

FINAL

**Town of Ridgefield  
Charter Revision Commission  
Special Meeting (Regular Business)  
May 11, 2010 7:00 PM  
Town Hall – 2<sup>nd</sup> Floor**

**Present:** John McNicholas, Chairman      **Not Present:** Andrew Kelemen  
Sharon Hyde, V.C.  
Lisa Carroll  
Tiffany Lenz  
Charles Primerano

**Guest:** Jan Rifkinson

**AGENDA**

1. Review Minutes from previous Meetings.
2. Review, discuss and vote on Fire Commission.
3. Distribution and discussion of Lisa Carroll's review of Town Meetings and Grants Commission.
4. Review and discussion of changes previously suggested by Town Clerk.
5. Discussion of Explanatory Text for Votes in 2006 Charter Vote.
6. Review and discussion of Chris McQuilkin's suggestion re: Town Meeting.
7. Discussion and review of Draft Report forms prepared by Charles Primerano.
8. Set final date for Draft Report to Board of Selectmen.
9. Agenda Suggestions for next Meeting.
10. Closing of Meeting.

**MEETING MINUTES**

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

Due to the fact that the Town Hall was locked, the Meeting of May 4<sup>th</sup> was not held, hence, this Special Meeting.

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

**Item 1**

I. With minimal discussion of the Meeting Minutes of November 4, 2009:

**Motion:**

**Chair McNicholas made a motion to approve the November 4, 2009 Mtg Minutes.**

**Ms. Hyde seconded the motion.**

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

II. With minimal discussion of the Meeting Minutes of April 6, 2010 and with the following changes:

- a. Andrew Keleman has been corrected to read Andrew Kelemen
- b. Attorney Bower has been corrected to read Attorney Maurer
- c. Page 3 has been changed to read:  
**Jan Rifkinson** asked whether the Town could grant subpoena powers under the Home Rule.  
**Attorney Maurer** replied by saying that the State would have to grant that power.
- d. Page 4: has been changed to read:  
**Ms. Hyde** (with the understanding as expressed by Tom Reynolds, Police Commissioner, that a Public Safety Commission does not have subpoena power and the Police Commission does granted by CT. State General Statutes) asked the Charter Commission to vote on keeping the Police Commission and discussing the Fire Commission at a later date.

**Motion:**

**Mr. Primerano made a motion to approve the April 6, 2010 Meeting Minutes.**

**Ms. Lenz seconded the motion.**

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

- III. With minimal discussion and two small changes of the Meeting Minutes of April 13, 2010:

**Motion:**

**Ms. Lenz made a motion to approve the April 13, 2010 Meeting Minutes.**

**Mr. Primerano seconded the motion.**

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

**Note From Recording Secretary: March 2, 2010 Minutes were approved at the April 13, 2010 Charter Commission Meeting.**

**Item #2**

Chair McNicholas started by talking about a former Fire Chief being fired by the Board of Selectman and that personality conflicts and politics may have played a role. Therefore, he would like to see a Fire Commission. He also commented that Tim Pambianchi is in favor of the Fire Commission and that there is an advocacy.

Mr. Primerano believes the Fire Department is a burden to the Board of Selectman especially with the Fire Department budget and long range plans in addition to their own budget and day to day responsibilities.

Ms. Lenz stated that she believed Heather Burford, Fire Chief was against a Fire Commission.

Chair McNicholas commented that emergency management is expanding.

Mr. Primerano agreed and added that there are more seniors needing emergency assistance.

Ms. Hyde commented that it seems private citizens don't understand the need for the Fire Commission especially since it looks like it is expanding government but there is no cost to this expansion. This is all volunteer positions.

**Note:** Concept and preliminary proposal of Section 4-14.1 Fire Commission is pending approval of final language.

Further, after some discussion:

**Motion:**

**Chair McNicholas made a motion to change Section 9.1 & 9.9 "Director of Civil Preparedness is amended to read Director of Emergency Preparedness"**

**Mr. Primerano seconded the motion.**

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

**Item #3**

Ms. Carroll asked Jan Rifkinson to speak first regarding his request for a Grants Commission.

Jan Rifkinson gave the following reasons for the need in Ridgefield for this Commission:

- a. The Town of Ridgefield has a lot of grants, i.e. Rent Abatements, the Library, Girls Club, Hart Bus, but there lacks order as regards to the budget. It is very confusing because all grants are not in one line item but are located throughout the budget. Jan went on to say that he thought that the grants should be a percentage of the overall budget.
- b. To have a Commission could avoid the situation like the Boys & Girls Club, the year before last, getting an okay for a grant of \$50,000 from Rudy Marconi, First Selectman only to be turned down later because of the economic downturn. People were furious because this money was promised to them. Or, the Stadium deal issue.
- c. There are minor conflicts of interest. For example, the Board of Selectmen voting on rent abatement.

Jan continued to say that with a Grant Commission, residents or groups could write in and request their need and what they are spending it on and what they spent it on last year, if applicable.

There was some discussion as to the wording for the Grants Commission in the Charter. Jan had submitted his suggestion. Items discussed were terms, how the Commission would report to the Board of Selectman who in turn report to the Board of Finance and Non-Profit wording. They all agreed that this Commission would remove a burden from the Board of Selectman, would be convenient for residents and groups which could include Music and Art. They all agreed that there would be transparency and that these grants could be a non-binding recommendation to the Board of Selectman with accountability. It was also discussed that abatements are not grants and that they are not found in the budget because the budget does not show income from rental properties so therefore there is no disbursements shown.

**Note:** The concept and preliminary proposal of Section 5-7.1, Grant Commission is pending approval of final language.

Ms. Carroll then went on to discuss Town Meetings and the objections made by the Town Clerk. After some discussion:

**Motion:**

**Mr. Primerano made a motion to restore Sections 3.5a) and 3.5b)B back to its original form. Section 3.5a) will be restored to two (2) percent of the total number of electors and Section 3.5b) will be restored to five (5) percent of the total number of electors.**

**Ms. Lenz seconded the motion.**

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

**Item #4**

**Motion:**

**Ms. Hyde made a motion to change Section 4.9 “Town deposit fund is amended to public funds”.**

**Ms. Lenz seconded the motion.**

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

**Motion:**

**Mr. Primerano made a motion to change Section 3.7, “at the meeting” was added to the first paragraph and last sentence for clarification.**

**Ms. Lenz seconded the motion.**

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

**Motion:**

**Mr. Primerano made a motion to change Section 4-15(b), “No less than” was deleted from the last sentence in the second paragraph. The statement now reads “Three (3) members shall constitute a quorum.**

**Ms. Lenz seconded the motion.**

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

**Motion:**

**Mr. Primerano made a motion to change Section 4-15(e), the first sentence was changed as follows, the phrase “for presentation at” was eliminated and replaced with “and recommend such budget to”. The phrase “following budget approval” was added after “set the mill rate by resolution”.**

**Ms. Lenz seconded the motion.**

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

**Motion:**

**Mr. Primerano made a motion to change Section 4-15(e), second paragraph, last sentence “insure” was changed to “ensure”.**

**Ms. Lenz seconded the motion.**

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

**Motion:**

**Mr. Primerano made a motion to change Section 10-1(c), second paragraph, second sentence, the word “decrease” was eliminated.**

**Ms. Lenz seconded the motion.**

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

**Motion:**

**Mr. Primerano made a motion to change Section 10-1(d), first paragraph “fifteen days” is changed to “fourteen (14) days”. The phrase “excluding Saturdays, Sundays and legal holidays” was eliminated.**

**Ms. Lenz seconded the motion.**

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

**Motion:**

**Mr. Primerano made a motion to change Section 10-1(e) “within ten (10) days” was replaced with “following”.**

**Ms. Lenz seconded the motion.**

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

Ms. Hyde commented that due to the fact that she never received a response as to the clarification of the term “town agency”, no change was made.

**Item #5**

Ms Hyde brought up the process for the wording for the ballot questions to be used by the voters after the approval by the Board of Selectman.

Chair McNicholas commented that between Cynthia and the Board of Selectman, there should be no problems.

**Item #6**

Ms. Carroll read the letter submitted to the Commission from Mr. McQuilkin’s. His first request is that small capital items, under \$100k should not be voted on by the citizens. The Commission’s consensus was that budgetary items and specifically this reference to Section 10-03 in the Charter have already been discussed at length by this Commission and found not to be broken.

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Mr. McQuilkin's next item concerned the Venus roof issue and how a capital project that was approved for a certain amount did not get started for a number of years then it cost more money to complete. Mr. McQuilkin feels that capital projects should have a time limit and if not completed by this time limit, the money should be returned to the Town. Chair McNicholas told the Commission that this was an unfortunate circumstance, a one time oversight and should not happen again. Also, there is a time limit in Section 10-5 of the Charter which is 3 years and is concluded by the Charter Commission to be fine.

Mr. McQuilkin's third and final item regarded re-votes within a defined period of time. The Commission stated that this issue has been addressed and already added to the Charter.

**Item #7**

Mr. Primerano suggested that for the final report he would like to make sure all emails or correspondence from the public is on his log and he asked the Commission to please review their notes. He went on to say that he is changing the format from the last Charter Revision Commission submission to what he believes is organized, clear and concise.

Ms. Hyde wanted to make sure his report encapsulates all information that the Board of Selectman would want to know as to their process of their decisions.

**Item #8**

There was discussion regarding the time frame for the submission to the Board of Selectman. This was decided that at the regular June Meeting, a final submission will be approved by the Charter Commission and then sent on to the Town Clerk and the Board of Selectman.

**Item #9**

There was discussion as to the contents of the next Agenda with the adding of Old Business, New Business and Correspondence. The next Meeting scheduled is a Special Meeting on Tuesday, May 18<sup>th</sup>.

**Item #10**

**Motion:**

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

**Mr. Primerano seconded the motion.**

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

Respectfully Submitted,

Lise B. Read  
Recording Secretary