

# ASHLAND CHARTER REVIEW COMMITTEE

JUNE 22, 2016 – Room A

## MINUTES

Attendees: Roberta Soolman, Chair (Roberta), Alexis Christopher (Alexis), Betsy Emberley (Betsy), Steve Greenberg (Steve), KG Narayana (KG), Ken Rush (Ken)

Absent: Joe Magnani (Joe)

Guest: Michael Herbert (left at 8:20 pm)

### 1. Welcome and Introductions

- Roberta called the meeting to order at 7:09, welcomed everyone and thanked Michael for coming to the meeting.

### 2. Discussion with Michael Herbert, Town Manager

- **Town Manager's relationship between the Board of Health, Planning Board, Library Trustees and the staff person who works for those boards:**
  - Michael believes the Town Manager should retain administrative authority over the relevant staff member and the relevant board should set policy for the staff member.
  - Michael stated we need to outline a better way to communicate between these boards and the Town Manager, and staff evaluations need to be done jointly.
  - KG believes that the Health Agent should be appointed by the Board of Health as per Massachusetts General Laws.
  - Steve stated that he believes the level of the Library Director is that of a department head while he believes the health agent is not.
  - Roberta noted that the language for all three boards is the same in Charter and that each section in the Charter references the state laws and the town bylaws with exactly the same language.
  - Michael expressed that we need to find a better way to formalize the setting of joint goals for the relevant town employee. Disciplinary issues are uncomfortable, but if they arise during the employee's work, how does that communication and issue get resolved between the Town Manager and the board? He will provide more detailed suggestions at a later date. He stated that it's important for the Town Manager to retain that authority from an organizational standpoint to meet the vision of the community and Board of Selectmen.

- Michael is working on a re-structuring that would create a Human Services Department as an umbrella for the Senior Center, Recreation Department, Veteran's Services and Youth and Family Services. Restructuring, according to the Charter, has to be presented to the Board of Selectmen for approval.
- The committee stated we need to have a mechanism to remove members of a board. Steve commented that other Charters make that a Board of Selectmen and Town Manager responsibility. Michael stated that there should be a way to allow boards to get their work back on track. Alternatively, you could limit to one year terms. You need to be clear about the outcome and what you're trying to achieve. Roberta asked Steve which Charters had clauses to rescind appointments. Steve mentioned Concord and North Reading as examples.
- Michael suggested two changes to the Town Manager position that are more in line with current norms: a five year contract instead of three (the current provision in the Charter) and removal without cause by a 4-1 super-majority.
- Michael discussed merged town functions.
  - Andover has been successful in consolidating municipal and school human resources as has Barnstable. Winthrop has also done it, but not sure how it's working. The schools have a different cadence because of steps and lanes as well as end of school year and beginning of school year separations and hiring.
  - Merged IT has gone well for both the town and the schools.
  - Facilities maintenance has been a little more difficult.

### **3. De-briefing of 6/8/16 meeting with Michael Ward**

- Roberta distributed Collins Center proposal for assistance. Discussion ensued regarding questions committee members wanted Roberta to ask the Collins Center regarding specifics and deliverables under the scope of work.
- The funds would come from the Town Manager's account.
- Steve was asked to email East Longmeadow and Framingham to ask them about their experience with the Collins Center regarding scope and cost, and KG will email Dracut.
- Steve will also check with Tara Ward about Framingham's experience, although it will need to be whittled down because they're operating under a Charter Commission (not a Charter Review Committee), and are looking at a full charter revision to change from a town to a city.
- We will all send Roberta anything we want to be included in the scope.

### **4. Confirmation of Date at Town Tent at Farmers' Market: July 2nd**

### **5. Approval of minutes:**

- Minutes from 6/6/16: KG moved, Steve seconded and the committee voted 5-0-1 to approve the minutes (Alexis abstained since she was not present on 6/6/16).
- Approval of the minutes from 5/11/16 were tabled until next meeting.

**6. Schedule of Interviews with Other Committees and Town Staff:**

- Roberta will contact relevant staff (e.g., department heads and those who staff committees/boards) and others will be sent questionnaire.

**7. Other Business:**

- Betsy will contact Susan Robie to inquire about using the Town Survey Monkey account for an online resident survey.

**8. Next Meeting: 6/28/16**

KG moved, Steve seconded, and the committee voted 6-0-0 to adjourn at 9:26 p.m.