A meeting of the Charter Commission was held on Monday, August 21, 2017 in the Town Council Chambers, 195 Danielson Pike, 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, Vincent Ferrera, Ellis Hopkins III

Motion made by David Campbell, seconded by Sacha Hummel, and voted to approve the minutes of the July 31, 2017 meeting.

Motion made by Susan Lessard, seconded by Sacha Hummel and voted to appoint Sharon Johnson as Vice Chair of the Charter Commission.

The summary of other RI Municipal Charters from the RI Office of Municipal Affairs was distributed to members.

Chair Marcello read into the record a letter sent to the following previous Town Council Presidents: Alvah Vernava, Richard Iverson, Ted Richard, III, Robert Budway, and Charles Collins, Jr. inviting them to attend the meeting tonight. Responses were received from Ted Richard and Robert Budway that they wound attend the meeting tonight.

Ted Richard explained he served as Council President from 1996-2006. At that time, the Council relied on department heads to run their department. Council liaisons were appointed to each department. During that time the Town Clerk, Roger Medbury was very strong and considered to be the Town Manager. When he left

Pat Salley took that role. When Peggy Long was elected as Town Clerk, the powers of the Town clerk were pulled back. Mr. Richard stated it was a political move. Chair Marcello stated that left a vacuum to be filled and asked who was looking out for the long-term interest of the Town and who was overseeing opportunities available through the State. Mr. Richard said they relied on State Reps and legal counsel for the State opportunities. The Council held work sessions for the public to bring forward items they would like added the Council agenda. Agendas were posted ahead of time to give people an opportunity to review the items and react to the Council before the meetings. Member Hopkins asked Mr. Richard if he thought a Town Manager was necessary. Member Campbell asked how he felt about an elected Town Manger. Mr. Richard said he is not opposed if the person is chosen by the people. Experience and the job description would be very important. More discussion continued.

Member Ferrera stated he is having a hard time with the political back and forth. He said he does not want to waste ten months of his life for the charter to fail. He said the committee looks like a joke to the community. He said Chair Marcello should step down as chair. More discussion continued.

Chair Marcello explained the Town Council unanimously passed a resolution appointing him as chair with the charge of the committee to pursue a legislative charter.

Robert Budway spoke about his time on the Council. He served as Vice President for four years and President for four years. He felt the employee handbook was an important document to update on a

regular basis. He met with department heads at their office prior to the monthly Council meeting to discuss agenda items or any other concerns. He also met with members from the School Department. He would bring the information back to the other members of the Council. He said he did have flexibility in his work schedule to take the time to this, as well as, having other Council members take on some of the responsibilities. He said he feels it is not practical to have one person oversee everything in the Town. It is important to have competent people at each location in Town.

Member Hopkins stated he agrees competent people are important. He also feels having someone oversee the synchronization of the departments is also important.

Various members from the audience spoke.

Melissa Ferrera said the position of Town Manager or Administrator seems overwhelming for one person.

Tom Galligan said he has lived in Town for 40 years and is has been happy until now.

Tim McCormick said the position being talked about would be a COO, an extension of the Town Council. The Town Council would still make the decisions.   Similar to the School Department with the Superintendent. The biggest concern for him is the speed the Commission is moving.

Ruth Strach also said the speed is an issue. Also, would like to see the Town Council have work sessions.

Bob Dexter said while he was a department head for the Town, department heads had access to the Council President and other

Town Council members through phone.

Terry Yeaw said the position would add a layer of middle management.

Jeremy Dexter asked why we would want to model another town and if we really want the State to have anything more to do with our Town.

Chairman Marcello replied that under the current 1915 Act, the state is in complete control of the governing structure of the town which provides us with no protection or checks and balances.

Member Lessard said the biggest challenge is setting the foundation.

Stacy Wortman said we have to give accountability to the Town, giving the people a say.

Ray Grigelevich stated the same form of government has been in place for 102 years. Times change and this is the opportunity to decide what is the best form of government for our Town. The Town needs a COO, the Council President may not always have the time. A framework needs to be established.

Member Johnson said they are looking at many Towns, finding items from different documents to create a charter that would work for Scituate.

Member Hopkins said there are five towns in the State similar to Scituate. Four of them have a Town Manager.

More discussion continued.

Motion made by Member Hopkins, seconded by Member Campbell, and voted to table item IV, 3 on the agenda, Structure of Town Council.

Members affirmed the next meeting will be August 28, 2017.

Motion made by Ellis Hopkins, seconded by Dave Campbell, and voted to adjourn the meeting at 8:30 pm.

    Attest:

_____

Gloria Taylor, Clerk

Refer to recording for complete discussion