

CHARTER REVISION COMMISSION
KILLINGWORTH, CT
REGULAR MEETING MINUTES*

January 4, 2021

Conducted as a Virtual Meeting via GoToMeeting

Members Present: Robert Rimmer (Chair), Walter Adametz, Joan Gay, Nancy Gorski, Mary Meixell.

Members Absent: Mary Casey Jacob.

Others Present: Catherine Iino, Guy Vecchitto, Kristi LiDonni, Bill Burley, Eileen Blewitt, and Shauna Ham, clerk.

1) Call to order. At 7:04 pm, Chairman Rimmer called the meeting to order.

2) Public input.

- Guy Vecchitto: would like a postcard sent to each citizen announcing the survey with the information on how to access it online or how he/she can get a paper copy if they prefer.

3) Approval of December 21, 2020 minutes.

The minutes were reviewed and no amendments were made.

Motion: J Gay moved to approve the minutes of December 21, 2020. N Gorski seconded.

Vote: All in favor, motion passed unanimously.

4) Creation of Survey to be distributed to residents.

- M Meixell screen-shared two versions of the survey, prepared by the subcommittee:
 - 1) Designed to illicit comments with limited guidance and without pointed direction; seven (7) comment boxes (“feel free to comment on any or all of the articles of the Town Charter listed below”); seven article headings guide participant comment topics. The survey does not commit to there being any surveys in the future, but is described as a “preliminary survey,” serving as a first inquiry for input from the townspeople.
 - 2) Completely open-ended with only one comment box.
- Members discussed how to make sure that the Charter is accessible to participants. A link to the Charter should be included within the survey; if that is not possible, the introduction should include instructions on how to access the Charter through the Town website. A pdf of the Charter can be included as an attachment when the survey is distributed by email.
- The main question discussed was whether either version, both with very broad, open-ended comment boxes, are the best use of survey time.
 - Members are hesitant to presume what the issues are, which is why the initial thoughts had been to have an initial survey open-ended—to raise public awareness and see what concerns are brought up by the public, without the bias of direction—and to consider those

responses in developing a second, more pointed survey with multiple choice, yes/no, ranked, and direct opinion questions.

- Rimmer commented that the risk with putting out the open-ended survey is that they may not get a representative response, but that this would be okay if they follow up with more directed questions in a second survey, which would likely receive greater response. The Commission has been going over the Charter and discussing their thoughts, but perhaps there are other thoughts from town residents that will come out through these open-ended questions that are more critical.
- A challenge the Commission faces is that it is difficult to lead the questioning without biasing the answer.
- C Iino commented in response to the open-ended surveys as presented: participants would have to put a lot of time and energy into figuring out what they think of the Charter; most would likely need something to get them started, to know what the controversies were or what possible changes are being considered.
- N Gorski suggested: “Have you ever attended a Town meeting? Why/why not?”
- Members express concern about time; they consider using the subcommittee’s first version (seven comment boxes) as a template and adding more direction and specificity to each section. Rimmer commented that they are trying to promote communication and provoke interest in the Charter revision process (Commission meetings, Town meeting(s), voting, etc.), and need to find a place between open-ended and more directed questions, with the goal of getting more useful information sooner, without being too directed.
- Members agreed to convene a Special Meeting on Tuesday, January 12, 2021 for the purpose of discussing the survey so that it can be finalized and distributed as soon as possible.
- The survey subcommittee will meet and prepare another survey for the Special meeting, using the 7-box version as a template and adding a level of specificity to each question that will reflect what the Commission has talked about, especially the issues they think are likely to come to the table. The subcommittee asked members to email them any specific topic, question, or suggestions that they have.

5) Purchase of Survey Monkey Annual Subscription - \$384.00.

- M Meixell reported that comment boxes are only offered with a paid subscription, not the free version, and that the annual fee is \$384.
- C Iino stated that she will check with RiverCog, and see if the Commission could use their subscription access. She will have an answer to this for the Special meeting.
- Members have to keep the budget in mind when deciding how to distribute information about the survey; just the postage needed to mail a postcard to every household, for example, would have a substantial cost.

6) Stakeholder meeting discussion.

R Rimmer reported that the Fire commissioners and the Finance Director responded that they will attend the 1/19/21 Regular meeting. He has had some correspondence with a few groups, and still no

response from others. Rimmer will send invitations to the tax collector, assessor, and the Selectmen's administrative assistant.

7) Review of Article 8 in comparison to other town charters.

- Chair Rimmer had compiled and distributed to members a comparison of Killingworth Town Charter Article 8 to selected town charters. Members found that Killingworth's Article 8 is overall significantly more descriptive than other towns.
- N Gorski expressed that Article 8 is excessively descriptive and that they need feedback from Attorney Tycz as to what is required at minimum; R Rimmer reported that he has not yet received that information from Tycz.
- Members engaged in discussion and were in seeming agreement that there needs to be a great deal of consolidation and that the re-wording needs to allow the Town the flexibility to change as needed over time; job descriptions should be separate and distinct from the Charter. Perhaps can be limited to stating the position and how hired/appointed/elected.

8) Review and discussion of current charter.

Article IX, The Board of Finance

- **§9-1, Organization and Procedure**
 - §9-1(b) – where it reads, “At the first meeting following the municipal election in which the Board members are elected..”, they need to replace the word “elected” with “seated”
 - §9-1(c) – very prescriptive; need to soften and make less dictated.
- Overall, much of Article IX is redundant.
- **§9-4, Monitoring – Current Fiscal Year**
 - §9-4(b) – auditor eligibility and restrictions are unnecessary and inhibitive
 - §9-4(c) – may want to look into inflation, consider if \$20,000 is appropriate or if it should increase; perhaps be expressed as a percentage of a mill instead of a concrete number.
- **§9-5, Expenditures and Accounting**
 - §9-5(f) –bidding regulations need to change; \$10k is too low.

Chair Rimmer stated that the goal of the next Regular meeting will be to finish their discussion of Articles 9 and 10.

- To prepare for this, members should review their equivalent to Killingworth's Article 9 in their respective charters for comparison and discussion at the next Regular meeting.

9) Adjournment: At 8:46pm, N Gorski moved for adjournment. J Gay seconded.

Vote: all in favor, none opposed. Motion passed unanimously.

Respectfully submitted,

Shauna Ham