

**MINUTES OF THE
PUBLIC HEARING OF THE BOARD OF SELECTMEN
ON THE CHARTER REVISION COMMISSION'S RECOMMENDATIONS
May 20, 2009**

Present: First Selectman Scott Lingenfelter, John Smith, Vicki Spellman, Brian Fitzgerald and Timothy Reynolds. First Selectman Lingenfelter called the public hearing to order at 6:30 p.m. in the Town Hall lower level conference room. The hearing was published by a legal notice in the Journal Inquirer Newspaper.

Present was Ernie Petkovich, Chairman of the Charter Revision Commission and Tom Sheridan a member of the Commission. First Selectman Lingenfelter explained the procedure for the Hearing and then turned the presentation over to Mr. Petkovich. Mr. Petkovich outlined the six charges given to the Charter Revision Commission by the Selectmen, and then explained the process and the steps the Commission took to arrive at its nine recommendations for Charter changes. The major recommendation was for a Town Administrator. The Board of Selectmen will still provide vision and set policy for the Town, but the Town Administrator would be responsible for the day to day operations. The full time Town Administrator will work under the direction of the First Selectman who will also be full time. The Town Administrator will supervise all town employees except the Town Attorney, Town Clerk, Tax Collector, Fire and Police Chief and their employees, Board of Education and contractors.

Mr. Petkovich explained the benefits of having a Town Administrator. This position would provide the Town with a professional who has training and experience in municipal and state government policies to manage the day to day operations vs. a newly elected First Selectman learning on the job. A Town Administrator would also provide continuity of town government, a foundation for long range planning and a separation of policy making by the Board of Selectman and operations. Some Charter Commission members did have concerns over this recommendation as they felt there were not enough checks and balances written into the Charter with this new Town Administrator position. Others on the Commission felt the authority, as defined for the Town Administrator, was not strong enough. Others were concerned over an additional salary for this position.

Other recommended Charter changes was to clarify that the Town Counsel will serve at the pleasure of the Board of Selectmen; clarification of the terms for some appointed personnel; clarify use of outside counsel as directed by the Board of Selectmen; the Director of Finance would report to the Town Administrator and not the Board of Finance; adjust the number of voters required to petition for a referendum to 250; standardization of the process and number of days for call for a referendum and add a section for the definition of the Annual town Budget to include the WCPA. There were also many technical corrections and a few suggestions to the Board of Selectmen that do not require Charter changes.

First Selectman Lingenfelter then opened the hearing to the public present for comments and questions.

Christine Davidson-Plantation Drive. She was concerned that the First Selectman and the Town Administrator would be a duplication of duties. She also stated that the Town employs highly qualified professionals currently on staff who are running the day to day operations, and was not happy with this recommendation. She was also concerned over that the Director of Finance would not report to the Board of Finance.

Thea Coburn of 511 N. Main Street. She had submitted a letter to the Selectmen regarding her comments on a Town Administrator. She was in favor of a strong Town Manager/Town Council form of government.

Irv Friedman, 119 Marbern Drive. He felt what the Charter Commission was creating was a Deputy First Selectman rather than a Town Administrator. He also felt that the Board of Finance is responsible for the finances of the Town and the Director of Finance should report to the Finance Board. He summarized the proposed Charter changes and urged the Board of Selectmen to reject the recommendations.

Sam Fuller, 555 N. Main Street. He read a statement from his group CAPS (Continuity, Accountability and Professionalism). He stated that CAPS believes that the Charter Revision Commission's recommendations do not provide the changes needed in Suffield's government structure and that, if implemented, would result in higher government salary expense at little or no benefit. They do not agree with the Town Administrator position as being recommended, and therefore CAPS urges that this recommendation not be approved.

Warren Packard, Park View Glen. He urged the Selectmen to ask the Charter Revision Commission to take another look at the Town Administrator position and re-work the job description.

There being no further public comment, Selectman Spellman made a motion to close the public hearing at 7:15 p.m. the motion was approved by unanimous vote.

Selectman Fitzgerald made a motion to adjourn. The motion was approved by unanimous vote. The meeting adjourned at 7:15 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,
Christine Koren, Recording Secretary

**MINUTES OF THE
REGULAR MEETING OF THE BOARD OF SELECTMEN
May 20, 2009**

Present: First Selectman Scott Lingenfelter, John Smith, Vicki Spellman, Brian Fitzgerald and Timothy Reynolds. First Selectman Lingenfelter called the meeting to order at 7:16 p.m. in the Town Hall lower level conference room on Wednesday, May 20, 2009.

Approval of Minutes:

Selectman Reynolds made a motion to approve the Minutes of May 6, 2009. The motion was approved by unanimous vote.

Public Input:

Ernie Petkovich, 40 Valley View Drive. He is the Chairman of the Charter Revision Commission. He said that the recommendations presented by the Charter Revision Commission will greatly improve the operations of the town and not to focus just on the Town Administrator recommendation, but all the recommendations. He felt that the voters should be given the chance to vote on them. He said if the Selectmen sends back the draft to the Commission and asks them to re-work it, then give the Commission a firm and clear position of what is expected of them.

Correspondence:

An e-mail was received from Sami Mehmed of 10 Dara Lane. Mr. Lingenfelter had sent copies of it to the Selectmen and spoke personally with Mr. Mehmed regarding it.

Discussion on the Charter Revision Commission's Recommendations:

Mr. Lingenfelter explained that there is no decision needed tonight on the Charter Revision Commission's recommendations. The Selectmen have until June 4th to give its decision back to Charter Revision Commission. He suggested holding a Special Meeting on June 3rd to make a final decision on the recommendations. He first wanted to comment on an article in the Suffield Observer regarding conflicts of interest of certain members of the Charter Commission. He said, for the record, that the Ethics Commission looked into the matter and they found no ethical violations with respect to Elaine O'Brien serving as members of this Commission. He further stated that the Board of Selectmen was ware of the alleged conflicts when appointing these members and felt that there was no conflict. Chairman Petkovich added that both Eric and Elaine were extremely valuable members on this Commission.

Selectman Reynolds stated that the number of 250 signatures to call a referendum was too low. Selectman Fitzgerald agreed that number of 250 is to low, and likely could cancel out the use of a Town Meeting. John Smith said the Commission states the issues which face the Town and the size of the budget now require a professional form of government and supports a Town Administrator. However, the Commission is

recommending only 250 signatures on a petition to bring any issue to a referendum vote, which can allow 250 people to cancel out or reverse a decision. This is totally two different concepts. If we go with a Town Administrator, we should have a strong Board of Selectmen and do away with the Town meeting entirely.

Selectman Reynolds felt the T.A. should be a stronger position. Mr. Lingenfelter said the Town needs a strong leader with more authority and was more in favor of strengthening the First Selectman's position before we make a total change in the form of government.

Selectman Spellman said the Town Manager form of government usually has a Town Council and takes the responsibilities away from the Board of Selectmen and Board of Finance. She asked if this is what Selectman Reynolds means when he says having a strong Town Administrator? This form of government would radically change what the CRC is proposing. Selectman Spellman also questioned why the CRC was changing the meaning of the Legislative Body of the Town. The Legislative Body is the Town Meeting and not the Board of Selectmen and she felt it should stay that way. She also added that there is statutory provisions for the Director of Finance and that position should report to the Board of Finance.

Selectman Fitzgerald said he was not in favor of the T.A. provision as drafted by the Charter Revision Commission. He said it describes more of an assistant. He has always been an advocate of the First selectman being paid a higher salary to attract more qualified individuals.

Mr. Lingenfelter submitted his list of comments. He said the Commission recommends a Town Administrator being in charge of the town employees, but makes no changes to all the Boards and Commissions who are currently overseeing departments, so who would be in charge? He feels there should be more power given to the First Selectman.

Discussion concluded and a special meeting of the Board of Selectmen on the recommendations will be on June 3rd.

Appointments:

Selectman Fitzgerald made a motion to appoint Jay Presser as alternate member to the Zoning Board of Appeals to fill the unexpired term. The motion was approved by unanimous vote.

Tax Rebates:

Selectman Fitzgerald made a motion to approve the tax rebate of Honda Lease Trust in the amount of \$524.68. The motion was approved by unanimous vote.

Selectman's Updates:

The Memorial Day Parade is Monday, May 25th. Lineup is at 8:45 a.m. with step off 9:00 a.m. sharp. Mr. Lingenfelter encouraged the Board to attend.

Single Stream Recycling began this week. It will now be every other week. The next time the recycling carts go out will be the week of June 1st.

Executive Session:

Selectman Reynolds made a motion to go into Executive Session to discuss a legal matter. The motion was approved by unanimous vote. The Selectmen went into session at 8:10 p.m.

Selectman Reynolds made a motion to come out of Executive Session at 8:45 p.m. The motion was approved by unanimous vote.

Adjournment:

Selectman smith made a motion to adjourn, The motion was approved by unanimous vote. The meeting adjourned at 8:46 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,
Christine Koren, Recording Secretary