

**WINDHAM CHARTER REVISION COMMISSION**

**WINDHAM HIGH SCHOOL MEDIA CENTER**

**THURSDAY, JULY 25, 2013 7:00 PM**

**Respectfully submitted by Jessica Niles Clerk of Charter Revision Commission**

**Attendees: Erika Haynes, Doug Lary, Donna Nicolino, Dennis O'Brien**

1. Call to order: Erika Haynes called the meeting to order at 7:15pm.
2. Citizens and Delegations (3 minutes, related to Charter, Commissioners may ask questions or seek clarification): James Flores: James brought up the topic of the right to petition in the charter as he has previously brought up in the past, Erika Haynes responded with you cannot use the right to petition for the charter but can use it to petition for an ordinance. Discussion was brought up regarding the fact the town was technically consolidated by previous statutes no longer in place. James Flores stated he feels the mayor should be appointed. Discussion took place regarding how these charter changes will not be for this November election but November election of 2014.

Mary-Lou Devivo (Ash Street) - she would like to see one police force for the entire town and feels it would need to be presented as a separate issue to the voters.

3. Discussion and Possible Action to Approve Minutes for July 11, 2013: Doug Lary made a motion to approve the minutes, seconded by Donna Nicolino: two changes to be made: (too>took) and (cease> ceased). Dennis O'Brien stated Jessica Niles was doing a good job with the minutes. Doug Lary stated he was impressed with the minutes and likes the idea of being able to go back and see what is happening. Motion passed
4. Commissioner discussion and possible action related to:
  - Vision and goals related to the charter, Board of finance, single finance department, and other finance related issues, Role of mayor, town manager, and town council, Priorities and approach for commission.

Erika Haynes stated every meeting we come back to the topic of being philosophical and it feels like everything is of the same priority but we need to begin to move forward.

Erika asked everyone to think of what are we trying to achieve and what is the goal.

Doug Lary handed out a paper with his vision and goals (see attachment a): Doug Lary would like to have the discussion regarding the wards/districts, he would like to look into alternates (elected and appointed boards), we do not need all the language

regarding Board of Selectmen. Doug Lary stated we should be able to get to vote on the issues they keep bringing up and there should be more than one issue on the ballot.

Dennis O'Brien- he disagrees with opening everything up to the voters, when we have a Town Council we elect; he would like to change all elected positions to two year terms, he feels there are too many cooks and they sometimes spoil the brew. Dennis O'Brien stated there are too many boards which results in too many opinions; he feels we need strong leadership in the Town Hall. Dennis O'Brien stated the government needs to be streamlined: accountable and able to listen to everyone but decide what is best for the town. He agrees with the idea of appointing the Mayor. Dennis O'Brien wanted to respond to a comment made last meeting by Jan-Maya Schold regarding the Board of Selectmen: her statement was not true the Board of Selectmen was not responsible for the day to day running of the town. We have one executive and that is the Town Manager, the Mayor is ceremonial and sets policy but he is not an administrator. Dennis O'Brien's goal would be to simplify government and make the terms two years to hold people more accountable. He also stated he agrees with the notion of a Special Master but is not sure if it is the correct person. He feels that education is the biggest problem and in addition Main Street needs to be adapted to host a college atmosphere.

Donna Nicolino- she stated we have been given a set of tasks to look at from both the Town Council and Attorney Cody. She is interested in looking at the police department topic, Board of Finance and Department of Finance, voting by wards (this is intriguing and she is interested in the pros and cons), alternates. Donna Nicolino agrees with bringing items to the voters but when it's practical, in addition the bigger issues should be dealt with first.

Erika Haynes- would like to create a navigable document- increase involvement and facilitate people getting involved. She would like to address the issues from the Town Council first and ensure to get others in for those meetings. Erika Haynes stated there are clear charges regarding the finance (Single Finance Department) and Water Pollution Control. Single Finance Department- How far can you extend the boundaries, does it merit articulation in the charter and what is the role of the treasurer (Town Clerk) Dennis O'Brien stated the previous charter commission had developed some language regarding the finance department and this commission may want to take a look at that.

Doug Lary stated the current language allows for Planning and Zoning to combine; maybe we should use similar language for other areas. Dennis O'Brien stated the functions of the Board of Finance would be performed by the Town Council. It was recommended that the Board of Finance line item authority be extinguished; the referendum would be one check and there does not need to be a lot of checks. It was mentioned that Barbara McGrath was on the board of Finance, Lynn Ide is coming in and Pricilla Root has been on the Board of Finance. Doug Lary brought up that the check by the Board of Finance is interesting, there is inconsistency based on district representation. He questioned which of the two models is correct, he also questioned how there is district representation on the Town Council but not anywhere else. Dennis O'Brien stated most are elected town wide and not by districts. He would like to look at the role of Mayor, Town Council and then the Town Manager; simplified, ease of government and clarification of power. Doug Lary we should think of what is the Town Council: figure out the role and make up. The power to the Town Council should be money and the power to the Town Manager is the ability to hire and fire. Donna Nicolino stated the mayor should be looked at first because it keeps coming up and there is a lot of confusion regarding this position. Dennis O'Brien offered to look into the Mansfield Charter regarding the Town Manager and Mayor. He stated the Town Council has a lot power in Mansfield, Town Manager does the day to day stuff and the check on this position is through the hiring and firing process. Discussion was held regarding the attachment from the Leagues of Cities; Doug Lary felt the language was clear.

Dennis O'Brien stated that in response to the Board of Education question and having a partial appointed board the answer is: it has been done and can be done. There is a home rule act provision that authorizes us to have a relative unconventional Board of Education.

5. Future Agenda Items (timelines and topics to be reviewed/discussed/altered with commissioners – Chair's proposals below): Erika Haynes will be gone for the month of August. Donna Nicolino will be leaving us: they are looking to fill the position: application is online, see Doug Lary or go to the Mayor if interested. Erika Haynes stated Donna has done a great job and her perspective is valued.

- \*\*Future Vacancy on Charter Revision Commission\*\*

- August 1 – Discussion and possible action regarding Finance Department and Board of Finance as articulated in Charter: discussion to include Blum Shapiro Report, Job Description of Finance Department Head, and reflecting discussion of July 25; Discussion and possible action regarding the definitions of elector & voter
  - August 22 – Guest: Lynne Ide, Chair of Board of Finance; Discussion and possible action related to Board of Finance, Single Finance Department and position of treasurer; Discussion and possible action related to technical charter issues, especially the issue of Town Council being given all the powers afforded in the CGS;
  - September 12 – Revisit and recap progress and goals (Commissioner Discussion), shaping of Fall Agendas; Mayor, Town Manager, Town Council
  - September 26 – Possible Guest: Dr. Adamowski regarding Board of Ed
6. Citizens and Delegations (3 minutes, related to Charter, Commissioners may ask questions or seek clarification): James Flores: in the past compromise has always equaled fiasco. He feels the issues worked on should be number 1 the police department going out into the Windhams. Number 2: eliminate the Board of Finance and let the Town Council absorb the responsibilities. Erika Haynes responded by saying we are legally bound to address issues from the Town Council and then will move on to the other issues.

Bernard **D'auteuil** (Walnut street, Willimantic): Bernard asked if there would be something in the charter in regards to regionalization. He brought up the topic of other towns having issues with the dispatchers and the towns want a say on the board. He also asked if the attorney has looked into this or identified a section where it may fit in. Dennis O'Brien stated he felt there were too many towns and it does not make sense to have 169 towns in the state.

Doug Lary (Public comment)- as former chair of the ethics commission he feels a regional ethics commission would be great, that way people who do not live there can hear the issues it would be a better standoffish approach. He also stated all commissions are limited to electors.

7. Adjournment: Doug Lary made a motion to adjourn, seconded by Dennis O'Brien, motion passed. Meeting adjourned at 8:50pm.

#### Attachment A: Vision and Goals from Doug Lary

Consider the benefits (regions represented) and disadvantages (lack of minority party representation) or wards or district representation. Currently we have 2 districts of unequal scale and unequal taxation. But only the Town Council is split by districts, and NOT BOE or BOF. Is this appropriate (if one is split, why not all three?) – Or should all be at large? Concerned that districts or wards are introduced the larger party/parties could dominate all elected seats. If the districts should be represented, how do we make the ratio of people or voters per elected official similar in the districts (see earlier (Mayor discussion) chart of how many elected from each district would match with what % distribution across 2 districts) (reapportionment at V-10).

Service Districts Chapter IX – Two doesn't seem to make a happy town. Is the solution *several, two, or one*?

Use alternates much more for both appointed and elected roles where more than one person holds the same seat (e.g. all but Mayor). Zoning Board of Appeals has alternates – why not the TC, BOF, BOE? Alternates build skills, maintain quorums, and could replace all or most of the page for party based replacements. (III-7). Why should the parties or Mayor pick replacements when the voters could approve alternates in advance during the election. <Suggest also permit elected alternates to also hold alternate roles on appointed commissions but not two full roles.>

Much of the language deals with change from one form (BPOS) to another (TC). Do we need that cluttering language going forward?