

Board of Selectmen
SPECIAL MEETING
May 22, 2015 – 9:00 AM
Lebanon Town Hall
Minutes

- 1.0** The meeting was called to order by First Selectman Joyce Okonuk at 9:12 a.m. Selectmen Linda Finelli and John Bendoraitis and Administrative Assistant Patti Handy were also present. Audience: 0.
- 2.0** The Selectmen discussed feedback from the Charter Public Hearing held on May 20th. Okonuk reported that a total of 17 people attended and that comments were both for and against approving a Town Charter.

Finelli expressed her opinion that the proposed changes to the Board of Finance (BOF) responsibilities within the Charter regarding the budget process is a sticking point for some. She has received feedback that the Town budgets should not be handled like the Board of Education budget with regard to the BOF having only bottom line control.

Okonuk added that when the BOF determines specific line item cuts to Town departmental budgets they are essentially creating policy and they are not statutorily authorized to set policy.

Selectmen referred to the definitions within the Charter regarding the definition of town budget. They also review the budgetary responsibilities of the BOF and the BOS as described in the Charter. They evaluated each section making sure that the language was clear to the reader so that the process would be understood. In some places in the document the total town budget was referred to as a “Board of Selectmen’s Budget” which Okonuk felt needs to be clarified as “Town Budget” in all sections. All agreed. Okonuk felt that the definition of town budget should be more specific but Bendoraitis disagreed saying that if the language is too specific it would not allow any flexibility.

Discussion followed regarding other terminology, definitions and responsibilities. Okonuk questioned the process for collecting individual town budgets e.g. would that be the responsibility of the Town Administrator or the BOS. Bendoraitis replied it would be the BOS.

Finelli stated, “It is my opinion that this (the Charter) is going to cost more money in the long run.” She added that it will probably change the Town make up by taking the BOF “out of the mix” (removing their power to approve individual budgets). Bendoraitis disagreed, saying that it would just “define their authority.”

Finelli also asked whether the Administrative Assistant would handle inquiries for both the First Selectman/Board of Selectmen and the Town Administrator. Okonuk said that the Assistant would work for the Town Administrator, not directly for the First Selectman. Finelli added that she believes more support staff may be needed. Bendoraitis disagreed as did Okonuk.

After further discussion on definitions Okonuk said she was willing to recommend to the Charter Commission that they go forward. Finelli responded, “I think the Charter is too cumbersome for a small town. It will be too expensive for the town.” She added that she is not comfortable with the idea that the BOF will have only “bottom line” approval of the town budget as they do now with the Board of Education.

- 3.0 Motion made by Okonuk/Bendoraitis to recommend some clarifications and changes in definitions and editorial “tweaks” in the draft Charter to the Charter Commission. Vote: Yes, unanimous.**
- 4.0 Motion by Finelli/Bendoraitis to adjourn the meeting at 10:25 a.m. Vote: Yes, unanimous**

Respectfully Submitted,



Joyce R. Okonuk, First Selectman