

FINAL APPROVED

**Town of Ridgefield
Charter Revision Commission
Special Meeting (Regular Business)
May 18, 2010 7:00PM
Town Hall - 2nd Floor**

**Present: John McNicholas, Chairman
Sharon Hyde, Vice Chair
Lisa Carroll
Tiffany Lenz
Charles Primerano
Andrew Kelemen**

AGENDA

1. Review minutes from previous meeting.
2. Review, discuss and vote on Fire Commission.
3. Distribute and discuss Lisa Carroll's reviews of Town Meetings and Grants Commission.
4. Technical changes reviewed by Tiffany Lenz.
5. Discussion, if any, of explanatory text for voters in 2006 Charter vote.
6. Final edits on Draft Report as prepared by Charles Primerano.
7. Set final date for Draft Report to Board of Selectman.
8. Correspondence
9. Old Business
10. New Business
11. Closing of Meeting

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

With the following corrections requested by Ms. Hyde & Chair McNicholas, the Meeting Minutes of May 11, 2010 were approved:

- Page 2, Item #2, first sentence is amended to read: ".....personality conflicts and politics may have played a role".
- Page 3, Item #3, last paragraph, last sentence is amended to read:"the budget does not show income from the rental properties, so therefore there are no disbursements shown".

FINAL APPROVED

- Page 5, Item #6, first sentence is amended to read: “.....small capital items, under \$100k should not be voted on by the citizens at the Town Meeting”.

Item #2

Chairman McNicholas reported to the Commission that since 1897 there has been a Fire Commission for the Volunteer Fire Department with a 6” thick manual of rules and regulations. It is a private organization that has an internal election for the Volunteer Fire Commission and is granted \$25,000 per year from the Town of Ridgefield. This Fire Commission reports to Heather Burford, Fire Chief who in turn reports to the Board of Selectman.

Ms. Lenz asked what the Board of Selectman did for the Fire Department.

Mr. Primerano commented that it was not clear what the BOS did but maybe instead of having a Fire Commission, the Board of Selectman should remain status quo as regards to the Fire Department but the duties and responsibilities should be detailed in the Charter.

Ms. Hyde expressed her concern that there is still too much that they do not know and she is leery to change anything.

Ms. Carroll suggested that the next Charter Commission should look into instituting a Fire Commission and the difference between what is wanted and what is needed.

Chair McNicholas suggested that they should decline to institute a Fire Commission this year. But, they should write up a detailed summary how they came up with this decision and leave the topic for the next Charter Commission.

Motion:

Mr. Primerano made a motion to maintain the current structure of the Fire Department as described in the Charter.

Ms. Carroll seconded the motion.

The motion carried.

Motion:

Mr. Kelemen made a motion to recommend to the future Charter Revision Commission to review in earnest and understand the current structure of the paid and volunteer Fire Department and look into a future delineation between the powers of the Board of Selectman as regards to the Fire Department and a possible Fire Commission.

Ms. Carroll seconded the motion.

The motion carried.

Item #3

Ms. Carroll reported that she spoke to Lisa Low of Lisa Low & Associates, Grants Administrator who had a wealth of information for her. They discussed the role of the Grants Commission in the Charter should be to devise, receive, review and award grants. The wording should include that the grants will be advertised. Also, the Commission will make grants to non-profit organizations who must serve Ridgefield residents. Ms. Carroll went on to say grants will be given only to those organizations who are not in the operating budget i.e. the Playhouse and the Library. Ms. Hyde questioned Ms Carroll and stated that maybe this should not be separate. Further, Ms Carroll stated that the only Grants Commission she could find was in Nepal.

Mr. Primerano stated that the Grants Commission would follow Best Practices with the Board of Selectman having the power to override recommendations of the Commission but there will be complete transparency.

Ms. Lenz commented that after all the work done by the Grants Commission, going through all the applications and deciding who gets what only to have the Board of Selectman deny it could be a real bummer.

Ms. Hyde commented that the grants in the budget are not clear and that movement is afoot for transparency.

Mr. Primerano said that he feels it is the Board of Finances responsibility to make the budget clear and Ms. Hyde concurred.

Ms. Carroll felt that the Board of Selectman should let the Grants Commission know the amount of money allocated each year for Grants and the Grant Commission should do it all. Further, she noted that no other Town gives grants and that Ridgefield is unique in this area.

Both Ms. Carroll and Mr. Kelemen felt a Grants Commission is needed. With so much money going out each year on grants, there needs to be checks and balances. Ms. Hyde agreed and suggested that this is the sole way that non-profit organizations can get assistance from the Town. She also asked if rental property and in-unkind donations would be included.

Mr. Primerano made a recommendation that the following wording be made part of the Grants Commission in the Charter:

Town of Ridgefield Grants Commission

- Role: To devise, receive, review and awards grants.
- Grants will be advertised.
- These grants will be recommended to the Board of Selectman and will be published annually.

FINAL APPROVED

- The Commission will consist of 3 Members.
- The term will be for 2 years staggered.
- The Commission will establish their own guidelines and policies.
- The grants will be made to non-profit organizations only, who serve the residents of the Town of Ridgefield.

Ms. Carroll will report to the Commission at the next meeting the final wording for this Grants Commission.

Motion:

Ms. Hyde made a motion to establish a Grants Commission.

Mr. Kelemen seconded the motion.

The motion carried.

Item #4

Motion:

Ms. Lenz made a motion to amend Section 6-2 to read 10-3 in lieu of 10-5 to reflect changes in Article 10.

Ms. Hyde seconded the motion.

The motion carried.

Motion:

Ms. Lenz made a motion to amend Section 8-3(1) to read 10-3 in lieu of 10-5 to reflect changes in Article 10.

Ms. Hyde seconded the motion.

The motion carried.

Motion:

Ms. Hyde made a motion to amend Section 3-9 by adding the word “the” before the words “Town Meeting”.

Ms. Lenz seconded the motion.

The motion carried.

Item #5

None to report.

FINAL APPROVED

Item #6

Discussion ensued about the final draft report. Ms. Hyde had stated that she had made the approved changes already and that Mr. Primerano should use her updated copy. Also, a Table of Contents should be included in the Charter.

Ms. Lenz stated that the footnote notation of the 11/07/06 approved changes made by the prior Charter Commission was not included in the Charter published on the website. Also, she stated that she could handle the Table of Contents.

Mr. Primerano reiterated that the only changes left are the Table of Contents, the footnote inclusion of the 11/07/06 approved changes of the prior Commission and the Grants Commission wording. Ms. Hyde stated that she felt the Commission should not make revisions re: the footnotes from the prior Charter Revision Commission. Both Mr. Primerano and Chair McNicholas will be working on the written process of decisions made by this Charter Commission for the Board of Selectman.

Item #7

Ms. Carroll stated that she will email everybody her wording for the Grants Commission and would appreciate individual comments back from the Commission. She requested that the Commission “not reply to all” in email. With all of this being done ahead of time, the May 25th Special Meeting will be short, only approving Grants Commission wording. At the next regular meeting of the Charter Commission scheduled for June 1st, Mr. Primerano will have the final draft for the Commission to approve. If any changes are recommended, Mr. Primerano will change them and then forward a rough final draft to the Town Clerk/First Selectman before the end of that week.

Item #8

None to report.

Item #9

None to report.

Item #10

None to report.

Item #11

Motion:

Ms. Carroll made a motion to adjourn.

Mr. Kelemen seconded the motion.

The motion carried.

Respectfully Submitted,

Lise B. Read

Recording Secretary