

WINDHAM CHARTER REVISION COMMISSION

WINDHAM TOWN HALL MEETING ROOM

THURSDAY, JANUARY 9, 2014 7:00 PM

Minutes submitted by Jessica Niles, Clerk of Town Charter Revision Commission

Attendance: Jan-Maya Schold, Doug Lary, Dennis O'Brien, Victor Rayhall, Chuck Pennewill, Pam Shorey

1. Mayor: Call to order- Mayor Ernie Eldridge called the meeting to order at 7pm.
2. Commissioner vote for election of
 - a. Chair- Jan-Maya Schold moved to elect Dennis O'Brien chair, seconded by Pam Shorey, motion passed (1 Opposed: Doug Lary). Dennis questioned when the deadline is. He stated we need to be more focused and move forward fast.
 - b. Vice-chair- Jan-Maya Schold moved to make Doug Lary vice chair, seconded by Chuck Pennewill: motion passed unanimous.
3. Citizens and Delegations (3 minutes, related to Charter, Commissioners may ask questions or seek clarification). Jean-De Smet (chair of the Energy Commission) would like the commission to add language which would allow a municipal electric utility to be formed (handout was given to commissioners). Jan-Maya Schold asked if it would be more practical to put wording into the charter. Jean responded by saying yes: this is a big step in the right direction. Dennis O'Brien questioned if Norwich/Bozrah had anything written in their charters. Jean responded in the affirmative regarding Norwich. Henry Crane (Windham Street) would like to see the Mayor continue to set the agenda for the Council- if people are not happy with the agenda then the Mayor can be voted out.
4. Discussion and Possible Action to Approve Minutes for December 19, 2013: Victor Rayhall made a motion to accept the minutes, seconded by Chuck Pennewill- a few minor changes to be made. Motion passed (1 abstention: Pam Shorey).

Deadline- Doug Lary found paperwork from the Town Council- start date was March 19th 2013. Dennis O'Brien located another item stating the termination date of this commission is June 30th 2014. Discussion took place regarding meeting dates and how the schedule is only set until May so any meeting after that may have to be a special meeting. Ms. Schold said there are a lot of issues left to discuss (relationship between Town Manager and Mayor) and a big thing is to clean up the document to make it easier to read. Dennis O'Brien noted two new members and asked like them to introduce

themselves and why they joined the Commission. Pam Shorey has been on a previous Charter Revision Commission, used to work for the Chronicle and became familiar with the government of Windham. She was clerk of the Probate Court for many years. Victor Rayhall has been involved with the town for over 40 years; he has served on several boards and commissions as well as being a selectman at one time. He has lived in the town for about 80 years and he feels the charter needs to be revised correctly.

5. Commissioner Discussion and possible action related to:

- a. Budget planning process: Jan-Maya Schold stated the regarding appointment it is very convoluted: the content does not need to change but it needs to be moved (pg. 13). Doug Lary stated the main reason for the proposed changes is to have to the Board of Finance and the Town Council ask questions simultaneously. The process should be done together to help save time and so the two bodies can learn together. Jan-Maya Schold stated that it had been brought up that “what if they don’t want to meet together?” Her response is that it is written in the charter; therefore they would have to. Discussion took place regarding which term to use when describing the two boards forming one (consolidation, merger, working in concert). The charge from the Town Council was reviewed. O’Brien feels item number 3 regarding makeup of the Board of Ed lacks support on this commission. Ex-chair Erika Haynes had a strong opinion in favor of change on the issue.
- b. Phase-in of Board of Finance phase-out- (Doug Lary handed out version three)- Doug Lary explained what he has been working on. There is still a need for district representation but as the number gets smaller it gets harder for the representation. Doug Lary stated he had thrown some at large seats in but then took them back out. Pam Shorey questioned why they would narrow it down to so few people. Doug Lary responded by saying it may be a lot of work for those people. Jan-Maya Schold mentioned that the commissioners had not had a complete and full discussion on the end result. She noted that if you reduce the number of members to 10 for both boards combined you would not have to go with any at large positions. Jan-Maya Schold made a motion to stop the decline in number of members resulting from merger of the Town Council and Board of Finance to 10 members. Doug Lary mentioned that in 2019 everyone would be

new to that role. Chuck Pennewill questioned where are the checks and balances? Jan-Maya Schold stated that according to information from Barbara McGrath that by the Town Council passing off the budget they are not taking responsibility. The function of the budget is currently split, the Town Council wants to pass policy and they can without worrying about where the money is coming from while the Board of Finance is forced to make policy in order to take the money from somewhere. Doug Lary mentioned that the referendum is part of the check and balances. Chuck Pennewill stated the Town Council does not have an interest in the budget except at budget time. Jan-Maya Schold stated that we now have a Finance Director and he is involved in all the budgets and it would be his job to get all these people organized. Doug Lary noted that in one of the original drafts it was a much deeper “Y” but the wanted to make sure he had an influence as to how it happens. Victor Rayhall stated you have to be careful with these changes; the people in the Windhams will not want this. The Schold motion died for a lack of a second. Discussion took place regarding the Town Manager being the CEO for both the Town and the Service Districts. Jan-Maya stated the Town Council should be able to spell out the executive powers of the Town Manager. Dennis O’Brien stated service districts are set up to pay for certain expenses. Jan-Maya Schold mentioned the district should consider pushing the issue of reimbursement for mutual aid. Dennis O’Brien likes having only one person in charge of executive functions. Schold opined that as CEO of both the town and the Willimantic Service District the town manager has a conflict of interest. She and Doug Lary believe that the Town owes the Willimantic SD lots of money which the town manager does not pursue because he has a conflict.

6. Future Agenda Items : Read both Jan-Maya Schold’s and Doug Lary’s handouts.
7. Citizens and Delegations (3 minutes, related to Charter, Commissioners may ask questions or seek clarification): None
8. Adjournment: Chuck Pennewill made a motion to adjourn, seconded by Doug Lary: Motion passed, and meeting adjourned at 9:05pm