

**Town of Ridgefield  
Charter Revision Commission  
Special Meeting (Regular Business)  
April 13, 2010 7:00 PM  
Town Hall – 2<sup>nd</sup> Floor**

**Present:** John McNicholas, Chairman  
Andrew Kelemen  
Lisa Carroll  
Tiffany Lenz  
Charles Primerano

**Not Present:** Sharon Hyde, VC  
Edward Tyrell  
Andrew Berger, Resigned

**AGENDA**

1. Review of minutes from previous meetings and approvals of same.
2. Chair discussion regarding use of emails and issues not discussed by CRC.
3. Fire Commission final wording - Second review of January proposal and vote.
4. Mr. Rifkinson's suggestion re: Grants Commission.
5. Discussion regarding Town Treasurer and Town Tax Collector.
6. Discussion of issues to be included in rough draft of final CRC Report.
7. Tentative items for next agenda.
8. Meeting adjournment.

**MEETING MINUTES**

**(These Minutes are intended to be a summary of the Meeting and not a verbatim recording).**

The meeting was called to order by the Chairman at 7:00pm.

**Item 1**

After some discussion of the March 2, 2010 Meeting Minutes,

**Motion:**

**Chair McNicholas made a motion to approve March 2, 2010 Meeting Minutes.**

**Mr. Primerano seconded the motion.**

**Motion passed unanimously. 5 (Yes), 0 (No), 0 (Abstain)**

**Item 2**

**Chair McNicholas** brought to the attention of the Commission that they need to be careful with email and outside discussions so they will not be construed as something unethical. Chair McNicholas reminded the Commission that all inquiries should come to him.

**Item 3 & Item 4**

These items were moved to after Item 5 as not to detain the guests at the meeting.

**Item 5**

**Guests:** Maureen Kiernan, Treasurer  
Barbara Serfilippi, Town Clerk  
Jane Berendsen-Hill, Tax Collector  
Cynthia Bruno, Registrar of Voters

**Mr. Kelemen** commented that he researched other Towns as to how they handled the above stated positions i.e. elected by the voters or appointed by a Town Board. He stated his results were split.

**Mr. Primerano** asked the officials present not to get offended by his comment but the intention of this Commission was to make sure that the Town had the best qualified personnel for these positions.

**Chair McNicholas** commented to the Commission "Is the process of electing the positions of Treasurer, Town Clerk, Tax Collector and Registrar of Voters broken"?

**Ms. Lenz** stated that one of the reasons that the Commission is addressing this issue is because of the email sent from Peter Gomez where he asks the Commission to look at the election of the Treasurer and maybe it should be changed to an appointed position by the BOS.

**Chair McNicholas** mentioned that the Commission should keep in mind that personality differences made be a motive with some requests made to the Commission.

**Mr. Primerano** commented that he felt that the Commission's task was not only to look at the Charter and see what must be changed but also what must be kept in the Charter and why.

**Ms. Carroll** mentioned the Board of Selection's Meeting Minutes of 12/21/09 which states, "David Grogins, Town Counsel, pointed out the Charter's definition of the responsibilities of the Town Treasurer as "the Treasurer shall exercise the functions of the Town deposit fund." Attorney Grogins went on to state that several years ago the state legislature had removed the phrase "Town deposit fund" and therefore the Charter does not accurately describe the duties and responsibilities of the Town Treasurer". Ms. Carroll went on to say that the Charter should comply with this statement.

**Maureen Kiernan** agreed with this statement because her job description is more than depositing funds. She also handles investments and paying bills.

**Chair McNicholas** went back to the conversation of elected positions verses appointed positions for the Treasurer, Town Clerk, Tax Collector and Registrar of Voters. He reiterated that an election by the voters and being accountable to the voters, is a good safeguard or checks and balances for the positions.

**Mr. Kelemen** asked if there were audits done on the Town books.

**Jane Berendsen-Hill** answered yes, every year the Town gets audited.

**Mr. Primerano** asked the officials present how they felt about the political process involved in their acquiring and retaining their positions.

**Jane Berendsen-Hill and Barbara Serfilippi** answered that they felt there were no problems.

**Ms. Carroll** wondered if a bigger pool of people might be accessed if the positions were appointed versus elected.

**Jane Berendsen-Hill** reiterated that these positions are accountable to the people, and the job descriptions are set, must comply with the Connecticut State Statutes and is not arbitrary.

**Mr. Kelemen** brought up the fact that the Assessor's job is appointed and not elected.

**Cynthia Bruno** stated that yes, this is true but the checks and balance here is an established appeal process.

**Mr. Primerano** stated that the local political parties probably safeguard for qualified candidates.

**Chair McNicholas** asked Ms. Kiernan if the State Statutes guide her in regards to allocating Town funds and investments.

**Jane Berendsen-Hill and Maureen Kiernan** both said yes. Jane went on to say that for her the State Statutes tells her what, where, why, when and how to do her job.

Later it was mentioned that Maureen Kiernan is confined by State Statutes as to what she may invest in. The Towns are required to take the safe road and not make risky investments. The Committee after rereading the email from Peter Gomez feels maybe the change needed is the Treasurer being required to report monthly in the BOS/BOF meetings her current and forecasted status of finances.

**Chair McNicholas** asked if there is anything in the State Statutes regarding an elected official versus an appointed official.

**Cynthia Bruno** answered no, but that she thought there was a reference as to having two elected positions at the same time as not being approved by the State Statutes.

**Chair McNicholas** asked the ladies if there was anything they would like to see changed in the Charter. Again, Maureen Kiernan asked if the wording "Town depository fund" could be changed.

**Cynthia Bruno** asked why the Charter Revision Committee increased the percentage of the total number of electors needed to put a petition back in front of the Board of Selectman.

**Ms. Carroll** stated that the Committee felt that after an issue was not passed, there should be a cooling off period and to revisit the issue there should be more electors involved. The Committee decided to talk about this issue again at their next meeting.

**Cynthia Bruno** asked if the changes that the Charter Revision Committee will be brought to the voters be clear and concise. She went on to say that the tendency of the voters is to vote no if they do not understand it.

**Mr. Primerano** suggested that it be in the newspaper first, to get the word out.

The ladies then thanked the Commission for inviting them and asking their opinion. No other Commission had done this and they really appreciated it.

### **Item 3**

Discussion ensued about a Fire Commission.

**Chair McNicholas** asked the Commission to re-read the proposal made to the Board of Selectman back in January regarding a Fire Commission and be ready to vote on this topic at the next meeting.

### **Item 4**

**Ms. Carroll** shared that Mr. Jan Rifkinson had contacted her and suggested a Grant Commission be established which is separate from the Board of Selectman.

**Mr. Kelemen** commented that he can see how grants can become routine year after year and that a Commission to carefully look over all grant requests could be beneficial. He also asked as to who applies for outside source grant money?

**Ms. Carroll** replied that many Towns have paid positions for a Grant Administrator and their jobs are to find and apply for State and Federal Grants. She stated that she will talk to Rudy Marconi and ask how the grant process currently works in Town. But she felt that there definitely should be a yearly review and the grantees must supply proof what they spent their grant money on and what their needs (if any) are again. Also, that there should be no conflicts of interest with receiving money and being on the Committee.

**Chair McNicholas** asked the Committee to be prepared to vote on this topic at the next meeting and to please let Jan Rifkinson know that his request is being addressed.

### **Item 6**

There was a discussion of what the rough draft will look like for the submission to the Board of Selectmen.

**Mr. Primerano** stated he will have the original Charter Section and then the Proposed Section with the reasons to change/keep, and then Future Recommendations for the next Charter Revision Commission.

**Chair McNicholas** shared the Commission's future schedule:

May - Charter Revision submission to BOS

June - BOS review and revisions, if any

July - Up or down vote by BOS

Next meeting is scheduled for Tuesday, May 4<sup>th</sup>, 2010.

**Item 8**

**Motion:**

**Ms. Carroll made a motion to adjourn.**

**Mr. Primerano seconded the motion.**

**Motion passed unanimously. 4 (Yes), 0 (No), 0 (Abstain)**

Respectfully Submitted,

Lise B. Read  
Recording Secretary