

Brookfield Charter Revision Committee
MEETING MINUTES (Approved January 5, 2012)
Thursday December 15, 2011, 7:00 p.m.
Selectman's Conference Room (2nd Floor), Brookfield Town Hall

Chairman Miller convened the meeting at 7:05 p.m. and established a quorum of members.

Present: Chairman L. Miller, Vice Chairman J. Park, Secretary D. Miles, R. Jaffe, S. Martone,
P. Scalzo

Absent: G. Dembowski, M. Labadia, D. Propper

1.0 Public Comments (15 minutes).

No one present.

2.0 Correspondence.

Chairman Miller noted an email received from G. Dembowski attaching correspondence from M. Grimes regarding voter turnout (attached). There was brief discussion regarding factors that may or may not affect voter turnout.

3.0 Review and Accept December 1, 2011 Meeting Minutes.

Vice Chairman Park moved to accept the Minutes of the December 1, 2011 Meeting. Commissioner Jaffe seconded the motion, and it carried 5-0-1 with Commissioner Scalzo abstaining.

4.0 Student intern research – new information and follow up discussion.

No new information has been submitted.

5.0 Review draft charter changes.

5.1 Financial and voter thresholds (Greg Dembowski) – It was noted that the thresholds were discussed at the last meeting. Chairman Miller stressed that the goal in the change of percentages is to decrease regulation and the “frivolous petitions” of a small number of people. Commissioner Jaffe indicated that, if given the choice between percentages required and dollar amount required for referendum, he would rather see the increase in the dollars required. Commissioner Jaffe inquired if there was a formal way to request feedback on citizens’ opinions on an increase in the thresholds, and noted that the school system website has the ability to conduct surveys. It was pointed out that the difference in the increased percentage will result in requiring 400 signatures instead of 200. Upon inquiry from Commissioner Martone, Chairman Miller advised that the current percentages have been in place since 1975, when the population of the Town was approximately 6,000 residents and the Town budget was much less than it is currently. Secretary Miles cited the size of the budget as an important

reason for having a professionally trained individual running the Town. Chairman Miller also noted the increased number of mandates imposed by the State and federal governments. Commissioner Scalzo indicated that the change in thresholds may be seen as an attempt to take away rights of citizens.

The Commissioners also noted that they are not sure if Commissioner Dembowski had a second meeting with the Republican Town Committee.

5.2 Revised duties of the First Selectman and proposed duties for a Town Manager (Mark Labadia and Dottie Miles).

Commissioner Scalzo suggested the following change for Section C.5-1; to change “during the absence of” to “in the event of”.

It was clarified that the correct change proposed for the number of members of the merged Planning and Zoning Commission was for five to nine regular members, with three alternates.
*(See discussion below)

5.3 Draft language for the advisory question and the losing candidate for the office of First Selectman (Dave Propper)

With regard to the advisory question, it will be left as it is. Commissioner Scalzo noted that Section C.9 was inserted to address this.

Commissioner Propper’s email of today regarding Section C2-7 was discussed. Commissioner Jaffe offered to re-draft the language. This change is also addressed in Chairman Miller’s press release.

*The discussion returned to the number of members for the Planning and Zoning Commission. Vice Chairman Park said that the original recommendation was seven members.

There was discussion regarding the Board of Selectmen’s authority to appoint and disband commissions.

There was additional discussion regarding having a town planner, and how the position streamlines the land use process in other municipalities.

The Commissioners indicated that they are in agreement regarding the deletions under the Duties of the First Selectman.

The Commissioners agreed that under Section C5-2(d), the Board of Selectmen should have the responsibility for the signing of contracts, not the Town Manager.

The members of the Commission agreed to do one more “read-through” of the draft revised Charter, review the proposed changes, and advised of any additional comments no later than December 22, 2011, so that it may be sent to Attorney Grogins on December 23, 2011.

5.4 Draft press release for the January 26, 2012 public hearing (Susan Martone and Larry Miller).

Commissioner Dembowski’s email of December 15, 2011, and Commissioner Propper’s email of the same date (attached) were noted. The Commissioners agreed to remove the following from the third bullet point: the words “hybrid” and “current”. Chairman Miller will revise the Press Release to check the clarification that the combined Planning and Zoning Commission will have seven regular members. The Commission also agreed with Commissioner Dembowski’s suggestion to add a contact name and telephone number. Chairman Miller and Secretary Miles will be added as “contacts”.

It was further agreed that the headline for the Press Release will read, “BCRC announces Public Hearing”. The public hearing will be announced at the first Board of Selectmen’s meeting of the new year, on Tuesday, January 3, 2012, and the Press Release will be entered into the record.

6.0 Develop presentation and other communications materials for the January public hearing.

A short Power Point presentation will be developed for the public hearing. There are no legal requirements for the public hearing, but a pre-amble and the legal notice will be read. Commissioner Jaffe suggested that a copy of the current Charter be available at the hearing. Chairman Miller recommended that the possible ballot questions also be presented. The Power Point presentation will be available as a handout and put on the Town’s website.

There was discussion regarding whether the presentation should be televised and it was decided it was not necessary. Additionally, the Commission recommended that the Mansfield Town Manager, Matt Hart, be invited.

There was discussion regarding the presentation of the benefits of the Town Manager, including that the BOS and the Town Treasurer will become volunteer positions, that the individual will have experience attracting businesses to the Town, and there will be increased efficiency in Town operations.

Commissioner Jaffe will also check the availability of the consultant recommended by Connecticut Conference of Municipalities that he and Commissioner Dembowski spoke with.

It was reiterated that the Public Hearing will be on Thursday, January 26, 2012, at 7:00 p.m. in the Whisconier Middle School Seminar Room.

Secretary Miles will ask Matt Hart if he could hold the date, make a short presentation, and be available to answer any questions.

Chairman Miller, and Commissioners Jaffe and Martone will begin drafting the presentation.

7.0 Open Discussion.

None.

8.0 Public Comments (15 minutes).

None.

9.0 Adjourn.

Commissioner Scalzo moved to adjourn the meeting at 8:25 p.m. Commissioner Martone seconded the motion, and it carried unanimously.