

TOWN OF PLYMOUTH

CHARTER REVIEW COMMITTEE

MINUTES OF THE MEETING

September 5, 2023

*Pursuant to Governor Baker's March 12, 2020, Order Suspending Certain Provisions of the Open Meeting Law, G.L. c. 30A, §18 and further updates, this meeting was conducted in a **hybrid format**: In-person option: Town Hall · Great Hall - 26 Court Street · Plymouth MA 02360 Or Virtual option – a Zoom Webinar link was provided .*

These minutes are not verbatim – they are the recording secretary's interpretation of what took place at the meeting, per Open Meeting Law, G.L. C 30A, § 22.

The Charter Review Committee held a scheduled meeting on Tuesday, September 5, 2023, 6 PM, at the Plymouth Townhall, Ropewalk Meeting Room, 2nd Floor, 26 Court Street, Plymouth, MA 02360.

In-Person attendance: Chair David Golden, Vice Chair Alan Costello, members Timothy Lawlor, Len Levin, and Martha Vautrain.

Attendance via Zoom: Clerk Robert Zupperoli and members Joseph Hutchinson and Laurence Pizer

In person attendance also included committee alternates, Steve Bolotin and Michael Hanlon.

Absent: Betty Cavacco

Committee assistant, Michelle Turner, was also present.

CALL TO ORDER

David Golden, Chair called the meeting to order at 6 PM, followed by the Pledge of Allegiance.

STATUS OF ALTERNATE MEMBERS

David Golden – Chair – Presented a handout which outlined a proposal for the Alternate Member Role. Mr. Golden first noted that the Moderator's decision was not to reconvene to discuss this matter.

The alternate role is summarized below:

Consistent with past precedence in town (see, for example, Board of Health), alternate members of the CRC shall be permitted to participate in meetings through discussion. They may also request items to be placed on the agenda for future discussion, provide information to committee members, raise ideas, and make recommendations to the CRC. In addition, alternate members shall be permitted to fill-in and cast votes in the absence of full voting members in the following manner:

- 1. The first alternate shall fill-in when there is an absence of a single voting member.*
- 2. The second alternate shall fill-in when there is an absence of either (1) the first alternate and, simultaneously, the absence of a single voting member; or (2) when there is an absence of two or more voting members.*

A quorum of five out of nine members is necessary for business to be conducted. Alternate members shall only be counted in establishing a quorum when such alternate members are sitting as a voting member.

In the event of a vacancy resulting from the departure of a full voting member, the first alternate will become a permanent, full voting member; the second alternate will become the first alternate. In the event of a second vacancy resulting from the departure of a full voting member, the sole remaining alternate will become a full voting member. The committee, as thereupon constituted, shall decide by vote whether to request that the Appointment Committee reconvene for the purpose of appointing one or more alternates.

MOTION: Robert Zupperoli motioned to approve the Alternate Role proposal as drafted, 2nd by Timothy Lawlor. No discussion. Roll call vote taken.
 Approved unanimously.

	YES	NO	ABST
Betty Cavacco --ABSENT			
Alan Costello	X		
Joe Hutchinson	X		
Tim Lawlor	X		
Len Levin	X		
Larry Pizer	X		
Marth Vautrain	X		
Robert Zupperoli	X		
David Golden-CHAIR	X		
Steve Bolotin*	X		
Mike Hanlon*	X		

*It was noted that the alternates votes were taken but not part of the quorum vote count.

Nominations taken for the first alternate:

MOTION – Timothy Lawlor motioned for Steve Bolotin as the 1st Alternate.
 2nd by Alan Costello. Mr. Bolotin accepted the nomination.
 Approved unanimously.

	YES	NO	ABST
Betty Cavacco --ABSENT			
Alan Costello	X		
Joe Hutchinson	X		
Tim Lawlor	X		
Len Levin	X		
Larry Pizer	X		
Marth Vautrain	X		
Robert Zupperoli	X		
David Golden-CHAIR	X		
*Steve Bolotin	X		
*Mike Hanlon		X	

In Betty Cavacco’s absence, Mr. Bolotin’s role as the first alternate was elevated for the remainder of the meeting, with voting rights.

MOTION – Alan Costello motioned for Mike Hanlon as 2nd alternate.
 2nd by Timothy Lawlor.
 Motion approved unanimously.

	YES	NO	ABST
Betty Cavacco --ABSENT			
Alan Costello	X		
Joe Hutchinson	X		
Tim Lawlor	X		
Len Levin	X		
Larry Pizer	X		
Marth Vautrain	X		
Robert Zupperoli	X		
David Golden-CHAIR	X		
*Steve Bolotin	X		
*Mike Hanlon		X	

MINUTES OF THE MEETING

July 24, 2023- Mr. Lawlor motioned to approve as amended, 2nd by Len Levin. Approved unanimously.

	YES	NO	ABST
Betty Cavacco --ABSENT			
Alan Costello	X		
Joe Hutchinson	X		
Tim Lawlor	X		
Len Levin	X		
Larry Pizer	X		
Marth Vautrain	X		
Robert Zupperoli	X		
David Golden-CHAIR	X		
Steve Bolotin	X		
Mike Hanlon - NO VOTE			

August 9, 2023 – Mr. Lawlor motioned to approve as amended, 2nd by Mr. Levin. Approved unanimously.

	YES	NO	ABST
Betty Cavacco -- ABSENT			
Alan Costello	X		
Joe Hutchinson	X		
Tim Lawlor	X		
Len Levin	X		
Larry Pizer	X		
Marth Vautrain	X		
Robert Zupperoli	X		
David Golden-CHAIR	X		
Steve Bolotin	X		
Mike Hanlon - NO VOTE			

PUBLIC COMMENT

Kevin Lynch – Expressed his concern for better communication throughout the Town.

No further Public Comment made at this time.

DISCUSSION TOPICS

DIAGNOSING PROBLEMS WITH THE CHARTER:

- *WHAT ARE AREAS FOR IMPROVEMENT IN OUR CURRENT FORM OF GOVERNMENT*
- *WHAT ARE SOME BLINDSPOTS IN OUR CHARTER?*
- *WHAT CREATES CONFUSION, FRICTION OR FRUSTRATION?*
- *WHAT IN THE CHARTER CREATES UNNECESSARY COSTS TO THE TAXPAYERS?*

IDENTIFYING COMMITTEE PRIORITIES:

- WHAT DO WE WANT TO ACCOMPLISH THROUGH OUR REVIEW?
- BY WHAT MEASURES WILL THE COMMITTEE BE DEEMED SUCCESSFUL?
-

Steve Bolotin

He noted that there are problems with the document (Charter) itself as well as how the Town operates the government.

For example, he used “repetitive statements concerning State laws”. He suggested a statement made at the beginning of the document “This Charter is subject to and will follow all State laws, current and further enacted.”

The Charter goes into great detail about the administrative functions of the government. He wants the Committee to determine how much detail is needed in the Charter.

Mr. Levin noted there are areas where greater detail is required.

Mr. Bolotin agreed.

Robert Zupperoli – Would like more discussion about the roles of alternate members for all committees throughout town.

Mr. Zupperoli would like to see better control in the general administration of Committee membership, i.e., date of appointment, length of term and term expiration.

Martha Vautrain – Discussion on the balance of powers between the Executive and Legislative branches.

Ms. Vautrain looks forward to the invitations this Committee will extend to other boards, executive and legislative leadership, department heads, unions, etc. and listening to their recommendations.

Mr. Golden agreed that invitations will be extended to many groups.

Ms. Vautrain - regarding communication concerns –she noted that the recent Commission proposed a large section to communication improvements.

Laurence Pizer – Has concern with too much detail in Departments that are called-outs in the Charter.

He noted that some but not all departments are mentioned in the Charter, but Department management should all be left to the Town Manager.

Alan Costello – Would like to hear a discussion about how better an Approved Town Meeting Article could be followed through the process, especially paying close attention to the allocation of the project budget.

Mr. Zupperoli stated that the Advisory & Finance Committee has a mechanism for review of article funding. Cautioned against repeating procedures already in place.

Mr. Costello mentioned there are also projects that are funded that do not move forward.

Joseph Hutchinson – Agreed that there are projects that get funded, do not move forward and the funds are reappropriated. This needs to be addressed.

Mr. Levin – Concerned that the Charter might not be the appropriate place to handle budget concerns.

Mr. Bolotin – What needs to be defined is who is responsible for certain functions. He looks forward to discussion with the Advisory & Finance Committee (A & F).

Timothy Lawlor – Stated that all A & F discussions have some sort of financial impact on the Town.

Joseph Hutchinson – focused on the layers of town government - the Charter, the Bylaws, the Policies.

Martha Vautrain – Her focus is not on whether the document is more or less detailed or more or less theoretical, but rather that it solves problems that are identified.

She agreed that funded projects need to be followed with the aid of an “oversight” committee.

Robert Zupperoli – as a member of the leadership team of the A & F. Budget discussions begin in late December and continue up to spring Town Meeting. There is a joint meeting with the school committee with an initial budget presentation at that time. There are follow-up school meetings with their various cost centers, there are subcommittees of the A& F that review each of the budgets of the Town departments.

There are almost 5 months of budget discussion and municipal finances. All meetings are open to the public, town meeting members, etc. to attend and garner information.

There are good mechanisms in place for the A & F.

Michael Hanlon – Concern with voter turnout, town vs. city elections – discuss moving the vote to the fall. To streamline article presentations to precinct caucuses, the presentation forum was introduced.

This has transitioned to the Moderator conducting the article presentations.

Discuss the original Oversight Committee idea. The Advisory and Finance Committee has the right to request any information they need from departments to make decisions. He would like to empower the A & F to ask for information and expect to receive the information, prior to making their decisions.

Len Levin –From a business sense he asked– do committees need Mission Statements – and what is each committee’s purpose?

PUBLIC COMMENT:

Al Denardo , precinct 17.

Mentioned that the prior Commission proposed a Finance Committee rather than an Advisory & Finance Committee. He would like the Advisory & Finance Committee to render more “finance” opinions.

Emily Tompkins, resident of Summer Street.

Attempting to understand how Plymouth’s government works. She is also a member of the League of Women Voters.

Concern that the average, especially younger residents, do not understand the Charter.

There was no further public comment.

NEXT MEETING – SEPTEMBER 19, 2023

Topic will be the Preamble and Chapter 1.

NEW/OLD COMMITTEE BUSINESS:

- Martha Vautrain asked if the Committee should also be prepared to begin discussion on Chapter 2 since the Preamble and Ch. 1 was just 3 pages?
- Consensus was to stay with the schedule as outlined.
- As submitted by a committee member, a brief discussion on the recent Attorney General’s State determination on the Zoning Board of Appeals and the Select Board conducting an inappropriate executive session.

The Chair reinforced the open meeting law presentation given to the Committee by the Town Clerk, Kelly McElreath, as well as the established Committee Rules. Committee members are encouraged to go through the Chair with information they would like everyone to receive.

Consensus was to take no action on the part of the Charter Review Committee in response to the AG’s decision.

- Committee Rules will be resubmitted to Committee members with an updated date.

ADJOURN

The meeting adjourned at 7:29 PM

Respectfully submitted,

Michelle A. Turner

Michelle A. Turner

Minutes Approved on: October 3, 2023