

Town of Ridgefield Charter Revision Commission (CRC)

Meeting Minutes

July 27, 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, Rebecca Mucchetti, Derick Schirm, Tom Lansen, Todd Zagorec
Mike Lordi, Michael Rettger, Laurie Christiansen, and Kim Welton

Board of Selectman (BOS): Rudy Marconi, Maureen Kozlark, and Bob Hebert

Town Counsel: Jason Buchsbaum

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 of Draft Report BoS Recommendations to the CRC with the Board of Selectmen and Jason Buchsbaum, Town Counsel

The CRC had a joint meeting with the BOS to review the BOS's comments and recommendations for the draft report submitted by the CRC. The following items were discussed.

The CRC discussed with Town Counsel the process to follow in its review of BOS comments and recommendations to the draft report.

Reference 9 – proposed language regarding notification of vacant positions:

There was a discussion about changing the wording to clarify that 30 days starts when the Board of Selectmen or affected board is notified.

It was agreed to add a sentence at the beginning of each of the first two paragraphs concerning notification by the Town Clerk. There was also a suggestion to use the word “prompt” instead of “timely”.

It was agreed that the language in paragraph 1 of Section 4-7 will read “within 30 days of the later of: (a) the effective date of the resignation or (b) the date the board receives written notice from the Town Clerk of the vacancy”. A corresponding change should also be made to the second paragraph of section 4-7, referring to “affected board”.

Reference 10 – clarification on whether to include FOIA reference as discussed by the BOS:
It was agreed to add “and of the Freedom of Information Act” at the end of the sentence in the first paragraph of Section 6-2.

Reference 11- clarification on proposed language by Counsel regarding Section 10-2b:
The language in paragraph 7 of Section 10-2 was updated to read “The Special Town Meeting may approve individual requests made by verified petition up to the amount of \$3,000,000. If the amount of the request is equal to or greater than \$3,000,000, the request shall be submitted to referendum.”

Reference 12- discussion on proposed language regarding nepotism and probable cause:

- It was agreed to accept Mr. Buchsbaum’s suggestion to keep the words “probable cause” in the charter.
- Rudy Marconi gave a brief background on why the Board of Selectmen rejected the proposal to add a nepotism rule to the charter. It was agreed to keep the nepotism rule out of the charter and keep the policy that already exists in place.
- Mr. Buchsbaum suggested keeping the original language regarding confidential information in section 11-2b and adding to the end “and also” together with portions of the wording from the commission’s initial proposed language that says “any information which is restricted from disclosure to the public under any provision of the General Statutes or federal law, or information exempt from disclosure under the Freedom of Information Act.”

Reference 13-15- clarification regarding proposed change from appointed to hired:

The Board of Selectmen suggested changing the word “appointed” to “hired”. The reason for the change is to make it clear to anyone reading the charter that no one person has the authority to appoint a position. Mr. Buchsbaum commented the word hired should also be included in Sections 9-2, 9-3 and 9-20.

- The language in Section 9-2 will read “Except as otherwise set forth in this Charter, mandated by State law, or provided by contract, administrative officers and department heads shall be appointed and/or hired, as applicable, in the manner as provided and shall serve at the pleasure of the appointing authority. Appointees of the First Selectperson shall be appointed and may be removed in accordance with provisions of Section 8-4 of this Charter.”
- In Section 9-3, “an appointive” should be changed to “an appointive or hired” in the first sentence, and “Persons appointed” should be changed to “Persons appointed or hired” in the second sentence.
- The language in the proposed new second paragraph of section 9-20 should be changed to read “hired position” rather than “appointed position”.

Reference 17- discussion regarding IT Town Committee vs IT Town Commission:

Derek Schirm and Tom Lansen reviewed their reasons for suggesting an IT Town Commission. Rudy Marconi and Bob Hebert talked about why the Board would prefer to

create a committee before entertaining the idea of a commission in the charter. All agreed to remove the proposed IT Commission and have the Board move forward with a committee.

Reference 18- discussion regarding gender neutral name changes for BOS:

The goal behind the proposed change by the CRC was to create a gender-neutral name. The suggestion from the Board to change the name to “Board of Selectmen/women” and “First Selectman/woman” does not accomplish the goal. The Board of Selectmen will discuss the name change again now that they know what the CRC was trying to achieve.

Reference 19- discussion of language proposed by Counsel in Section 10-1(c):

Mr. Buchsbaum suggested adding the word “only” following the word “discussion” in the first paragraph of section 10-1c and adding the sentence “Except as provided elsewhere in the charter, the Town and Budget Meeting shall have no authority to make changes to the annual capital and operating budgets of the Board of Selectmen and Board of Education”. Mr. Buchsbaum clarified the reason for the proposed language. After discussion, Mr. Buchsbaum agreed that adding the word “only” is definitely required, but that the additional proposed language was helpful but not critical to achieving the change proposed by the CRC. The Board agreed to with the suggestion from the CRC to add just the word “only” and leave out the additional language proposed by Mr. Buchsbaum.

Reference 20- clarification of proposed language re: Boards, Committees & Commissions:

Mike Rettger clarified to the Board the reason for the proposed language, which is to make the charter more reader friendly. The Board agreed with the recommendation.

4. Discussion and possible vote on BoS Charter Revision Recommendations 1 through 30.

Mr. Cascella moved, and Mr. Schirm seconded a motion to accept the referral from the BOS regarding References 1 through 8. Motion carried 9-0.

Mr. Rettger moved, and Mr. Cascella seconded a motion to accept the referral as revised by the BOS regarding Reference 9. Motion carried 9-0.

Mr. Cascella moved, and Mr. Lansen seconded a motion to accept the referral as revised by the BOS regarding Reference 10. Motion carried 9-0.

Mr. Rettger moved, and Mr. Schirm seconded a motion to accept the referral as revised by the BOS regarding Reference 11. Motion carried 9-0.

Mr. Lansen moved, and Mr. Lordi seconded a motion to accept the referral as revised by the BOS regarding Reference 12. Motion carried 9-0.

Mr. Rettger moved, and Mr. Schirm seconded a motion to accept the referral as revised by the BOS regarding References 13 through 15. Motion carried 9-0.

Mr. Cascella moved, and Mr. Lansen seconded a motion to accept the referral from the BOS regarding Reference 16. Motion carried 9-0.

Mr. Lansen moved, and Mr. Schirm seconded a motion to accept the referral from the BOS regarding Reference 17. Motion carried 9-0.

Mr. Rettger moved, and Mr. Cascella seconded a motion to decline the referral from the BOS regarding Reference 18. Motion carried 9-0.

Mr. Lordi moved, and Mr. Lansen seconded a motion to modify the CRC recommendation to change the Board of Selectmen to Select Board. The new recommendation will be to change the Board of Selectmen to the Board of Selectpersons. Motion carried 6-3. Mr. Cascella, Ms. Welton, and Mr. Schirm opposed.

Mr. Rettger moved, and Mr. Lordi seconded a motion to accept the referral as revised by the BOS regarding Reference 19. Motion carried 9-0.

Mr. Cascella moved, and Mr. Schirm seconded a motion to accept the referral from the BOS regarding Reference 20. Motion carried 9-0.

Mr. Schirm moved, and Mr. Cascella seconded a motion to accept the referral from the BOS regarding References 21 through 23. Motion carried 9-0.

Mr. Cascella moved, and Mr. Rettger seconded a motion to accept the referral from the BOS regarding Reference 24. Motion carried 9-0.

Mr. Schirm moved, and Mr. Lansen seconded a motion to accept the referral from the BOS regarding References 25 through 30. Motion carried 9-0.

5. Discussion of Tracker

The CRC agreed that no future changes would be required.

6. Communications

The next submission to the press will take place after the final report is submitted to the BOS.

7. Correspondence

None

8. Planning Future Calendars

The agenda of the August 3, 2023, meeting will include the review of the Draft Final Report, the redline version of the revised Charter, and the revised Summary of Accepted Proposals. The agenda of the August 10, 2023, meeting will include the vote on the CRC submission to the BOS.

9. Minutes – Review and Approval

Motion to approve as amended the minutes of the July 20, 2023, meeting by Mr. Cascella, seconded by Mr. Rettger. Motion carries 9 to 0.

10. Adjourn

Motion to adjourn at 9:28 p.m. by Mr. Schirm, seconded by Mr. Cascella. Motion carries 9 to 0.

Respectfully submitted,
Mike Lordi, Recording Secretary