/financial concerns.

Deliberation of topics - Town Meeting:

During the interviews, there were comments about other forms of legislative power, quorums to be considered. More communication methods should be required and time frames for meetings indicated in the Charter should be changed. Additional discussion suggested that the town should be prepared to make the Town Meeting more widely available, considering virtual remote participation, for example. Participation at the Town Meeting has been dwindling and having it expanded in other ways may increase attendance. Also, the date change for the next Town Meeting to a Saturday may still bring up issues related participation, but it addresses some interview comments about weeknight meetings.

Call to Action: Chair Stephan will review the Town Bylaws and the Town Charter about meetings.

MOTION to adjourn by Dr. Lindenmayer and seconded by Ms. Desmarais. Motion carried 6-0-0. The meeting adjourned at approximately 8:30 PM.

Respectfully submitted,

Donna C. Hardy, Uxbridge Charter Review Committee Assistant

