A meeting of the Charter Commission was held on Monday, November 13, 2017 at the North Scituate Community House, 546 W. Greenville Road, N. Scituate, RI. The meeting was called to order at 6:30 pm by Michael Marcello, Chair.

Members Present: Michael Marcello, Sharon Johnson, Susan Lessard, Sacha Hummel

David Campbell, Ellis Hopkins III

Members Absent: Vincent Ferrara

Motion made by Sacha Hummel, seconded by Sharon Johnson and voted to approve the minutes of the October 2, 2017 meeting. David Campbell abstained. Motion passes

Member Ellis Hopkins read a statement in regard to a flyer recently distributed by the Scituate Home Rule effort. (see attached statement)

Member Sacha Hummel gave a presentation on Town Budgets. (presentation is attached)

Member David Campbell gave a presentation on Financial Town Meetings. Before his presentation, Mr. Campbell stated he is not offended by the Home Rule Charter flyer.

After the presentations, Chair Marcello opened the meeting up to the commission members and members of the audience for questions.

Ray Grigelevich stated the citizens do not have the right to direct money to a specific line item at the Financial Town meeting. Chair Marcello said that is true with the School Department only, but they can with other municipal departments.

Mary Morse asked if the public can review the budget and make changes to it before it is approved. Chair Marcello responded that the budget is presented ahead of time, but the current 1915 act does not mandate public hearings on any budget. It is done as a matter of practice, but one of the goals of a charter is to lay out a definitive process that must be followed by an elected town council or school committee. Up until last year the School Committee, did not hold public hearings before passing the budget.

Chair Marcello presented a proposed procedure for voting and drafting proposed charter language. (see attached). The purpose of the procedure is to allow members to make motions and changes to the proposed charter with the understanding that no vote is final.

Members discussed the need for a town manager. Member Hopkins feels there is a need especially with for public safety issues. He said testimony by former Council President’s Budway and Richard also stated there is a need for a town manager. Chair Marcello noted that he was struck by the testimony of the town managers who testified before the committee and indicated that they could not name or know of the person who represented Scituate at the many state meeting that are held to educate the municipalities about various state/federal mandates or programs. As an example, he noted that for at least for a decade the town did not have an approved asset protection plan for the school department and we forfeited 35% of state re-imbursement for capital programs. Member Campbell feels the position should be elected. Other members feel the position should be appointed because there is not guarantee that person who would run for office in Scituate would have the necessary qualifications.

Motion made by Ellis Hopkins, seconded by Sacha Hummel and unanimously voted to include an appointed town manager in the draft charter language. Passed unanimously.

Members discussed Town Council, terms, term limits, and qualifications.

Motion made by Chair Marcello, seconded by Sacha Hummel and voted to include language in the draft charter stating the appointment of a town manager will require the majority plus one vote by the town council. Motion passes

Members discussed qualifications for a town manager. Member Campbell feels a master’s degree in management should be required. Member Hopkins said a planning management professional should be acceptable if no master’s degree. Member Johnson stated a masters in finance should also be acceptable.

Motion made by David Campbell, seconded by Ellis Hopkins and voted to require minimum qualifications for a town manager in the language of the draft charter. Motion passes. Members Campbell and Hopkins were asked to review language from existing charters on minimum qualifications for the Commission to consider at its next meeting.

The committee began a discussion about the proposed make-up of the town council. For town council Member Johnson would like a 7-member town council, one member from each current voting (3) districts, 4 town wide. Council member would serve a two year term with a term limit. Member Campbell would like a 7-member town council. Chair Marcello would like a 4-year term but feels it might be too much of a change from existing practice as well as too much of an initial commitment that may discourage people from wanting to run. Member Hopkins would like a 5-member town council. Discussion continued.

Motion made by David Campbell, seconded by Ellis Hopkins and voted to include the following language in the draft charter for town council: Two-year term with a limit on four consecutive terms. A person would be re-eligible to run again after four years of absence.

Chair Marcello noted that he was not opposed to term limits, but that the current proposal seems too complicated and that he would prefer a straight 8 year limit.

Campbell motion passed 6 to 1 with Marcello voting no.

Motion made by Susan Lessard, seconded by Sharon Johnson and voted to approve language in the draft charter to include a 7-member town council, 3 district members and 4 at large. Motion passes unanimously.

Mary Morse asked if a requirement can be added to the charter for an expense over a certain amount to require voter approval. Chair Marcello asked Member Hummel and Member Campbell to research other charters for similar language.

Ruth Strach spoke to Member Hopkin’s statement made at the beginning of the meeting. She said the flyer regarding the Home Rule Charter did not speak to any member of the Charter Commission. She said this commission was handpicked and not elected. Member Hopkins said he has a problem with the term handpicked. Chair Marcello said this is the most diverse committee in this Town. Ruth Strach said she gives credit to the committee for not having discussions outside of the meetings.

Tim McCormick said a ten-year life limit for town council would be good and keep it simple. He asked if the next meeting could address roles of the town manager, town clerk, and town treasurer.

More discussion continued.

The next meeting will be on November 27, 2017 at Clayville Elementary School.

Motion made by Sacha Hummel seconded by Ellis Hopkins, and voted to adjourn the meeting at 8:46 pm.

Attest:

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Gloria Taylor, Clerk

Refer to recording for complete discussion