

Received 5/29/2024
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Tonya Hogan, TC

MIDDLEFIELD CHARTER REVISION COMMISSION
405 Main Street
Middlefield, Connecticut 06455

Minutes of the May 21, 2024 Special Meeting

Members

| | | | |
|---|--------------------|---|-----------------|
| X | Lowry, David | A | Skelps, Michael |
| X | Malcolm, Alice | X | Twombly, Ken |
| A | Neidhardt, Peter | | |
| X | Poturnicki, Robert | | |

A=Absent
X=Present

Bob Yamartino, First Selectman, and Jim Irish, Selectman, were present at the meeting.

Call to Order

Bob Yamartino called the meeting to order at 7:00 PM and reviewed the agenda.

Dave Lowry made a motion, seconded by Rob Poturnicki, to approve the agenda, as presented. Motion carried unanimously.

Pledge of Allegiance

The Pledge of Allegiance was recited.

Charge of the Charter Revision Commission

Bob Yamartino read the charge into the record. "The Middlefield Board of Selectmen give charge to the Charter Revision Commission on this day, May 21, 2024. The charge of the commission: Commission members were chosen based on two Democrats, two Republicans and two Unaffiliated voters. It is the desire of the Board of Selectmen that you, the commission, review all recommendations of the prior Charter Revision Commission, select from those previously recommended changes those you feel deserve reconsideration by the voters and then, after careful thought, respectful debate and delivered considerations, bring forward a revised Town Charter for adoption

by the town's legislative body at a general election. The Board of Selectmen also expects recommendations for changes to the Town Code where such changes will bring the code into agreement with the charter and/or proposed charter revisions. As the commission conducts its due diligence, there were issues the Board of Selectmen requested by considered and endorses the recommendations of the prior board as it pertains to succession of the First Selectman in the event that the office is vacated prior to the end of term. This should include process, timing of replacement as well as party affiliation. Provisions for the periodic review of the charter and/or codes and process for revision, the Town Charter was first adopted in '71. It has been amended five times since adoption. The last time the charter was amended was in 1991, 20 years after adoption, 30 years ago. Having not been modified in well over a quarter of a century for various reasons, the commission should enshrine a periodic review of the charter. Charter review amendment should include the make-up of the commission, the manner of appointment and the timing such that the adoption of changes coincide with an election in November. The importance of your charge here tonight can't be overstated. Quoting from the existing charter, section 103 General Grant of Powers, in addition to all powers granted to towns under the Constitution and General Statutes of the State of Connecticut, the town shall have all powers specifically granted by this charter and all powers fairly implied in or incident to the powers expressly granted and all other powers incident to the management of the property, government and affairs of the town. Careful consideration of the expected changes, as well as the unexpected impact of your actions, should be carefully weighed. I hope you conduct your review in a timely fashion and wish you good speed."

Mr. Yamartino reviewed that this charge is not very different from the last. He noted that there will need to be a public hearing at the beginning of the process and reviewed that the scope is only discussion of items from the prior Charter Revision Commission. He noted that they dropped the review of elected positions as the Board of Selectmen is not necessarily in favor of bringing those back. Mr. Yamartino added that another public hearing will be held after the commission's final report, the Board of Selectmen review the report and hold a public hearing, after approval.

Election of Officers

Alice Malcolm nominated Michael Skelps for chairman of the commission. Ken Twombly volunteered to chair the commission.

Dave Lowry nominated Ken Twombly as chairman of the commission, seconded by Rob Poturnicki. Nomination carried, with Ken Twombly abstaining.

Rob Poturnicki nominated Dave Lowry as vice-chairman of the commission, seconded by Alice Malcolm. Nomination carried.

Dave Lowry nominated Alice Malcolm as secretary of the commission, seconded by Rob Poturnicki. Nomination carried.

Discussion

a. Regular meetings and public hearing schedule

Dave Lowry asked if the town would be willing to get some lawn signs for the Charter Revision public hearing and Bob Yamartino agreed to do that. Mr. Yamartino added that if the commission sets the date for the public hearing, it could also be included in the newsletter that goes out in the first week of June. There was discussion about how many people showed up at the public hearing about the charter revision last time.

Dave Lowry made a motion, seconded by Ken Twombly, to hold a public hearing, followed by a Charter Revision Commission meeting on June 4, 2024 at 6:30 PM in the Senior Center room. Motion carried unanimously.

Bob Yamartino noted that he will have Judi Rand do all the proper postings and notifications as well as signs. It was agreed that the hearing and meeting will be in-person and via Zoom.

Ken Twombly had written an article to go into the newsletter and felt that they only lost by four votes because of one item. Rob Poturnicki noted that he knew that Ann Olszewski was concerned about what would happen when Bob Yamartino was no longer First Selectman. They agreed that the commission will not even address those issues.

The commission agreed to work with the most recent version of the charter, dated May 2023, leaving the grammatical changes as they are. Ken Twombly endorsed removing term limits for boards and commissions and the extension of the 30-day rule for replacing a member of the Board of Selectmen. The third question was defeated by only four votes and Mr. Twombly felt that it was because people didn't know about it. Dave Lowry felt that the other major change would be the amount of dollars spent requiring a Town Meeting. He wasn't sure that people understand that concept, though someone did add a budget line item at the Town Meeting this year.

Jim Irish noted that information needs to be in to the Secretary of State in September for the November ballot. Everyone agreed to have it completed by the first week of August, but felt they would be done before that. Bob Yamartino added that they will send out another newsletter right after Labor Day which would be the last one before the election. Jim Irish encouraged the commission to think about when and where information should be available throughout the process, including a sample ballot. Mr. Yamartino reminded everyone that it all has to be out in early October because of early voting.

Adjournment

Rob Poturnicki made a motion, seconded by Ken Twombly, to adjourn the meeting. Motion carried unanimously.

The meeting was adjourned at 7:45 pm.

Respectfully submitted,

Debi Waz

Debi Waz
Alwaz First