

Town of Ridgefield Charter Revision Commission (CRC)

Final Approved Minutes

April 13, 2023, at 6:30 p.m.

Town Hall Annex Conference Room #2

These minutes are a general summary of the meeting and are not intended to be a verbatim transcription. A video of the meeting is available on the Town's website.

Members Present: Bob Cascella, Mike Lordi, Rebecca Mucchetti, Michael Rettger, Derick Schirm, Todd Zagorec and Kim Welton (by phone)

Members Absent: Laurie Christiansen and Tom Larsen,

1. Call to Order

The meeting was called to order by Ms. Mucchetti at 6:30 p.m.

2. Public Comment

No public comments.

3. Discussion and a possible vote on open tracker items

Mr. Rettger moved, and Mr. Schirm seconded a motion to recommend making the Affordable Housing Committee a permanent Committee enumerated in the Charter. Motion failed 3-4. Ms. Welton, Mr. Lordi, Mr. Zagorec, and Mr. Cascella opposed. (Tracker Item A-51)

Mr. Lordi moved, and Mr. Schirm seconded a motion to recommend revising the Charter so that any reference to the First Selectman be changed to First Selectperson, that any reference to the Board of Selectman be changed to Select Board, and members of the Select Board will be referred to as Members. The Charter will be further revised to incorporate the recommended language from the Town Counsel, "The Select Board which, except as modified herein, shall have the powers and responsibilities conferred on a Board of Selectman by state statute." Motion carried 5-2. Mr. Cascella and Mr. Rettger opposed (Tracker Item A-7)

The CRC reviewed with Mr. Sexton his recommendation that the Charter be revised to make the Fire Commission an elected position. Mr. Cascella will review how surrounding communities address the role of the Fire Commission and present his findings at a future meeting. Mr. Cascella moved, and Mr. Rettger seconded a motion to table further discussion until a later meeting. Motion carried 7-0. (Tracker: A-49)

Mr. Lordi moved, and Mr. Schirm seconded a motion to decline to recommend the suggested changes to Section 1.1 of the Charter submitted by Ms. Noyes since many of the suggested changes have been addressed by the CRC. Motion carried 7-0. (Tracker Item A-11)

Mr. Rettger moved, and Mr. Cascella seconded a motion to decline to recommend the suggested changes to Section 2.1 of the Charter submitted by Ms. Noyes. The term '...to be a body politic and corporate...' is used correctly. Motion carried 7-0. (Tracker Item A-13)

Mr. Zagorec moved, and Mr. Rettger seconded a motion to decline to recommend the suggested changes to Section 2.3 of the Charter submitted by Ms. Noyes. Motion carried 7-0. (Tracker Item A-14)

Mr. Rettger moved, and Mr. Zagorec seconded a motion to recommend accepting the referral from Ms. Noyes regarding Section 3.3. The revised language was discussed and agreed on. Motion carried 7-0. (Tracker Item A-15)

Mr. Lordi moved, and Mr. Cascella seconded a motion to decline to recommend the suggested changes to Section 3.6 of the Charter submitted by Ms. Noyes. Motion carried 7-0. (Tracker Item A-16)

Mr. Lordi moved, and Mr. Cascella seconded a motion to decline to recommend the suggested changes to Section 3.7 of the Charter submitted by Ms. Noyes. Motion carried 7-0. (Tracker Item A-17)

Mr. Lordi moved, and Mr. Schirm seconded a motion to decline to recommend the suggested changes to Section 3.13 of the Charter submitted by Ms. Noyes. Motion carried 7-0. (Tracker Item A-18)

Mr. Lordi moved, and Mr. Schirm seconded a motion to decline to recommend the suggested changes to Section 3.14 of the Charter submitted by Ms. Noyes. Motion carried 7-0. (Tracker Item A-19)

Mr. Schirm moved, and Mr. Cascella seconded a motion to decline to recommend the suggested changes to Section 4 of the Charter submitted by Ms. Noyes. Motion carried 7-0. (Tracker Item A-20)

Mr. Lordi moved, and Mr. Rettger seconded a motion to table further discussion of the referral regarding the oversight of the Town Charter submitted by Ms. Noyes until a later meeting. Motion carried 7-0. (Tracker Item A-54)

Mr. Cascella moved, and Mr. Schirm seconded a motion to decline to consider the referral regarding term limits on Committees or Commissions appointed by the Board of Selectman submitted by Ms. Noyes. Motion carried 7-0. (Tracker Item A-55)

Mr. Lordi moved, and Mr. Cascella seconded a motion to decline to consider the referral regarding the incorporation of mission statements into the Charter as submitted by Ms. Noyes. Motion carried 7-0. (Tracker Item A-56)

Mr. Rettger moved, and Mr. Zagorec seconded a motion to decline to consider the referral regarding the position of Information Systems Director submitted by Ms. Noyes since this position already exists. Motion carried 7-0. (Tracker Item A-57)

Mr. Rettger moved, and Mr. Lordi seconded a motion to accept the referral regarding Commissioner, Committee, or Board Member recusal submitted by Ms. Noyes. Ms. Noyes' suggestion has been addressed in the CRC's revisions to various of the Charter. Motion carried 7-0. (Tracker Item A-58)

Mr. Rettger moved, and Mr. Schirm seconded a motion to decline to consider the referral regarding affordable housing submitted by Ms. Noyes since it is not a charter issue. Motion carried 7-0. (Tracker Item A-59)

Mr. Rettger moved, and Mr. Zagorec seconded a motion to decline to recommend the change to Section 4-8 of the Charter to incorporate the "Drop Down" election rule submitted by Ms. Wise. Motion carried 5-2. Mr. Schirm and Ms. Welton opposed. The CRC will recommend in its report to the Board of Selectman that the "Drop Down" election rule be considered in a formal study of alternative forms of government for the Town. (Tracker Item A-40)

Mr. Lordi moved, and Mr. Cascella seconded a motion to decline to consider the recommendation that the Charter be amended to require any person elected or appointed to a Commission or Board that requires specialized knowledge or that makes decisions that could be appealed to the Superior Court take mandatory state-approved education classes once elected (and before being seated), including continuing education annually for their entire term, as submitted by Mr. Jewell. Motion carried 7-0. (Tracker Item A-41)

Mr. Lordi moved, and Mr. Rettger seconded a motion to decline to consider the recommendation that the Charter be amended to prohibit elected or appointed officials from spreading misinformation, including on social media, as submitted by Mr. Jewell. Motion carried 7-0. The members expressed concern about how such a suggestion could be practically implemented from a freedom of speech perspective (Tracker Item A-42)

Mr. Lordi moved, and Mr. Cascella seconded a motion to decline to consider the recommendation that the Charter be amended to require any group or spokesman for any group when appearing at a public meeting of the Town of Ridgefield to disclose the name and address of its membership, as submitted by Mr. Jewell. Motion carried 7-0. (Tracker Item A-43)

Mr. Lordi moved, and Mr. Cascella seconded a motion to decline to consider the recommendation that the Charter be amended so that Boards and Commissions are

required to cooperate with each other and prohibit legal action between them unless approved by the Board of Selectmen or if the Board of Selectmen is a party, by the Board of Finance, as submitted by Mr. Jewell. The recommended change is already addressed in the Charter. Motion carried 7-0. (Tracker Item A-44)

Mr. Schirm moved, and Mr. Rettger seconded a motion to decline to consider the recommendation that the Charter be amended so that Boards and Commissions are prohibited from acting in any way they know or should know is in violation of applicable law, even as part of a lawful strategy, as submitted by Mr. Jewell. Motion carried 7-0. The members commented that if an action is illegal, adding the proposed language to the Charter would not change the situation. (Tracker Item A-45)

Mr. Rettger moved, and Mr. Cascella seconded a motion to accept the recommendation that the Charter be amended so that the Board of Ethics is only required to accept ethics complaints that are supported by a sworn affidavit by the complainant, including a statement of the specific ethical standard that was allegedly violated and the basis of the complainants' knowledge, as submitted by Mr. Jewell. Mr. Jewell's suggestion has been addressed in the CRC revision to Section XI of the Charter. Motion carried 7-0. (Tracker Item A-47)

Mr. Cascella moved, and Mr. Schirm seconded a motion to decline to consider the recommendation that the Charter be amended so that the Board of Ethics has the power to remove elected officials for serious ethical violations or repeated ethical violations, as submitted by Mr. Jewell. Motion carried 7-0. (Tracker Item A-46)

Mr. Lordi moved, and Mr. Cascella seconded a motion to decline to consider the recommendation that the Charter be amended to institute term limits for all commissions and committees and that the Chairperson must rotate every two years or length of term, as submitted by Ms. Mazzola. Motion carried 7-0. (Tracker Item A-52)

Mr. Lordi moved, and Mr. Rettger seconded a motion to decline to consider the recommendation that the Charter be amended to require that all meetings of boards, committees, or commissions be recorded (filmed, zoomed, etc.) for the entirety of the meeting, as submitted by Ms. Mazzola since this has already been declined by the CRC. Motion carried 7-0. (Tracker Item A-53).

Mr. Lordi moved, and Mr. Cascella seconded a motion to decline to consider the recommendation that the Charter be amended to require all Town of Ridgefield employees, elected officials, volunteers, and temporary workers shall conduct all electronic communication using a Town-provided email account with appropriate multifactor security measures, as submitted by Mr. Neblett since this not a Charter issue. Motion carried 7-0. (Tracker Item G-1).

4. Communications

No discussion.

5. Review of Action Item

No discussion.

6. Old Business

The CRC received from Town Counsel a response to the question raised by the CRC regarding changing the name of the Board of Selectman and First Selectman.

The CRC received from Mr. Rettger a "clean" version of the Charter incorporating the reference change to boards, commissions, committees, departments, elected offices, and agencies approved at the April 6, 2023, CRC meeting. Minor technical changes were made.

The CRC received Mr. Rettger's suggested language for incorporating the Affordable Housing Committee into the Charter.

The CRC received from Mr. Rettger a technical change to the revision of Section 5-15 of the Charter submitted by the Youth Commission and approved at the April 6, 2023, CRC meeting.

7. Correspondence

The CRC received an email from Mr. McLaughlin, Chair of the Board of Ethics, acknowledging receipt of CRC revisions to Section XI of the Charter. Mr. McLaughlin will distribute the revision to the members of the Board of Ethics and will do his best to attend the April 20, 2023, CRC meeting.

The CRC received an email from Ms. Noyes regarding CRC discussions of elected versus appointed for the positions of Town Clerk, Town Treasurer, and Tax Collector.

8. Planning future CRC agendas/calendar

The April 20, 2023, meeting agenda will include the discussion of the draft revisions to Section XI of the Charter with the Chair of the Board of Ethics, oversight of the Town Charter, the recommendation that the Fire Commission be an elected position, and the draft CRC report to the Board of Selectmen.

9. Minutes – review and approval

Motion to approve as amended the minutes of the April 6, 2023, meeting by Mr. Cascella, seconded by Mr. Rettger as revised. Motion carries 7-0.

10. Adjourn

Motion to adjourn at 9:49 p.m. by Mr. Schirm, seconded by Mr. Rettger. Motion carries 7 -0.

Respectfully submitted,
Mike Lordi, Recording Secretary

* Tracker: The Change Request Tracker is a document that lists recommended changes received by the CRC.