

DRAFT MINUTES – March 18, 2012

CHARTER REVISION COMMISSION
March 17, 2012
Town Hall Commission Room

A meeting of the Charter Revision Commission was held on March 17, 2012 in the Weston Town Hall Commission Room. Present were Woody Bliss, Richard A. Bochinski, Nina Daniel, Kenneth C. Edgar, Jr., and Dennis H. Tracey, III. Arne de Keijzer and Susan A. Moch were absent.

The meeting was called to order at 1:05 PM.

In response to the invitation of the Commission, Board of Finance members Michael O'Brien and Patrice Kopas joined the meeting to provide comments on the possible change of the length of the terms of members of the Board of Finance.

Mr. O'Brien stated that they had consulted with the other members of the BOF and that the members are of the unanimous view that 6 year terms are appropriate. One reason is that there is a long period of education for a member to get to understand the Town's finances. The role of the BOF has changed and expanded in recent years. Although one significant part of the job is review of the BOS and BOE budgets, that constitutes only approximately 20% of the BOF's work today. The BOF works year round. For example, there was a rundown in the General Fund and extensive work was done by the BOF to address that issue. There are also many GASB regulations and other legal requirements that the BOF members must know. He also stated that the board is very bipartisan and works together.

Ms. Kopas stated that the BOF deals with many different First Selectmen, and 6 year term enables them to be less political, with more consistency.

Mr. Tracey asked whether the BOF had any proposal for addressing the issue with the election cycle while still retaining six year terms. Mr. O'Brien stated that it would require two members to voluntarily agree to reduce their terms to four years.

Mr. O'Brien stated that the biggest recent changes to the BOF job is changes in the law, particularly GASB, which requires extensive knowledge.

Ms. Kopas stated that if the terms are not "broke" the Commission should not fix them. She suggested that the Commission should ask the people whether 6 years is too long.

Commission members then expressed their views, with each member present stating that they favored moving from 6 year terms to 4 year terms in order to increase accountability. The members stated that the right of the voters to have input every 4 years was very important and that moving to a 4 year term would not have a significant impact on the expertise and knowledge base of the Board. They further believed that the change would not have a significant impact on the nonpartisanship of the Board.

The benefit of four year term is accountability to the people, and secondarily, that some people may be willing to run for a four year term who might not want to run for 6 years.

The Commission then proceeded to discuss the revised draft of its "Substantive Changes" memorandum and agreed that a revised draft would be circulated over the weekend and finalized for distribution to the press.

The Commission next took up the approval of the minutes of the March 14 meeting. Mr. Tracey moved that the draft minutes be approved. Mr. Bochinski seconded, and the motion passed unanimously.

After completion of its discussions, Mr. Tracey made a motion to adjourn the meeting, and Mr. Bochinski seconded the motion, which was unanimously approved. The meeting was adjourned at 2:40 pm.

Dennis H. Tracey, III, Co-Chair