

WINDHAM CHARTER REVISION COMMISSION

WINDHAM TOWN HALL MEETING ROOM

THURSDAY, SEPTEMBER 12, 2013 7:00 PM

Respectfully submitted by Jessica Niles clerk of the Town Charter Commission.

Attendees: Erika Haynes, Pricilla Root, Doug Lary, Jan-Maya Schold, Barbara McGrath

1. Call to order: Erika Haynes called the meeting to order at 7:08pm.
2. Citizens and Delegations (3 minutes, related to Charter, Commissioners may ask questions or seek clarification): None
3. Discussion and Possible Action to
 - a. Approve Minutes for July 25, 2013- Barbara McGrath made a motion to approve the minutes, seconded by Priscilla Root- (a list of corrections to be made): motion passed (2 abstentions: Jan-Maya Schold and Barbara McGrath).
 - b. Approve Minutes for August 22, 2013- Barbara McGrath made a motion to approve the minutes, seconded by Jan-Maya Schold: (list of corrections to be made): motion passes (1 abstention- Jan-Maya Schold).
4. Commissioner discussion and possible action related to:
 - Board of finance, single finance department, and other finance related issues: Erika Haynes would like everyone to state their impressions and then their hopes. Doug Lary started by saying he enjoyed having Lynne Ide; he felt she was a good source of information and he was able to ask a very important question (is the structure correct?).

Jan-Maya Schold stated two issues came up if the Board of Finance would be dissolved. The first being: the Town Council is not really getting the information in a timely manner (therefore making the Town Council rush with their answers). The second issue is the board of Finance is trying to set policy in a way and then you move this financial function to the Town Council which gives them: line item veto, policy and bottom line veto- all of this responsibility in one body.

Barbara McGrath stated whenever you are making a financial decision you are exercising policy. There are two ways to address policy and they are structure from governance or structure from management. Barbara McGrath stated she would like to move away from the Board of Finance; currently the respective boards come up with

their budgets and expect the Board of Finance to get them passed. The Town Council had to be the ones to say the voters do not like this; right now the Board of Finance is left to figure things out. Barbara McGrath feels if we keep the Board of Finance then do not put the budget out to referendum. Jan-Maya Schold asked if people feel we are putting too much on volunteers. Also do you think we could impose a reasonable schedule? Pricilla Root responded by saying no. Erika Haynes stated she would hope the Town Council would be more responsible and postpone things they did not feel comfortable voting on. Board of Finance should not have line item veto but a dollar amount; the departments should have to figure out where the cuts will come from. Pricilla Root said it has been done time and time again, it was considered setting policy and the issues need to be separated.

Jan-Maya Schold made a motion to request that Kevin Donohue's suggestion to ensure the continued existence of the Board of Finance in the charter is guaranteed, seconded by Barbara McGrath; it was determined that language would be developed with attorney Cody; the language previously developed was more of a vision but not we are past the vision states; motion passed (unanimous).

Pricilla Root stated we are talking political stuff- Board of Finance has never set to assume to set program policy. It also depends on how you define setting policy. Pricilla Root could not imagine a subcommittee that would be able to put the time and effort into getting an appropriate budget out to the voters. She stated the people do not care who but they do care about the money; she did a straw poll and people were horrified. She also stated if it will be put into the charter then its needs to be separate. Jan-Maya Schold asked if they felt the board could and should take on the functions of the Board of Finance. Barbara McGrath responded by saying once the higher level of financial management is developed then yes. She feels the amount of work will not be so overwhelming once things are set up properly and in addition maybe giving the Town Manager more responsibility. Jan-Maya Schold stated that Kevin Donohue mentioned it would be two years before munis are up and running. Jan-Maya Schold made a motion that in addition to enshrining the Department of Finance in the charter but also asking attorney Cody and Neil Beets what kind of stop gap will be put in to allow the Board of

Finance and Town Council to collectively vote for referendum to dissolve Board of Finance at the end of five years. Pricilla Root wants the Department of Finance up and running before dissolving the Board of Finance. Rephrase of the motion: *authorize the chair to pursue language development with attorney Cody that would achieve a five year referendum where the Town Council and Board of Finance would dissolve the Board of Finance.* The

next charter then would have information as to why it did not happen: what issues arose and what steps to take next. Brief discussion was held on having people attend mandatory trainings. Doug Lary mentioned no one addressed the function of the Board of Finance- they take two distinct budgets and have to decide which one gets shaved down; he does not see how the Town Council would be unbiased. Barbara McGrath mentioned that the Board of Education should take care of the Board of Education budget and the Town Council should take care of the Town Council budget: the individuals on those boards will learn how it all works. Jan-Maya Schold brought up another issue which is the Board of Finance has control over the Willimantic Service District. The Willimantic Service District does not have its own staff, currently the Board of Finance reviews the budget and that is not the way it should be. Discussion took place on how the language may impact other areas of the charter: chapter 10. In addition what would the structure look like after the referendum? Doug Lary questioned what the Board of Education was not included in on this talk? Jan-Maya Schold *amended the motion to include the Board of Education. Motion was seconded by Barbara McGrath, motion passed unanimously.*

Doug Lary questioned starting the budget in the other direction: set the mill rate and then decide who. You could have multiple choice questions: too high, too low or what mill rate would you support? Barbara McGrath responded by saying the challenge is if the Town Council identifies a major initiative and it is critical (could have massive benefits) then you want to sell it to the people for the dollar increase rather than taking from the set dollar amount. Discussion took place on how money is received from all different places which affect the budget: pilot money, casinos, state, etc.

5. Commissioner Discussion and possible action related to:

- Elector vs. voter terminology in Charter: Priscilla Root stated she thinks the issue should be tabled until all parties are here. Doug Lary stated he feels there may be four types of voters: resident voter, property owning voter, voter who is not able in some but in others and people who reside in a different town but have property in this town. Jan-Maya Schold stated she had asked for the topic to come off the agenda; she typed up replacement language which she had been asked to do. If you want a 3rd and 4th type of voter then that is completely different. Erika Haynes stated the topic would be moved to the first meeting in October.

6. Future Agenda Items (timelines and topics to be reviewed/discussed/alterd with commissioners – Chair’s proposals below)

- ****Future Vacancy on Charter Revision Commission****- Erika is trying clarify with the Mayor when the end date will be.
- September 26 – Guest: Dr. Adamowski regarding Board of Ed – in Town Hall Auditorium- Jan-Maya Schold asked what Dr. Adamowski will be presenting on? There was also a question regarding if the meeting will be considered a special meeting seeing the location was moved- do not believe so only things that may make special meetings it time change and date change.
- Priscilla Root stated she feels all the housekeeping issues should be put together; so those items could get taken care of. - Discussion was held.
- Erika has not updated the Town Council yet and will wait until the new Town Council is elected
- Doug Lary stated he liked the way the voting went tonight and would like the agendas to have focus tools.

7. Citizens and Delegations (3 minutes, related to Charter, Commissioners may ask

questions or seek clarification): Bernard D'auteuil (Walnut Street, Willimantic): He stated he felt it was good the charter commission was looking to get rid of the Board of Finance. He brought up the topic of the hot potato (five hundred thousand dollar issue). He stated a lot of politics are involving shoving things in people’s faces. He also brought up the topic of regionalization.

Henry Crane (Windham Street, Willimantic): Berlin gave a job description for the Director of Finance where the position you cannot spend money that is not there. You first need to certify the need then have the money and finally are able to spend it. He feels you can mandate these steps. Henry pointed out that Neil Beets had set a budget of 0% and was aiming for that but ended up going past it some; but the goal was to stay close to 0%.

8. Adjournment: Barbara McGrath made a motion to adjourn, seconded by Doug Lary: motion passed.

Meeting adjourned at 8:45pm

DRAFT