

The **Special Organizational Meeting** of the **Ordinance Revision Ad Hoc Committee** of the Town of Charlestown, duly advertised and posted, was held **March 23, 2023, at 6:00 p.m.** at the Charlestown Town Hall, Council Chambers, 4540 South County Trail, Charlestown, RI.

The meeting was **CALLED TO ORDER** by Town Clerk Amy Rose Weinreich at 6:00 p.m.

ROLL CALL: Town Councilor Stephen J. Stokes, Town Councilor Deborah A. Carney, Member-at-large William Coulter, Member-at-large Lewis Johnson, Planning Commissioner Ruth Platner, Zoning Board of Review Member Sheila Andrew, and Affordable Housing Commissioner Lorraine Boucher. Economic Improvement Commissioner Jane Glander was absent. Also in attendance were Charlestown Police Lieutenant Kevin Kidd, Town Clerk Amy Rose Weinreich, Acting Town Administrator Jeffrey S. Allen, and Town Solicitor David Petrarca.

Discussion and potential action concerning appointment of officers

Ms. Weinreich asked for nominations for the roll of Chair.

Motion made by Mr. Stokes, seconded by Mr. Coulter and approved unanimously to nominate Deborah A. Carney as Chair.

Motion made by Ms. Carney seconded by Mr. Coulter and approved unanimously to appointment Stephen Stokes as Vice Chair.

Ms. Carney inquired whether Ms. Weinreich would be attending the Committee's meetings to take minutes. Ms. Weinreich stated that she would not be in attendance but would provide the opportunity to the Town Hall Clerical staff to provide secretarial support to the committee. There were no objections from the Committee.

Discussion and potential action concerning an annual meeting calendar

Ms. Weinreich suggested that the Committee meet on the fourth Thursday of each month in the Town Hall Council Chambers.

Motion made by Ms. Boucher to set the meeting calendar of the Ad Hoc Ordinance Review Committee to meet the fourth Thursday of each month and authorize the Town Clerk to post the agenda and the calendar on the Secretary of State's website.

Ms. Weinreich stated that the representative from Town Solicitor's Office had not yet arrived at the meeting and suggested that the Committee wait for his arrival before setting the meeting calendar.

Motion made by Ms. Boucher, seconded and approved unanimously to table the annual meeting calendar until after the next agenda item.

Discussion and potential action concerning next steps

Ms. Carney stated that the Town Council brought representatives from each of the Boards and Commissions together to this Committee because each body has knowledge of specific ordinances and how they should be amended. She suggested that each Committee member take the next month to review the ordinances and come to the next meeting with their top five issues to be looked at. She noted that the Town Council set money aside in the upcoming budget for a recodification project with General Code, the Town's vendor for publishing ordinances; this Committee could bring issues to General Code for inclusion in the project.

Zachary Dumont, the Town's representative from General Code, addressed the Committee, stating that the project would begin with an editor examining the existing code for flow and continuity, followed by an analysis of the ordinances for grammatical issues, conflicts with State and Federal statutes and suggestions from neighboring towns. The manuscript will be transmitted to the Town with numerous questions and suggestions for revisions. After the Town's response, General Code will provide a final manuscript for adoption and publication. He noted that General Code's editorial staff would be available to the Town throughout the process to answer any questions and provide guidance and stated that the recodification project would take 18-20 months.

Ms. Andrew inquired whether the ordinances had to go to the State before approval. Mr. Dumont stated that General Code was not affiliated with the State, nor were their editors attorneys.

Attorney Petracra spoke concerning his experience with General Code's recodification project in another community. Ms. Carney inquired whether it would be an Open Meetings violation for multiple Committee members to working on an electronic version of the ordinances at the same time. Attorney Petrarca stated that there was some case law concerning the matter and suggested that it may be advisable for Staff members to interact electronically with General Code's manuscript.

Mr. Coulter inquired whether parameters should be set as to how deep the committee members would dig into the ordinances, as it could be a daunting task. Mr. Stokes gave some examples of how the Committee members could work together to provide their expertise.

Ms. Andrew inquired whether the Committee members could bring a new ordinance to the Committee meetings for discussion and transmission to the Town Council. Ms. Carney confirmed and stated that the purpose of the Committee was to have discussion about existing and necessary ordinances and find solutions to issues. Attorney Petrarca noted that the Zoning Board of Review had very limited jurisdiction; the Board is not permitted to conduct discussions about policy, rather the matters before the Board must either be applications for Variance, Special Use Permit, or Appeal. Attorney Petrarca suggested that Ms. Andrew could report information from this Committee by email through the Building Official's Office. Ms. Andrew inquired whether other members of the Zoning Board of Review could communicate areas of concern to this Committee through a memo; Attorney Petrarca confirmed that they could.

Ms. Boucher inquired about the timing of the legal review portion of the recodification project; Mr. Dumont stated that after General Code has performed the legal analysis, they would return a working manuscript of the code document to the Town for review. He stated that from the time of the kick-off meeting with General Code, it may be six months before a working manuscript would be returned.

Motion made by Ms. Boucher, seconded and approved unanimously for each member to report back at the April monthly meeting with a list of the top five areas of ordinance review.

Motion made by Mr. Stokes, seconded and approved unanimously to take the annual meeting calendar from the table.

Attorney Petrarca stated that the Solicitor's Office did have a conflict with the fourth Thursday of the month at 6:00 pm, but suggested that the third Thursday of the month was possible.

Ms. Andrew inquired whether, in the event of Committee member attendance conflicts, an alternate could attend. Ms. Carney stated that there was no provision for Alternate in the formation of the Committee.

Motion made by Mr. Stokes and seconded to set the annual meeting calendar to be the third Thursday at 6:00 pm in the Council Chambers, with the next meeting on April 20, 2023.

Motion made by Ms. Carney, seconded and approved unanimously to amend the motion to include “with the exception of August 17.”

The main motion as amended was called; the main motion as amended was called.

Ms. Platner inquired about the format of the ordinance distribution. The Committee discussed their preference for receiving the code book.

Mr. Coulter inquired whether public input would be taken item by item or at the end of the meeting. Ms. Carney suggested that the Committee could conduct their discussion followed by public input. Ms. Andrew confirmed that the topics of discussion would be listed on each agenda.

ADJOURNMENT

Motion made by Mr. Coulter, seconded and approved unanimously to adjourn. Adjournment took place at 6:45 p.m.

APPROVED April 20, 2023

ATTEST:

Amy Rose Weinreich, CMC
Town Clerk