

**CHARTER REVISION ADVISORY COMMITTEE  
MEETING  
April 26, 2023 at 6:00 p.m.  
Charlestown Town Hall, Annex  
4540 South County Trail, Charlestown RI 02813**

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**MINUTES**

**Call to Order**

The meeting was called to order at 6:09 p.m.

**Roll Call**

**Present:** Catherine Graziano, Chair, Margaret Hogan, Anne Mulhall, Lorna Persson, Evelyn Smith, Stephen Stolle and Laura Rom, Vice Chair. Also present were Acting Town Administrator Jeffrey Allen, Council Ex-Officio Deborah Carney and Administrative Assistant Susan R. Shea

**Approve minutes from 4/6/2023.**

It was moved by Ms. Hogan and seconded by Ms. Persson to approve the minutes from April 6, 2023 with the noted amendments. Motion passed with a unanimous vote of 7-0.

**Discussion and potential action regarding access to historical Charter records/amendments**

Ms. Smith stated that there are historical records associated with the Charter. Ms. Shea noted that there are books in the vault for all elections held including results of any Charter changes that were proposed to the voters.

**Discussion and potential action concerning review of town employee survey responses.**

The committee received information from the Tax Collector, Tax Assessor, Park and Recreation Director and Town Clerk.

Tax collector Jo Anne Santos stated that she would like to see the issuance of building permits and beach passes contingent upon taxes being current.

Parks and Recreation Director, Vicky Hilton, suggested changes refer to a section of the town ordinance and not the Charter. Ms. Shea was asked to forward it to the Ordinance Review Ad Hoc Committee.

The committee set a meeting date for Friday, May 12 at 9:30 a.m. at the Town Hall to meet with Town Clerk, Amy Weinreich and Tax Assessor Ken Swain so they can better explain their proposed changes.

**Discussion and potential action concerning review of entire charter, including results of town responses.**

There was a lengthy discussion regarding the restructuring of the tax departments (collector, assessor and treasurer) based on the recent study from Clifton, Larsen and Allen who put together a report on the current structure our tax department with suggested changes for better fluency and accountability.

Ms. Smith suggested that Article X Administrator Appointment and Qualifications. C-41 A. could be combined with C-42 A. Also, Article XIV C 46 & C47 regarding Appointment for temporary absences and appointment during replacement process could also be combined.

Section Article XX Department of Finance C-54 Establishment and C-55 Organizations should address the new position of Finance Director. The Clerk was directed to contact the solicitor for an opinion.

Article LVIII Dual Office Holding C 185 Restrictions states that an elected official cannot hold more than one position elected or appointed. It was noted that it excludes holding ex-officio positions or no voting positions.

Ms. Smith said that Part 3 Administrator, Article X Appointments and Qualifications C-41 and C-42 could be combined.

C-54 and C-55 refer to the establishment of a new position as Finance Director.

Ms. Carney reported that the report from Clifton, Larson, Allen (CLA) called for a restructuring of the Finance Department. The report was discussed at the March 29<sup>th</sup> Town Council meeting.

C-155 Establishment and appointment. This addresses that there “shall” be a Department of Public Assistance. Technically there is not a department but rather a duty of the Town Administrator’s Administrative Assistant. It was questioned whether it was mandatory by state law. Can it be moved to the Finance Department. The Clerk was asked to contact the solicitor for an opinion.

C-185 Dual Office Holding. This addresses that appointed members of town government can only hold one position at the same time. Ms. Carney noted that this does not prevent people from serving on Ad Hoc committees (C-185 C.)

Chair Graziano suggested a provision requiring an Ethics Advisory opinion be requested by the prospective committee or board appointee.

Ad Hoc Committee are only valid for the term of the Council.

Ms. Hogan questioned the timeline of the budget process. She suggested that if the budget started meeting at the beginning of December that it would have more time to review and, ultimately, being able to forward it to the Council earlier for their review.

A discussion ensued about suggested Charter changes in February of 2008. Ms. Carney stated that she could not find any minutes to see what happened with the proposal. Ms. Smith noted that the same thing happened in 1997.

The committee talked about staggered terms for the Town Council. Ms. Graziano mentioned considering term limits.

It was questioned why the Planning Commission is governed by State Law rather than it being an appointed town committee. It appeared that way in the original 1981 Charter.

### **Discussion and potential action regarding outreach to community and solicitation of public comments**

The Clerk will ensure that the Pipeline requests public input for comments/suggestions of the Charter. The town website will also have a link for the public to send an email to the committee.

### **Adjournment**

It was moved by Ms. Hogan and seconded by Ms. Rom to adjourn at 8:14 p.m. Motion passed with a unanimous vote of 7-0.

Respectfully submitted,

Date Approved: