

TOWN OF SANDWICH

Charter Review Committee January 7, 2023

TOWN CLERK  
TOWN OF SANDWICH

MAR 07 2023

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**Present:** D. Sampson, J. Coogan, P. Schrader, J. Fitch, K. Renzi, J. Roche, S. James (remote)  
**Others Present:** Atty. John Giorgio, KP Law

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

**Review Minutes** Mr. Fitch moved to approve the minutes of December 1, 2022. Seconded by Mr. Schrader. Approved unanimously.

**Old Business**

**Discussion of Representative Town Meeting**

Attorney Giorgio is present to provide advice relative to the change to Representative Town Meeting. The Committee had been given a list of considerations by Atty. Goldberg. He suggested looking at both Falmouth and Plymouth charters to see some of the provisions and wording related to RTM. A question about approach to be taken at Town Meeting was discussed. Should this be a separate article on the warrant, so it doesn't interfere with the other housekeeping changes to the Charter? Also, should the change to the Clerk position appear as a separate article? Atty. Giorgio made some comments relative to RTM:

- The format concentrates legislative power.
- Town Meeting is longer because the representatives feel obligated to discuss issues in detail.
- Representatives are better informed and have the incentive to show up at the meeting.
- Consider voting electronically – no matter the town meeting format.

Committee members expressed some concerns about putting too much detail into the article. Normally, there is an equal number of representatives from each precinct, and voting is done by precinct. The total number can range from 70 to 80 (low) to 150 (high). Sometimes it is better to make the total number higher in case precinct numbers increase or another precinct is added. Voting by precinct gives everyone representatives for the same number of voters. There needs to be a provision for filling vacancies. Other issues to consider are setting a quorum, number of signatures needed to nominate, and whether or not Select Board members are automatic voters. Ms. James was concerned that details need to be in the Charter, but Mr. Fitch responded that too many details would bog down the discussion of whether the change should be made.

Mr. Sampson suggests having a public hearing/forum. Mr. Coogan agreed and said that would increase transparency. The forum could cover the pros and cons of making the change. We would need to identify the important issues to be addressed. Publicity is going to be very important.

Atty. Giorgio suggests voting on the revisions as a binding question, have a separate question for the Town clerk, and do RTM as non-binding. Should the RTM be approved, then the details would need to be added. There are a couple of options for managing a major revision. Elect a 9-member Commission to add details and submit to the legislature or submit all the approved changes to the legislature except the non-binding question. If RTM is supported, then the details can be added by legislators before final legislative approval. Either way, there will need to be a ballot vote. Mr. Roche asked whether it would be better to give Town Meeting two versions and they can vote one up and one down. Atty. Giorgio thinks it would be better to have the three questions.

Atty. Giorgio will look at all the Charter revisions, will write the articles for the Clerk and the RTM questions, and make changes as needed. Ms. James will send the track changes version and a clean version to Atty. Giorgio. He thinks he can return it quickly. Mr. Sampson will start planning the forum (probably in February or March) and begin writing the publicity.

**Discussion of Tri-Board Meeting**

Mr. Fitch said the Selectmen did not appear to be in favor of RTM, but he believes they will put it on the warrant. Mr. Coogan said the forum will be very important.

**Mr. Fitch moved to adjourn the meeting. Mr. Coogan seconded. Approved unanimously.**

The meeting adjourned at 8:06 PM. The next meeting is to be determined once the Committee receives back Atty. Giorgio's comments.

Respectfully submitted,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Susan R. James".

Susan James, Recording Secretary