

Board of Selectmen  
**Special Meeting**  
May 20, 2015 – 7:00 pm  
Fire Safety Complex

**Public Hearing Minutes**

- 1.0 The meeting was called to order by First Selectman Joyce Okonuk. Selectmen Linda Finelli and John Bendoraitis were also present as well as Charter Commission Chairman Tom Meyer and three other members of Charter Commission. Total Attendees: 17
- 2.0 Tonight's hearing is required of the Selectmen per statute in the Charter process. Although the Charter Commission has done many other presentations of the draft/proposed Charter throughout the town, Charter Chairman Tom Meyer provided an overview of the proposed Charter utilizing a power point presentation. During and following the presentation questions were entertained from the audience and were answered by Meyer and others on the Charter Commission as well as the Selectmen. Questions from audience included:

Were suggestions made by public in the past incorporated in this Charter?

*Yes. Commission members reviewed all comments submitted and did include many changes in the proposed Charter resulting from those suggestions.*

Increased costs for the Town Administrator appear to be low.

*Bd of Selectmen (BOS) submitted optional budget for new administration to Bd of Finance (BOF) when presenting FY 15-16 budget reflecting approximate \$27,000 increase should Administrator be hired. BOF determined they would estimate a cost up to \$40,000 for budgeting purposes.*

Should elected officials become appointed would they be union eligible?

*As the Town Clerk and Tax Collector are supervisory staff they would not be eligible to participate in the current bargaining unit.*

Would additional space be needed to house the new staff?

*No. Should the Charter be adopted the new Town Administrator would take the office of the First Selectman, the new First Selectman would not be a position requiring an office, and the current Administrative Assistant to the First Selectman would remain in the current office she occupies but would work directly for the Town Administrator. The Town Clerk and Tax Collector already have offices.*

If Charter passes and the town does not like the change, can we go back to the current form of government?

*Once the Charter has passed it must remain in place. To change the method by which the town government operates, a change would have to be made in the Charter to permit a different governmental operation.*

Comments by Audience:

A current member of the BOF said change being recommended for the budget function of the BOF is dramatic and he is concerned about the checks and balances. If a change in the process is adopted, he feels the BOF would need fewer members, especially with the BOS becoming larger. He was also concerned about the change in the way alternates would be seated at meetings as the present system works and maintains political balance.

Another member of the BOF stated disappointment as to how the BOF will be reduced to just the bottom line authority as she likes the current process.

A former member of the BOF provided the history of how and why the Finance Board was created in Lebanon, largely required due to the inability of the then (approximately 1974) First Selectman to properly explain the budget at Town Meeting. He expressed concern with regard to the changes proposed for the budget process involving the BOF. He felt the current method works well and does not require any change.

Another resident felt that the changes of substance proposed in the Charter could be implemented through additional ordinances rather than a Charter.

Some members of the BOS felt that the present system of permitting the BOF to make cuts to individual town budgets was in fact allowing that Board to set policy for the town which by statute, is the responsibility of the BOS. The Charter would permit bottom line cuts for the town side of the budget by the BOF which would control overall expenditures and it would be up to the BOS to determine where those cuts would be made within individual budgets to meet the bottom line recommendation of the BOF.

The First Selectman thanked those present for attending and explained that the comments and suggestions heard would be reviewed by the BOS and should changes to the draft Charter be recommended, those changes would be sent back to the Charter Commission before the final document is approved by BOS to bring to Referendum vote in November. Another public meeting will be held prior to the fall vote to familiarize voters with the content of the proposal.

**3.0 Motion Finelli/Bendoraitis to adjourn the meeting at 9:05 p.m. Vote: Yes, unanimous**

Respectfully submitted,

Joyce R. Okonuk  
First Selectman