

**CHARLOTTE SELECTBOARD
MINUTES OF INFORMATIONAL HEARING
ON PROPOSED TOWN CHARTER
CHARLOTTE CENTRAL SCHOOL
408 HINESBURG ROAD
FEBRUARY 29, 2016**

APPROVED

SELECTBOARD MEMBERS: Lane Morrison, Chair; Carrie Spear, Matthew Krasnow, Fritz Tegatz.

ABSENT: Jacob Spell.

ADMINISTRATION: Dean Bloch, Town Administrator

OTHERS: Approximately 20 members of the public

ITEMS TAKEN UP:

- Informational Hearing on proposed Town Charter

CALL TO ORDER

Mr. Morrison, Chair, called the meeting to order at 6:00 p.m.

INFORMATIONAL HEARING ON PROPOSED TOWN CHARTER

Mr. Morrison gave a brief presentation on the history of the development of the charter.

Mr. John Howe asked how the charter would affect the process of approving the municipal budget. Mr. Morrison described the process.

Ms. Mary Cheney asked if the committee that worked on the proposed charter was advisory to the Selectboard. Ms. Lynn Jaunich, who was one of the committee members, indicated that the committee was not appointed by the Selectboard; it formed in 2012 after there was discussion of a petition requiring the municipal budget to be voted by Australian ballot.

Ms. Nancy Wood indicated she had several questions. She asked why the draft charter did not specify that an informational hearing would be needed prior to the vote by Australian ballot, even though it was very specific in subsection 3.(d) with regard to the revote of a rejected budget. Mr. Bloch indicated that the charter is silent on requirements that aren't proposed to change from statute, and an informational hearing is required by statute, Title 17 Section 2680, VSA.

Ms. Wood asked whether all budget related articles would be voted by Australian ballot? She asked, for example, what if an article regarding the tax exemption of the Friendship Lodge was voted down on the floor at Town Meeting; would that still go to Australian ballot? Mr. Krasnow said that it appears that it would. Ms. Wood said the language regarding budget-related articles is not clear.

Mr. Howe said he believes this will create Town Meetings that very few people will go to. Ms. Valerie Graham said that she agrees with Mr. Howe, but she is afraid that if the process goes to a pure Australian ballot vote, there will be even less participation.

Ms. Gretchen Morse thanked people who worked on the charter; but she said there's a need to pay attention to how this will work.

Mr. Clyde Baldwin asked when the charter sunsets, what will we return to? Mr. Morrison said that it will go back to the way things are currently.

Mr. Alex Bunten asked if having a charter could lead to other changes? Ms. Spear said that it could. Mr. Morrison said that amending the charter requires the same process as adopting the charter. Mr. Krasnow said that in discussion with the town attorney, the attorney said that sometimes there can be an emotional hurdle to get back a charter if the charter goes away completely via the sunset provision. Mr. Krasnow said that that is why he wrote the sunset provision to make the entire charter go away, not just the provision regarding how the budget is voted.

Mr. Bunten asked if the charter could be sunsetted anytime. Mr. Krasnow said that it would require a petition of 5% of town voters and legislative approval, which would be the same for any change, and that would trigger a vote to repeal the charter. Ms. Jaunich said that to change or repeal the charter, it needs to go to an Australian ballot vote.

Ms. Cheney said that there's nothing in the charter about the percentage of votes—for example what happens if the Australian ballot vote is lower than the vote on Town Meeting Day. Mr. Morrison said that in his experience the turnout for Australian ballot votes is usually four to five times greater than the turnout on Town Meeting Day.

ADJOURNMENT

MOTION by Ms. Spear, seconded by Mr. Krasnow, to adjourn the meeting.

VOTE: 4 ayes, 1 absent (Mr. Spell); motion carried.

The meeting was adjourned at 6:45 p.m.

Minutes respectfully submitted, Dean Bloch