CHARTER REVIEW COMMITTEE
Meeting Minutes

For the Meeting Held On : June 25, 2015
Meeting Time : 6:30 pm

Location : Council on Aging – Media Room
Address : 328 North Main Street, East Longmeadow, MA

Meeting Posted On… (48 hrs required) **Day:** Friday **Date:** 05 / 26 / 2015

Is Meeting Being Recorded by Digital Recorder: Yes X No
The Minutes of this Meeting are being taken by: Marge Larocca

Committee Members: (check if attended)

Dawn Starks	✓	Russell Denver	✓	William Fonseca		George Kingston	✓
Larry Levine	✓	Eric Madison	✓	Raymond Miller	✓	Tom O'Connor	✓
Ralph Page	✓						

Attendees: Marge Larocca

Did the Chair release any prior Executive Session Minutes?

Yes		No	x

Dates of Executive Session Released :

TOPIC / MATTER #1
Consultant

Summary of Matter Discussed :

- The Chair opened the meeting and asked if everyone read the proposal from the second consultant. Mr. Levine stated that he contacted Lauren Goldberg of Kopelman and Paige with questions in order to compare their proposal to the Collins Center proposal. Mr. Levine stated that Kopelman and Paige would write the final draft of the charter and followed with a description of differences in both proposals. Mr. Levine stated that he has no experience with either vendor, the cost is similar, and if Kopelman and Paige were to be selected by the Commission then two other proposals would have to be obtained. He added that this didn't apply to the Collins Center as they are exempt under the procurement statute.
- Mr. Madison stated that he felt the proposal from Kopelman & Paige was a great bio of the firm and its people, and that the proposal from the Collins Center laid out a structured progressive format.
- The Chairman stated that the Charter Commission's $25,000 reserve fund transfer request was presented at the last Appropriations Committee Meeting. She stated that the total for the Charter Commission's budget is $30,000, and to keep this in mind regarding the consultant. Mr. Miller spoke about the cost of the consultant that was used by the previous Charter Commission, and gave a description of the meeting schedule.
- Mr. Page stated that because the Collins Center office was a closer location then this would cut down on travel time. Discussion followed about the proposal from Kopelman & Paige. Mr. O'Connor noted that if Kopelman & Paige were selected then the process will

have to go out to bid and would result in having to take the lowest bidder. Mr. Miller stated that having to do that would take some time and that the Collins Center is committed to a shorter timeframe.

- Mr. Denver stated that he agreed with most of what was said that he sees the need to expedite the process. The Chairman stated that the Collins Center has had a profound effect on the competition and Mr. Page stated that he read the charters that were sent by Kopelman & Paige and was impressed with the quality of work presented.
- Mr. Madison made a motion to authorize the Chairman to enter into a contract with the Collins Center as the Charter Commissions' consultant. The motion was seconded. Discussion followed about making the motion contingent upon references. The motion was amended making it contingent upon satisfactory review of references by the Charter Commission Chairman. Discussion followed. The vote for the amendment was as follows: 1 opposed & 7 in favor. The vote for the original motion, as amended, is as follows: 1 opposed & 7 in favor.

Documents or Exhibits for this Matter:

- Collins Center Memo-Chart of Municipalities

Votes Taken Under this Matter :

- Mr. Madison made a motion to authorize the Chairman to enter into a contract with the Collins Center as the Charter Commissions' consultant. The motion was seconded. Discussion followed about making the motion contingent upon references. The motion was amended making it contingent upon satisfactory review of references by the Charter Commission Chairman. Discussion followed. The vote for the amendment was as follows: 1 opposed & 7 in favor. The vote for the original motion, as amended, is as follows: 1 opposed & 7 in favor.

TOPIC / MATTER #2
Internal Interviews

Summary of Matter Discussed :

- The Chairman stated that all the internal interviews aren't completed but the Commission can start some discussions and from those discussions they develop some broad objectives that everyone can agree on.
- The Chairman spoke about meeting with the appointed boards and committees, and the elected boards yet to be interviewed. She stated the main goal of the internal interviews is to identify strengths and weaknesses of the current form of government as well as what do they see structurally that would help in the future. She stated that the interviews with department heads were very forthcoming and helpful and that the interviews were not meant to be interrogations. They were meant to be conversations and the ones she attended were very conversational, and very interesting and enlightening.
- The Chairman asked that during the discussion of interviews with department heads that the names of department heads not be used and to give general information and general themes. She added that as the interviews with the elected boards were conducted in open meetings, the restriction doesn't apply.
- The Discussion began and the Commission members shared the information received **Department interviews** *(not listed in order of priority):*
    1. Communication – lack of
    2. Ability for Dept. heads to hire staff
    3. De-centralized government
    4. Want to have timely decisions

5. Inconsistent grading of employees
6. Micro-managing departments by Board of Selectmen
7. Current Board of Selectmen members acting independently-inappropriate execution of power
8. Dept. heads would like to present their own dept. budget
9. To have some of the appointed instead of elected
10. Concerns of union negotiations-BOS has control of neg. & doesn't consult
11. Need for Human Resources/HR structure, person or dept.
12. Inconsistency of Board of Selectmen liaisons
13. Disruptive & no continuity difficult to move through a multi-year project
14. Dept. reports to one board, & another board believes they should report to them
15. Who's the supervising board? Unclear chain of command, overlap of jurisdictions
16. Everything has huge negative impact on employee morale
17. Dept. head advocating one central authority (mayor, town admin. Etc.)
18. $56,000,000 business essentially operating on a mom & pop type of structure
19. On-camera interviews do not add value, losing quality candidates
20. Lack of long-term planning-decentralized
21. Concern over appointed boards wasting time of dept. head
22. Board was a good sounding board, there is a lack of knowledge of the people on that board, education of elected board members for overall management of that dept.
23. When dept. heads "mess-up", boss don't know it. When dept. head needs attention of the board, they don't get assistance
24. Poor timely access to legal counsel advice
25. Good communication among dept. heads for the most part. No team building-lack of communication between dept. heads
26. No team building- lack of communication between dept. head
27. Dept. head meetings not useful
28. The name "Town Administrator" is not followed in East Longmeadow. The position is not defined & only has as much power as the Board of Selectmen gives
29. Budget process feedback before deadlines with boards
30. Not one "go-to" person to make a decision – tied into de-centralization

- **Board interviews:** *(not listed in order of priority):*
  1. Assessors-board works well together & liked being elected.
  2. Focus on structure.
- Mr. Madison spoke about information he received that shows the attendance for elections and town meetings and commented that the low attendance percentages are glaring. He then spoke about a group of residents that attended a meeting of the DPW. They had voiced their displeasure with the maintenance of the athletic fields, and were told to go to another town department for it. The residents were frustrated and there was no resolution for them. The Chairman agreed that the residents' frustration is high and that they have to structurally make a path for resolution. Mr. Madison stated that it goes back to decentralization. Mr. Page stated that the residents don't know who to go to and there is lack of communication between town government and residents. He added that there is a need to be a customer based government.
- 3. Decentralization creates frustration for town, difficult for people to navigate town departments

  4. Communication issue between Board of Selectmen & Board of Assessors

  5. No centralized person or board to resolve conflicts-there has to be one entity to build the team

6. Boards are self-selected, lack of citizen interest
7. Appointees on boards/committees/commissions have no knowledge & there are many open positions

- Discussion followed about appointing of commissions and committees, and it was noted that there is a need to make people aware of the open positions.
- 8. Appointing is better to select qualified people rather than electing
  9. Structural issue – Dept. heads work for more than one board
- The Chairman asked for comments about the Legislative body.
  10. Comment from one board was-you can pack meeting & you do not get timely responses
  11. Other form of government would be better informed & respond quickly
  12. Difficult to deal with budgets
  13. Town Meeting schedule is difficult to get things done. There is at least 6 months between opportunities to get things done.
  14. Timing of elections & town meetings
  15. Trying to conduct business. Business moves faster than our government
  16. Disappointment in the "Fiefdom" of boards & departments
- Discussion followed about the aspects of town meeting, things that could be lost or kept, and it was noted that it is a New England Tradition. It was stated that Boards do like the current form of government but department heads and residents do not.
  17. No level of trust between boards
  18. Run Town by one representative from each elected board
  19. Lack of communication means no long term goals
- The General Objectives – Keys that were assembled from the list: *(not listed in order of priority):*
  1. Communication & Cooperation
  2. Timely decision making
  3. Authority & accountability
  4. Organization of departments
  5. Centralization of government
  6. Appointed vs. elected

Documents or Exhibits for this Matter:

- None

Votes Taken Under this Matter :

- None

TOPIC / MATTER #3
External Interviews

Summary of Matter Discussed :

- The Chairman spoke about setting up external interviews with pertinent individuals and with towns comparable with East Longmeadow. Seven similar communities were selected for the interviews and members of the Commission were assigned to set up appointments to meet with their Chief Administrator and an elected person to discuss the structure of their government.

Documents or Exhibits for this Matter:

- None

Votes Taken Under this Matter :

- None

TOPIC / MATTER #4
Calendar

Summary of Matter Discussed :

- The Chairman spoke about a letter that was received from the State regarding deadlines for the Charter Commission, and gave a description of the tasks that need to be completed and the dates that they need to be completed.
- Discussion followed about the meeting calendar and the possibility of meeting weekly instead of bi-weekly to meet deadlines.

Documents or Exhibits for this Matter:

- None

Votes Taken Under this Matter :

- None

TOPIC / MATTER #5
Meeting Minutes

Summary of Matter Discussed :

- The Meeting Minutes of June 11, 2015 were reviewed. A motion was made to approve the minutes. The motion was seconded. Discussion followed and it was motioned to amend the minutes to add the word "elected" before the word boards in the third bullet of Topic #1 and to add the words "to him" to the last sentence of the fourth bullet in Topic #3. Mr. Kingston abstained from the vote, and all others were in favor.

Documents or Exhibits for this Matter:

- Charter Review Commission Meeting Minutes – June 11, 2015

Votes Taken Under this Matter :

- The Meeting Minutes of June 11, 2015 were reviewed. A motion was made to approve the minutes. The motion was seconded. Discussion followed and it was motioned to amend the minutes to add the word "elected" before the word boards in the third bullet of Topic #1 and to add the words "to him" to the last sentence of the fourth bullet in Topic #3. Mr. Kingston abstained from the vote, and all others were in favor.

8:13 PM: Motion to Adjourn

Next Meeting: July 9, 2015 – 6:30PM – 328 North Main St. – Media Room

MEETING FOLLOW UP:
Draw up bios for Charter webpage
Write monthly updates for webpage - *George*
October 15, 2015 – date for Public Hearing

PRIOR MEETING NOTES:
Set up meetings with surrounding communities