

**TOWN OF GREAT BARRINGTON
SELECTMEN'S MEETING
MINUTES
TUESDAY, SEPTEMBER 27, 2011
6:00 P.M. – TOWN HALL**

PRESENT: STEPHEN BANNON
 ANDREW BLECHMAN
 ALANA CHERNILA
 DEB PHILLIPS
 SEAN STANTON
 KEVIN O'DONNELL, TOWN MANAGER

1. CALL TO ORDER

Sean Stanton called the meeting to order at 6:00 P.M.

2. Discussion re: Town Charter

Sean Stanton stated that the Town Charter is supposed to be reviewed every 10 years and since Great Barrington's charter was enacted in 1992, it has never been touched.

Steve Bannon said that it is important to review the charter, but it is not the time to do it. He suggested that it be put off for 3-6 months.

Deb Phillips agreed that it is not the moment to do it. The Board will need to make a decision whether to make amendments or revisions. She suggested that it be done as a revision so that it covers the charter top to bottom. She suggested that a charter committee begin this process in the spring.

Andrew Blechman agreed saying that doing it 'haphazardly' would not be wise. He said that it should be discussed among the Board in a workshop before a committee is created.

Alana Chernila said that there are more packed and intense meetings as the months go on and feels that the Board may still be busy in 3 to 6 months. She feels that the process should be started. She added that there are library issues that are up in the air and can't be put off.

Sean Stanton said that the Board should not engage in a formal process, but should think about it quite a bit. He said that Great Barrington has changed quite a bit and with the Charter being the governing document, they should review how things are done.

Steve Bannon said that it may be worthwhile to meet in a workshop to discuss areas to be highlighted by the committee.

Sean Stanton said that the local charter procedure says that every 10 years, the Board of Selectmen should reprint the charter and make it available to the public at cost. He said that he didn't know if this was being done.

Kevin O'Donnell said that the charter is on the website under municipal code.

Holly Hamer asked if the library trustees can change the library bylaws in the code if they are not contradicting the charter.

Sean Stanton replied yes.

Kevin O'Donnell re-affirmed that the Library Board can make changes in the code as long as the changes are not in conflict with the charter.

Jim Stark asked if the Library Trustees want to make a change in the code, can they do it themselves or does it go to Town Meeting?

Sean Stanton replied that they would come to the Board of Selectmen to have the changes brought to Town Meeting.

Andrew Blechman suggested that sessions focused on the charter be scheduled when budget season is over.

Dave Ryel asked if the committee isn't formed until spring, won't this eliminate the possibility of going to Town Meeting with revisions.

Steve Bannon responded that only amendments may get in on time. He said it is too cumbersome of a process to complete by Town Meeting. He also suggested that the charter be looked at cover to cover by an independent authority.

Deb Phillips said that there may be things that can't wait 2 years.

Sean Stanton said that he would rather do the amendment process.

Deb Phillips suggested that the Board look at the charter with these 2 options in mind and then decide which process to use.

Steve Bannon suggested that the Board move one meeting to November 1 and have a workshop deciding which process to use.

Jim Stark asked for clarity between the amendment and revision processes.

Sean Stanton said that the revision process is more complicated and lengthy, by which they would have to create a charter committee. He said that the amendment process does not require a charter committee.

Jim Stark asked how many amendments can be made.

Sean responded that there is no amount as long as they don't change the composition, mode of election, appointment, or terms of major local offices.

Alana Chernila said that she needs more clarity on the rationale of who is elected versus appointed. She said that the system doesn't make sense. She asked if they shift back or change it, will it qualify as an amendment.

Steve Bannon responded that it would require a revision.

Sean Stanton said that the Selectmen need to have conversations with other boards and should look at other town's charters.

Sean Stanton said that he will communicate with the chairs of the other boards. He will tell them that the Selectmen are working on this and invite them and their board members to the workshop.

ALL AGREE TO HAVE THE WORKSHOP ON NOVEMBER 1st.

Alana Chernila asked if Great Barrington has a Town Managers Act.

Kevin O'Donnell said that the charter is this.

Alana Chernila said that some towns have a Town Managers Act as well as a charter.

3. ADJOURNMENT

On a motion by Steve Bannon, seconded by Alana Chernila, the Board adjourned its meeting at 6:50 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Cara Becker". The signature is written in black ink and is positioned directly below the phrase "Respectfully submitted,".

Cara Becker
Recording Secretary