

TOWN OF GROTON
 CHARTER REVISION COMMISSION
 REGULAR MEETING MINUTES
 NOVEMBER 21, 2016
 TOWN HALL ANNEX—COMMUNITY ROOM 2

Chair Pro Tem Aument called the meeting to order at 6:35 p.m.

I. ROLL CALL

Members Present: Chair Pro Tem Scott Aument, Commissioners Kathy Chase, Jane Dauphinais, Robert Frink, Patrice Granatsoky, Rosanne Kotowski, Brandon Marley, Daniel Mello, Darcy Peruzzotti, and Jennifer L. White
 Absent: Chair Dee Hauber

Also in attendance were Mayor Flax and Councilor Peruzzotti.

II. APPROVAL OF MINUTES

A motion was made by Commissioner Peruzzotti, seconded by Commissioner Chase, to approve the minutes of the October 17, 2016 meeting.
 Commissioner Kotowski amended the minutes.
 Vote: 9-0-1 Commissioner Dauphinais abstained.

III. COMMUNICATIONS

a. Chair Pro Tem Aument stated that he had received communication from Betty Russ regarding non-resident taxpayers voting on the budget and Margaret Adams who is in favor of a budget referendum.

b. Commissioner Chase stated that she received an e-mail from Betty Russ.

c. Commissioner Frink stated that he attended the joint RTM/Town Council meeting. He stated that he spoke with RTM Moderator Scott Newsome, and he will try to meet with him regarding Charter Revision issues.

d. Commissioner Kotowski stated that she attended the joint RTM/Town Council meeting and the end of the Board of Education budget meeting with the Town Council.

e. Commissioner Granatosky stated that all of the Commissioners received e-mails from Keith Hedrick, Conrad Heede, and Mary von Dorster who are opposed to a budget referendum.

f. Commissioner Dauphinais confirmed that she had received the e-mails that Commissioner Granatosky had referenced, and she stated that she received additional communication regarding non-resident property owners voting.

Commissioner Granatosky made a motion, seconded by Commissioner Dauphinais , to suspend the rules to allow public comment. The motion carried unanimously.

IV. PUBLIC COMMENT

- a. Margaret Peggy Adams, 30 Circle Avenue, Groton, stated that she has been working on the issue of voting on referendum as a non-resident taxpayer since 2009. She noted that she was told that the issue could be raised during Charter revision. She stated that she would like to vote on items that affect her taxes, and most recently, she was not able to vote on the school project from the recent election. She stated that she sent 2,040 letters to non-resident taxpayers, and she noted that she has heard from four or five people, but she hopes for more of a response. She stated that she would appreciate it if the Commission could look at the issue and see non-resident taxpayers as concerned members of the community who want to see Groton grow and prosper.

Commissioner Kotowski stated that she has heard from three people from Ledyard who are Groton property owners and support Ms. Adams' position.

V. NEW BUSINESS

Chair Pro Tem Aument stated that he had a discussion with Chair Hauber, and it was determined that going forward, strict votes will not be taken, but there will be informal votes for the parking lot. He noted that he appreciates the patience that the Commissioners had at the last meeting.

Commissioner Frink stated that votes should be taken for motions. He stated that when motions are made and votes are taken, it would be helpful to have them written before voting occurs.

In response to Commissioner Mello, Commissioner Frink stated that the motions from the last meeting are still on the table.

Commissioner Granatosky stated that it will be important to document who votes in favor, against, or abstains from motions.

Commissioner Frink distributed a document regarding 3.5.2 – holding multiple offices. The document was received for record and is included in the minutes. The Historic District Commission was added to the list of land use authorities.

Commissioner White suggested that Tier I and Tier II Commissions be identified. She suggested that somebody could not be on two Tier I Commissions.

The Commission discussed identifying Tier I and Tier II Commissions.

In response to Commissioner Mello, Commissioner Frink stated that he will re-write proposed changes to 3.5.2 for the next meeting including information that the Town Council will determine Tier I and Tier II Commissions.

Commissioner Dauphinais stated that she is not aware of people who are trying to serve on too many Commissions, and she is unclear about what problem this proposed change

is aiming to solve. She stated that the Statute states that a person can be on more than one Commission as long as it is not one with land use statutory authority.

Commissioner Frink stated that the Statute does not state land use. He stated that he will re-write proposed changes to 3.5.2.

Chair Pro Tem stated that 3.5.2 will be revisited at the next meeting.

In response to Commissioner Mello, Town Clerk Moukawsher stated that changing the first Tuesday of December, to the first Tuesday after the election for the Town Council to take office, was not voted on.

Commissioner Kotowski stated that after speaking with a former Town Councilor, she was given four areas that could help town government, and she suggested they be placed on next meeting's agenda. The four sections are: 5.3, 5.7, 7.3, and 7.1.2. She stated that the former Councilor suggested the Mayor create Town Council agendas, or have input with the Town Manager; the language that prohibits the Town Council from obtaining information directly from department heads be removed; the Council should have input when department head level positions are being filled; a simple majority should be necessary for the removal of the Town Manager.

Commissioners Dauphinais and Frink stated that the agenda is developed with the Town Manager.

In response to Commissioner Dauphinais, Town Clerk Moukawsher stated that Town Council rules outline how the agenda is developed, and it is not in the Town Charter.

Chair Pro Tem Aument stated that the topics raised by Commissioner Kotowski will be added to the next agenda.

Commissioner Frink distributed a document with proposed changes for 3.3.2. The document was received for record and is included in the minutes.

Commissioner Kotowski stated that she is in favor of election by district.

Commissioner Peruzzotti stated that one of the points when this issue was discussed was whether there was a RTM or not. She stated that if there was no RTM, then she wanted to look at a Council that was elected by district.

Commissioner Mello stated that decisions are contingent on whether there is an RTM or not. He stated that his largest priority is the budget referendum and then the next priority is the RTM.

Commissioner Peruzzotti stated that there needs to be a problem to solve before changes are made.

Commissioner White stated that her priorities are Board of Finance or RTM and power of the Council to act as a board for the Town Manager.

Chair Pro Tem Aument stated that the Commission has to deal with the big picture items first. He noted the problems are fiscally based and comments from the public encouraged looking at a budget referendum.

Commissioner Frink stated that the Commission needs to look at the budget process.

Commissioner Granatosky encouraged the Commission to focus on the topics on this evening's agenda.

Chair Pro tem Aument stated that the budget process could be added to next week's agenda.

Commissioner Frink reviewed the Generalized Budget Process flow chart he created. The chart has been included in the minutes.

Commissioner Dauphinais stated that one of the problems she is trying to solve is the complicated budget process. She noted that the problems with the RTM are: it is too big; the political parties have a hard time finding enough volunteers to serve and do a good job; with so much government in Groton, it is hard for proactive policy and investments in infrastructure to make it through the budget process. She stated that she could not support a referendum unless something was taken away from the budget process.

Commissioner Mello stated that the Council would need a Board of Finance if there was no RTM.

Commissioner Dauphinais stated that she would like to see a Council and a Board of Finance. She stated that based upon the research she conducted through OPM; it is not common for a Connecticut town of Groton's size to have a budget referendum, and she stated that there is no town that has a population near Groton's population that has a budget referendum. She noted that a referendum becomes expensive, and it is hard to explain a budget that serves 40,000 people.

Commissioner Marley stated that the Commission should go through a section of the Charter, make decisions, and then move to other sections. He stated that a vote on one section could be contingent on another section.

Commissioner Granatosky stated that the towns with the larger populations with DRGs that are similar to Groton have professional staffs that guide the town in public policy, and it is not left to chance by way of referendum.

Commissioner Chase stated that the larger items should be dealt with first, such as RTM and referendum.

Chair Pro Tem Aument recognized Councilor Peruzzotti. She stated that she agrees with the Commission approaching issues step-by-step, identifying top three categories, and then including sections that fall under each large category.

Commissioner Mello stated that the discussions have been good, and he feels that the Commission is moving and the process has been valuable.

The Commissioners discussed how the Charter Revision process will proceed.

Commissioner Peruzzotti stated that the form of government should be looked at first followed by the structure of government and the sections that fall under it. She stated that the problem the Commission is looking at is that the government is too costly and cumbersome and how to change it to make it more streamlined. She stated that the Commission should go through the Charter chapter by chapter to see how it can be changed to solve the problem.

Commissioner Frink stated that the best way to address government structure is through the budget process.

Commissioner Dauphinais stated that she agrees with Commissioner Frink's approach of looking at the budget process first.

In response to Commissioner Dauphinais, Commissioner Kotowski stated that the Commission would need to decide if the RTM would be replaced with a Board of Finance. She stated that she would like to know how a Board of Finance works with generating revenue.

Chair Pro Tem Aument stated that he supports taking something out of the process before adding anything else, such as a Board of Finance.

Commissioner Kotowski stated that the process could be that the budget goes from the Town Manager to the Board of Finance before the Town Council.

In response to Commissioner Granatosky, Chair Pro Tem Aument, Commissioners Frink, Kotowski, and Dauphinais stated that the differences between the Board of Finance as a budgetary body and the RTM as a budgetary body is that it would be smaller, would meet often, would deal with revenue, and would have people who are familiar with finance.

Chair Pro Tem Aument stated that the Board of Finance could be elected or appointed.

In response to Commissioner Granatosky, Commissioner Frink stated that the Board of Finance is advisory, would have power over mid-year transfers between departments, and tests affordability. He stated that establishing a Board of Finance would be an effort.

Town Clerk Moukawsher stated that previously the Town of Groton had a Board of Selectmen and a Board of Finance.

Commissioner White stated that the RTM was supposed to be temporary.

Commissioner Kotowski stated that a good reason for a referendum is that it addresses the problem that a lot of people feel there is not enough voter participation.

Commissioner Mello stated that the number of people voting is not stellar.

Commissioner Kotowski stated that a lot of people voted in the November 08, 2016 election.

Commissioner Granatosky stated that the Town would be lucky if thirty percent of people vote at a local election.

Commissioner Dauphinais stated that there would be a special election in May on the budget.

Commissioner Kotowski stated that voters are educated, and the recent school referendum passed by five percent, and she feels it is hypocritical to put conditions on a referendum.

Commissioner Dauphinais stated that a large bond referendum does not come up every year, required an active campaign, PACs, and she does not envision the Town going through that process every year to pass a budget. She stated that she is not comfortable reducing the Town budget every year to a political campaign; it is too complicated.

In response to Commissioner Kotowski, Commissioner Dauphinais stated that people have a say because they can elect members of the Town Council and the RTM.

Commissioner Mello stated that that the Commission needs to identify big ticket items.

Commissioner Chase stated that the big ticket items are: Town Council, RTM, Finance Board, and referendum with a trigger.

The Commission decided the Board of Finance's specifics should be on the next agenda.

Commissioner Peruzzotti stated that the Commission should list pros and cons of each topic at the next meeting.

Commissioner Dauphinais stated that it is important to think about how many stops, or reviews, the budget should have. She noted that most towns have two elected bodies review the budget. She stated that in some cases, such as in larger towns and cities, there is no referendum. She noted that some towns have a separate referendum for the Town and the Education budgets.

Commissioner Frink stated that there is value in having the threat of a referendum.

Commissioner Granatosky stated that if there are proposals at the next meeting, then Commissioners should be prepared to defend them. She noted that she likes to have time to read information before a meeting.

Chair Pro Tem Aument stated that information should be sent electronically before the meeting.

Commissioner White stated that there should be a 24-hour rule so that the Commissioners have at least 24-hours to digest information before the meeting.

In response to Commissioner Mello, Chair Pro Tem Aument stated that the RTM and referendum will be looked at next meeting along with the main topics identified earlier at this meeting.

Chair Pro Tem Aument recognized Mayor Flax. Mayor Flax questioned the timeline the Commission has to submit recommendations. He stated that he thinks each topic should be debated and decided before moving to another topic.

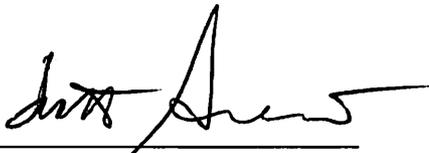
Commissioner Dauphinais stated that she agrees with the Mayor in that a discussion should be focused on a specific topic before moving on to another topic.

Chair Pro Tem Aument stated that the RTM and Board of Finance will be discussed at the next meeting.

The Commission discussed the schedule of upcoming meetings.

A motion to adjourn was made by Commissioner Peruzzotti, seconded by Commissioner Marley. The motion carried unanimously. Chair Pro Tem Aument adjourned the meeting at 8:15 p.m.

Attest:

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Scott Aument", written over a horizontal line.

Scott Aument
Secretary

3.5.2 *Holding multiple offices.*

No elected official may occupy at the same time another elective office nor be appointed to serve as a member of any permanent town ABC, which was created pursuant to the specific provisions of the CGS. ~~No appointed member of any permanent town ABC, which was created pursuant to the specific provisions of a CGS shall serve as a member of any other statutorily authorized town ABC, or hold any elective town office at the same time. These prohibitions shall not apply in any case where dual office holding is authorized by the CGS.~~ An appointed member of a permanent town ABC may be appointed to another ABC at the discretion of the Town Council. This shall not apply to ABC's that have land use authority or function as an appeal authority including the following;

- Board of Assessment Appeals
- Building Code Board of Appeals
- Conservation Commission
- Housing Code Board of Appeals
- Inland Wetlands Agency
- Planning Commission
- Zoning Board of Appeals
- Zoning Commission

Historic District Commission

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Town Council – Members and Term

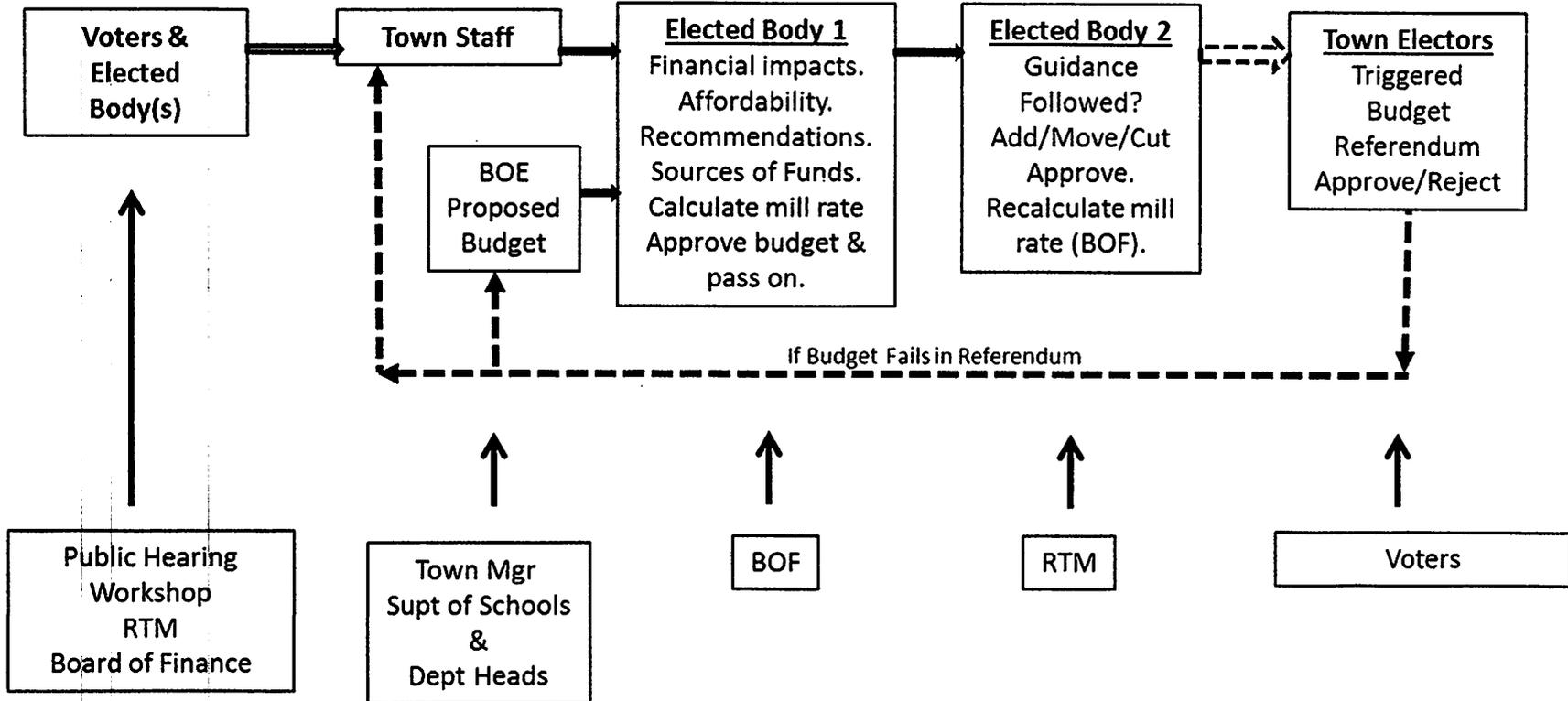
3.3.2 *Town Council (Council).*

~~Nine Seven (97)~~ members of the Council each for a term of ~~two four (24)~~ years; minority representation shall ~~not~~ apply to the Council. Members shall be elected by voting district with each district being allotted one Town Council seat. -per exception in CGS 9-167a.

Variables

1. Number of members
2. Term
3. Minority Representation
4. Election by District

Generalized Budget Process



Section 5.3 Meetings; Quorum;

.... Address the Council. Add The Mayor shall create the agenda for the Town Council meetings. All meetings

Section 5.7 relative to Administrative Services

Remove “The Council and its members shall deal officially with the town staff solely through the Town Manager”.

7.3 Appointment of Department Heads and Other Officers

The Town Manager Add with Council input shall appoint, and may remove,

Section 7.1.2 Removal

Change to simple majority the number of votes necessary to remove the Town Manager. I believe that the CRC already voted to change it to 6? Or is that in the Parking Lot?

Source: OPM

Municipality (Approved budgets by Referendum in 2011- 2014. Indents indicate towns with automatic referendums)	2015 Population	Gov't Structure	FY 2017 Mill Rate	Fire District Mill Rate
· Andover	3,262	Select/TMtg	30.7	
Ashford	4,251	Select/TMtg	32.4	
· Avon	18,414	Council/Mgr	29.5	
· Bethel	19,529	Select/TMtg	32.2	
· Bolton	4,947	Select/TMtg	37.5	
Brookfield	17,143	Select/TMtg	26.4	
Canterbury	5,089	Select/TMtg	24.5	
Canton	10,330	Select/TMtg	29.8	
Chaplin	2,255	Select/TMtg	35.1	
Cheshire – By Petition	29,262	Council/Mgr	25.6	
· Clinton	13,047	Select/TMtg	27.1	
Colchester	16,130	Select/TMtg	30.9	
Colebrook	1,436	Select/TMtg	29.3	
Coventry	12,438	Council/Mgr	31.2	
Cromwell – by Petition	14,034	Council/Mgr	31.4	2.25
East Granby	5,199	Select/TMtg	31.1	
East Haddam	9,081	Select/TMtg	29.4	
· East Hampton	12,858	Council/Mgr	29.4	
East Lyme	19,343	Select/TMtg	25.4	
East Windsor	11,400	Select/TMtg (4yr)	30.9	1.2
Easton	7,625	Select/TMtg	30.8	
Ellington	15,916	Select/TMtg	30.5	
· Farmington	25,629	Council/Mgr	25.8	
Granby	11,298	Select/TMtg	36.9	
Griswold	11,830	Select/TMtg	27.1	
· Guilford	22,350	Select/TMtg	28.7	
Hampton	1,849	Select/TMtg	28.5	
Hartland	2,127	Select/TMtg	25.5	
Hebron	9,552	Select/TMtg (4yr)	35.6	
Killingly	17,131	Council/Mgr	27.3	
Killingworth	6,455	Select/TMtg	25.9	
· Ledyard	15,025	Mayor Council (4 yr)	31.9	
Lisbon	4,310	Select/TMtg	20.5	
Litchfield	8,212	Select/TMtg	26.7	
· Madison	18,223	Select/TMtg	26.5	
Middlebury	7,634	Select/TMtg	31.0	
· Monroe	19,833	Select/TMtg	35.0	

Rec'd 11-21-16

New Fairfield	1,426	Select/TMtg	28.7	
New Hartford	6,764	Select/TMtg	29.5	
New Milford	27,276	Mayor/Council	26.8	
· Newtown	28,022	Select/TMtg	33.6	
North Haven	23,828	Select/TMtg	30.5	
North Stonington	5,256	Select/TMtg	27.0	
Old Saybrook	10,160	Select/TMtg	19.3	
Orange	13,944	Select/TMtg	32.2	
Oxford	13,013	Select/TMtg	24.2	
Plainville	17,773	Council/Mgr	32.0	
Plymouth	11,813	Mayor/Council	36.0	
Portland	9,391	Select/TMtg	32.5	
Preston	4,707	Select/TMtg	23.8	
Prospect	9,739	Mayor/Council	29.9	
Redding	9,293	Select/TMtg	29.2	1.59
Ridgefield	25,244	Select/TMtg	26.7	
Salem	4,183	Select/TMtg	31.7	
Seymour	16,475	Select/TMtg	36.0	
Sherman	3,668	Select/TMtg	20.3	
· Simsbury	24,348	Select/TMtg	37.1	1.23
Somers	11,432	Select/TMtg	24.2	
Southbury	19,675	Select/TMtg	28.8	
Sprague	2,951	Select/TMtg	31.5	
Stafford	11,837	Select/TMtg	33.5	
Stonington	18,370	Select/TMtg	22.3	.7-3.0
Thomaston	7,621	Select/TMtg	34.1	
Thompson	9,290	Select/TMtg	26.1	
· Tolland	14,849	Council/Mgr	34.2	
Vernon	28,959	Mayor/Council	38.0	
Watertown	21,911	Council/Mgr	30.9	
Westbrook	6,902	Select/TMtg	23.1	
Weston	10,387	Select/TMtg	28.6	1.6
Willington	5,908	Select/TMtg	27.7	
Winchester	10,829	Council/Mgr	33.5	
· Windham	24,799	Council/Mgr	NA	
· Windsor	29,016	Council/Mgr	31.5	
Windsor Locks	12,537	Select/TMtg	26.7	
Woodbury	9,636	Select/TMtg	26.3	
GROTON	39,692	Council/Mgr	21.73	
Groton Sewer District				0.25
Groton, City				5.432
Poquonock Bridge				6.35
Mystic Fire				2.31

Noank Fire	1.49
Old Mystic Fire	2.95
Groton Center Fire	3.50
W. Pleasant Valley Fire	3.80
Mumford Cove	0.31
GLP Assoc.	2.994

CRC STRUCTURE THOUGHTS

CRC	TRIG/REF		TC	RTM	FB	TM
Dan	Y	Y	Y	N	N	Y
Darcy/Jane	Y	N	Y ⁷ DISTRICT 2 AT LARGE	N	Y AT LARGE	Y
Jenn	N	N	Y ⁷ DISTRICT 2 AT LARGE	N	Y ELECT	Y
Brandon/Patrice	N	N	Y	Y SHRINK TO HALF	N	Y
Scott/Roseanne	N	Y	Y	N	Y	Y
Bob	Y	N	Y ⁷ ONLY	N	Y	Y
Kathy	N	N	Y	Y SHRINK TO HALF	N	Y

TRIG/REF – TRIGGER/REFERENDUM

TC – TOWN COUNCIL

RTM – REPRESENTATIVE TOWN MEETING

FB – FINANCIAL BOARD

TM – TOWN MANAGER

Reviewed at mts
11-21-16