

**Town of Chelsea  
Charter Commission Public Meeting  
May 22, 2012, 6:30 PM  
Chelsea Elementary School**

**Members Present:**

Barbara Skehan, Charles Skehan, Elizabeth Larrabee, Peter Hanson, Scott Ludwig, Ben Smith, Maria Jacques, Elizabeth Cousins

**1. Call to Order**

The meeting was called to order at 6:32 p.m. by Ben Smith, Chairman. Members of the Charter Commission introduced themselves.

**2. Public Comment**

Ben Smith explained that this Public Meeting of the Charter Commission was being conducted in accordance with 30-A M.R.S.A § 2103(5) for the purpose of receiving information, views, comments and other material from members of the public relating to the functions of the Charter Commission and a new municipal charter. Ben stated that the charter development process would continue over the coming year and include additional public hearings and meetings. At the conclusion of the process, Ben explained that the Commission will produce preliminary and final reports with specific recommendations for a charter in the Town of Chelsea.

The following public comments were received from Chelsea residents.

**Palmer Sargent:**

- Mandatory minutes at all town committee or board meetings as they are not mandated by Maine State Law. Town might hire a person to take the minutes.
- Continue with three selectman and a professional town manager. Might be difficult to have five selectman on a regular basis. Consider a clause in the Charter that would allow expansion to five if the town reached a certain population.
- Give selectman the authority to appoint people to boards or committees. He explained that the reason many are now elected was that that citizens felt the selectman were playing favorites. Put in a requirement that the Selectman put in writing the reason they were not reappointing someone.
- Town manager should issue an invitation to citizens to apply for vacant positions.
- Suggested a mentoring process for people who expressed interest in a particular board or committee.

- The way to establish trust is to have a professional town manager to whom the selectman can delegate responsibilities.

**Pat Finale:**

- Questioned whether we would have enough eligible people to fill a five position board.
- Wanted to know more about what a charter might include.
- Asked if we would interview folks from other towns with charters to find out what they liked or would change about their charters.
- Wanted the charter to have some flexibility.
- When asked if it should provide guidance to the budget development process she said that it might be a reasonable place for it to be.
- Said she did not know enough about the difference between a Town Council and a Board of Selectman form of government. However, she felt that citizens should retain their right to vote on issues at Town Meeting rather than have those legislative powers delegated to a council. She further stated that, given a town the size of Chelsea, it is not impractical to retain the Town Meeting form of government and a town council may not be necessary.
- She questioned whether the town should require a quorum for actions at Town Meeting? What would it be based on? How would it be structured?

**Mike Pushard:**

- Agrees with the concept of a quorum for a Town Meeting
- Does not support five member board of selectmen because it would be difficult to get folks to run and stated that it is hard enough to get three qualified individuals to participate given a town of our size. Stated that having five members could allow members to be elected that may not have the best interests of the town in mind;
- Should be something in place to remove an elected official from office, perhaps a petition process and recall election, public hearing. Questioned what the removal would be based on (e.g., criminal activity) and what cause necessary. Stated that the process should not allow for frivolous actions to remove someone from office that may simply have a difference in opinion from other members of the town.
- When asked about a clause preventing folks with pending legal issues from running for office, he stated that it is up to voters to make the right choice.

**Shirl James:**

- Board members should try to remove a “bad” member themselves by confronting the individual and only escalate it to the townspeople if the person refused to step down.
- Record all meetings and provide minutes.
- Suggested that someone interested in an appointed or elected position should perhaps be required to attend 8 meetings before becoming eligible.
- Elections should be advertised at key intersections.

#### **Andy Finale:**

- Suggested that perhaps the charter should contain provisions that would suspend an elected official if they were charged with criminal activity. Further stated that, pending suspension, an interim person could be temporarily appointed during this time to allow time for a recall process.
- Suggested that term limits may be appropriate. Stated that a mandatory “sit out” period for one term after a person has serve 2 or 3 terms. This could ensure that the process is open and that appropriate checks and balances exist.
- Utilize the website for public comments and perhaps have a “citizen comment” function.
- Elect Board members but if not enough, give authority for selectmen to appoint.

### **3. Next Meeting**

June 5' 2012 at the Chelsea Town Office

Adjournment: A motion to adjourn was made by Betty Larrabee that was seconded by Barbara Skehan. The Public Meeting was declared adjourned at 7:50 p.m.