

Windham Charter Revision Commission

Windham High School Media Center

Thursday August 22nd 2013 7:00pm

Minutes respectfully submitted by Jessica Niles Clerk of Charter Revision Commission

Attendee: Donna Nicolino, Jan-Maya Schold, Douglas Lary, Pricilla Root, Dennis O'Brien (7:10pm), guest speaker Lynne Ide

1. Call to order: Donna Nicolino called the meeting to order at 7:04pm.
2. Citizens and Delegations (3 minutes, related to Charter, Commissioners may ask questions or seek clarification): Diane Perkins- applied to be part of the commission.

Mary-Lou Devivio- she would like to see the police expanded out into the Windhams. With three elementary schools out there we need more protection.

3. Discussion and Possible Action to Approve Minutes for July 25, 2013: Jan-Maya Schold made a motion to hold the approval of the minutes to the next meeting, seconded by Doug Lary: motion passed.

4. Discussion with Lynne Ide, Chair of Board of Finance- Lynne Ide stated that she wanted everyone to understand that anything she speaks of tonight is her own opinion and does not reflect what others on the Board of Finance think. She reported that she has served on the Board of Selectman and has been on the Board of Finance for two years with two years left to go. Since serving on the Board of Finance she has a much greater appreciation for the things they address. 1. Audit: involves the financial function of the town. For several years the town has been behind on the audit but they are working to fix the problem. Lynne Ide feels the two parts could come together but there still needs to be a body to look at it; it will be interesting when it comes to consolidating. She stated that interviews were conducted for the position of the Director of Finance- this person will need to be very skilled; part of the job will be breaking us into the changes. Lynne Ide feels the Board of Finance will play a unique role in helping move the changes along. Jan-Maya Schold stated the position of Director of Finance is new to us, what do you think of having a Finance Director? Lynne Ide responded by saying she thinks it is great. Jan-Maya Schold asked how much time she spends working on the Board of Finance. Lynne Ide responded by saying as chair she has had to communicate with all the different sections (5 entities) and this takes a lot of phone calls and emails. The Board of Finance meets once a month generally but during budget season there are town hearings, other meetings; she guessed she spends about 6 hours a month talking to people and attending the meetings. Lynne Ide stated the audit process has been very painful; weekly conference calls etc., once the new system is in there should be clear information readily available. Donna Nicolino asked what steps need to be taken to ensure a smooth rollover? Lynne Ide responded by saying she could not outline that on the spot but it would take several people, and the committee could look at other towns to see how it works for them. Douglas Lary questioned if she felt the Board of Finance needed different skills or a different focus? Lynne Ide responded by saying a little bit of both, going into the position she did not have a lot of financial background but she has been in charge of organizations and leading the way. Priscilla Root asked how the Board of Finance was a policy making board: the response to that was it depends on how you define policy. Lynne Ide stated the Board of Finance should not be wading into making decisions about programs: how material is taught or specifics.

Discussion took place regarding the reading program. Dennis O'Brien stated the Board of Finance is impacting policy, Jan-Maya Schold stated impacting is different from making. Discussion took place regarding not many towns having a sitting Town Council and Board of Finance being vital to smaller towns. Jan-Maya Schold stated often the Town Council is presented with material and then asked to vote on it shortly after; she feels the Council gets overwhelmed. Lynne Ide stated that anyone on the Council has the right to slow things down and control the pace of what is happening at meetings. Pricilla Root stated that when she was on the Board of Finance they would spend 4-6 hours a week; she feels there needs to be a forceful and vibrant subcommittee if the job is going to be done right. Lynne Ide stated there are different ways for it to be done properly; you have to try hard to make sure you get the appropriate information and the voters are informed. Jan-Maya Schold would like to see it put into the charter that in five years the Board of finance and Town Council will collectively vote to disband the Board of Finance. Lynne Ide stated you cannot to put something in the charter to make two sections vote; it would have to go through the voters. Jan-Maya Schold asked if there should be a transitional period. Lynne Ide responded that she had not thought of that but does not think it is unreasonable. Dennis O'Brien pointed out you are not getting rid of the function; it is hard to bind a future committee. He feels you should 1st vote to tentatively eliminate the line item vote of the Board of Finance. Discussion took place on the topic of putting line item and policy makers all in one basket? Douglas Lary had several topics/questions: right number of members on boards/commissions, duration of terms and should terms be staggered, Town Council has district representation but Board of Finance does not- opinions on that, Board of Education should they be appointed or elected, Board of Finance should they be elected or appointed? Lynne Ide responded by saying you do not need to be a financial superstar but instead care about the community, have common sense and be able to listen to different perspectives. She feels appointed boards do not really help because it removes them from accountability. Lynne Ide stated having a budget referendum before legislature is done is absolutely crazy-this year they held out on the mill rate until the state was done. She does not feel there needs to be district representation and she feels staggered terms are good (you do not want everyone running at once). Lynne Ide stated that boards or commission should have 5-7 members on them. The downside of having a Board of Finance is for some people it is double duty- you have to talk before the Board of education, then the Board of Finance and then a town meeting. Jan-Maya Schold questioned if they could hold joint meetings during budget season? Lynne Ide responded by saying sometimes the chair doesn't want to do that or the two sides do not want to do that. Jan-Maya Schold stated she thought it would be good to hear input from all the different components. Brief discussion regarding the Natchaug roof and the way it was carried out. Jan-Maya Schold asked what Lynne thought about monetary amounts to spend and having to get approval. Lynne Ide responded by saying it is good to have a ceiling, the comptroller has been given guidelines when it comes to allowing moving of money. The current board has been loose regarding what is moving around but they are asking for monthly reports.

5. Discussion and possible action regarding Finance Dept. and Board of Finance as articulated in the Charter: discussion to include Blum Shapiro Report, Job Description of Finance Dept. Head, and reflecting discussion of July 25: Pricilla Root asked if we should include the Department of Finance. Donna Nicolino stated we should put language in which allows it. Jan-Maya Schold mentioned that Kevin Donohue wanted language added to help prevent it from being forgotten. Doug Lary wanted to table the topic and limit the scope. Jan-Maya Schold stated the report they had received from Blum and

Shapiro should not be used, that is for the Town Council. Dennis O'Brien made a motion to table the issue, seconded by Doug Lary- Dennis O'Brien withdrew his motion and Doug Lary withdrew his second. Discussion took place regarding narrowing the scope. Jan-Maya Schold made a motion to define parameters this committee will use to guide the scope of discussion of Finance Department, seconded by Priscilla Root; discussion took place Dennis O'Brien called the question. 3 in favor (Donna Nicolino, Jan-Maya Schold, Pricilla Root) 2 opposed (Dennis O'Brien, Douglas Lary). Motion passed. Douglas Lary made a motion to table the discussion, seconded by Dennis O'Brien; 3 yay (Douglas Lary, Donna Nicolino, Dennis O'Brien) 1 nay (Jan-Maya Schold) 1 abstention (Priscilla Root). Motion passed.

6. Discussion and possible action regarding definitions of elector and voter: handout from Jan-Maya Schold was reviewed. Jan-Maya Schold looked at these terms because it had been discussed how new language was needed; upon her doing a word search it was discovered there are several places where the wrong word is used. Dennis O'Brien stated we do not allow non-residents to vote. Douglas Lary mentioned a section where the wrong word is used "page 4 section 3-7(vacancies) next to last paragraph it starts as: In the event..." Dennis O'Brien stated that immigrants should be able to vote based on their kids being in school, you could take the 7-6 section and delete the reference to U.S Citizen. Jan-Maya Schold stated voter should be combined to cover everything. You could also add in a third option that would allow civic voting. Discussion took place between Jan-Maya Schold and Dennis O'Brien regarding 7-6 and non-resident voters. Jan-Maya Schold tabled the discussion for clarification on 7-6, seconded by Pricilla Root: 4 yes Douglas Lary choose not to vote.

7. Future Agenda Items: Approval of the minutes from July 25th 2013 meeting, discussion of the Finance Department and definition of voter and elector.

8. Citizens and Delegations (3 minutes, related to Charter, Commissioners may ask questions or seek clarification): None

9. Adjournment: Donna Nicolino made a motion to adjourn, seconded by Jan-Maya Schold: motion passed

Meeting adjourned at 9:03pm