

**TOWN OF SANDWICH**

*Charter Review Committee March 6, 2023  
Informational Forum*

**TOWN CLERK  
TOWN OF SANDWICH**

**MAR 17 2023**

**9 H 00 M A M  
RECEIVED & RECORDED**

*TW*

**Present:** D. Sampson, J. Coogan, P. Schrader, J. Fitch, K. Renzi, J. Roche, S. James (remote)

**Mr. Sampson called the meeting to order at 7:00 PM**

Mr. Sampson began by presenting an overview of the Charter review process to approximately 30 people in attendance. He discussed the process of reviewing and amending the Charter and described the three warrant articles for the annual town meeting. Mr. Coogan described the charter as being similar to a constitution or framework for governing then highlighted the more important of the housekeeping changes made to the charter.

*Public Input*

- Consider adding language that says that the Charter can be amended any time by town meeting. Don't need to wait 10 years before amending.
- 4.3.4 Concerns expressed about language addressing vacancy on school committee that occurs fewer than 8 months before next annual election. Does the language now allow for discretion of an appointment according to timing within the 8 months?
- 4.2.7 Concern about the wording that a majority of the quorum can conduct business, rather than mandating three votes.
- Suggestion to possibly separate sections that just are grammatical or wording from any section that might engender more discussion.

Mr. Coogan stated that if anyone has any suggestion for language change to draft new language and get it to the Committee.

Mr. Sampson then described the changes made to the article relative to appointment of the town clerk. He reviewed the process of how department heads are hired and stated that this recommendation is not a negative reflection of how well the town clerk has been doing his job. The recommendation for any role change is not at all related to those who fill the role, but to the role itself. This is the only position left that is an elected one and the belief is that it should be also included in the organizational hierarchy of command.

*Public Input*

- Question as to why this is being put forward when it seems as if there is low risk for electing someone who is not qualified for the position. Concern that it is the CRC and not the people making the decision (this was clarified that it is a committee recommendation and that the people get to decide at town meeting)
- Concern that this gives too much authority to the town manager.
- Question as to how long the appointment would last. Suggestion that the terminology be changed to a "hired" position, not appointed, as is any other department head.
- Information needed as to how often performance evaluations are performed on department heads; maybe specify in the charter for this position.
- Would like information detail on how the committee members voted on these warrant articles.

Mr. Sampson then described the recommendation for representative town meeting (RTM). He reviewed the forms of local government in Massachusetts and the specific challenges of open town meeting. He presented two charts that detailed open town meeting attendance over the past 38 years. He also described the general structure of RTM. This is a non-binding warrant article which, if passed, would require developing specific details to be presented at a future town meeting; this change would also require a ballot vote.

*Public Input*

- Question whether statistics on voter turnout at elections is consistent with the numbers that come to town meeting.

*[Handwritten mark]*

- Concerns expressed about the current process of contacting town officials becoming more complicated if trying to contact an elected representative. Accessibility is important. Presumably, with many more elected people being involved, there would need to be some clarity as to how this would be managed. Would more staff be needed?
- Would there be enough interest to get the numbers needed for adequate representation. If there is no competition for elections, isn't it still representation by default?
- Several expressed their feelings about losing their ability to vote. Sometimes attending town meeting results in a change of opinion about an issue when more information is presented.
- Can multiple people in the same household run for election as a representative?
- Concern that a representative would vote from a personal perspective and not what the constituents want.
- Concern about a burden on town resources.
- How can we address identified issues with the current form of town meeting? People who come to town meeting shouldn't be penalized because others choose not to exercise their vote.
- Need for more advanced and broader distribution of materials before town meeting and possibly education sessions for the public.

Several people who spoke expressed ambivalence but are willing to consider the concept. Some think it is worth exploring further and several expressed that they would not support this. Sandwich Stands will be holding two public conversations about how to improve town meeting – March 15<sup>th</sup> 6:00 PM to 8:00 PM at the library and March 16<sup>th</sup> 10:00 AM to Noon at Sand Hill School.

Respectfully submitted,



Susan James, Recording Secretary