

Dedham Town Charter Review Committee
Meeting Minutes
January 8, 2020
Lower Conference Room, Dedham Town Hall

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TOWN OF DEDHAM
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Committee Members Attending:

Carmen Dellolacono Jr., chair
Tom Ryan, vice chair
Michelle Apuzzio
Lance Hartford
Gemma Martin

Others Attending:

Leon Goodwin, Dedham Town Manager
Margaret Connolly
Jim Driscoll
Tracey Driscoll

Committee Members Absent:

John Healy, secretary
Andrew Haley

Chairman Carmen Dellolacono called the meeting to order at 6:04 pm.

Dedham resident Jim Driscoll asked the committee to consider the process of filling unexpected vacancies for Town Meeting seats. Presently his precinct — precinct 4 — fills vacancies prior to the warrant review meeting, which he views as an imperfect solution due to low attendance at the meeting. He suggested that a better system would be to offer the position to the candidate who received the next highest amount of votes in the last election. Mr. Dellolacono thanked him for the input, said that the committee would specifically review Town Meeting on February 12 with the town moderator, and asked if he could return at that time. Mr. Driscoll said that he would attend the February 12 meeting.

The main purpose of this meeting was to discuss the town charter with Dedham's relatively new Town Manager, Leon Goodwin. Mr. Goodwin explained he had been on the job for just over 90 days and discussed the various forms of city and town government with which he has experience, including a council-manager (weak mayor) form (Keene, NH) and Town Manager (Salem, NH). Mr. Goodwin had the following insight:

- Larger councils or select boards can often lead to better longevity in the Town Managers. With smaller councils/boards, if one or two seats turn over in an election, assessment of the Town Manager's performance can shift significantly.
- It is traditional in a Town Manager format to have all department heads report to the Town Manager. This is a main difference from a Town Administrator position.
 - There is potential conflict for department heads who report to their policy-setting boards as opposed to reporting to the Town Manager.

- Mr. Goodwin believes that at present there is good collaboration between his office and the library and parks and recreation departments (the only two departments to which their heads report to the board rather than to him).
- The present charter states that the Town Manager is to conduct performance reviews of department heads and other town employees. He does not believe that this has been done for some time. He plans to conduct reviews.
 - In section 4.2.s it would be helpful to have language that directs the Town Manager to consult with policy-setting boards in conducting these reviews.
- In section 4.2.p relating to creating and re-organizing town departments, Mr. Goodwin suggested that the language needed to be clearer. The committee and Mr. Goodwin agreed that if there is no budget impact it seemed reasonable to have the select board approve the change, but if there was impact to the town budget, it would need to go before town meeting.

Other discussion topics among the committee and those in the audience included the rationale behind appointed and elected boards and committees, the warrant book, the duration of Town Meeting, and the assistant town manager position. In summary:

- The charter should perhaps address the type of information that should be distributed to Town Meeting members. This includes the pros and cons of each article, what a yes vote and no vote means, and insight on how the select board voted on the article.
- Margaret Connolly suggested the committee consider an end time for town meeting even if it means continuing the discussion on a subsequent day.
- The charter needs to clarify to whom the assistant Town Manager reports.

Tom Ryan made a motion to adjourn at 7:50 pm. Gemma Martin seconded, and the committee passed it unanimously.

/michelleapuzzio