

**CHARTER REVIEW COMMITTEE MEETING
AUGUST 29, 2022 7:00 PM**

TOWN CLERK
TOWN OF SANDWICH

SEP 15 2022

9:00 AM
RECEIVED & RECORDED *tw*

Members Present: D. Sampson, P. Schrader, J. Coogan, K. Renzi, J. Fitch

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

Review Minutes – August 15, 2022

Mr. Coogan moved to approve the minutes of August 15, 2022. Mr. Schrader seconded. Approved unanimously.

Old Business

Representative Town Meeting Discussion

Mr. Fitch began the discussion stating he did some reading and that his opinion has not changed for the following reasons:

1. It is past time to move to the Representative Town Meeting (RTM). Open Town Meeting (OTM) works well when there is a large turnout and voters who care. The quorum was reduced because of fear that not enough voters would attend. Lately, we do not get a large turnout, so business is determined by only a small percentage of voters. This is not effective.
2. The Town is headed for some complicated issues – wastewater and housing. The community needs to be involved. RTM will provide better involvement and more informed voters. With OTM, it is easier for special interest groups to advance decisions; RTM would avoid that and people with special interests could call their precinct representative. Is it a better place to go?

Mr. Schrader said there have been issues over time when very few people attend. Then special interest groups leave after the vote for their issue is completed. RTM would avoid that.

Mr. Coogan said it is difficult to argue against RTM, although Ms. Harper's presentation was daunting. This might not be an easy sell, but we are going to be considering complicated issues in the near future. It is good to point out that any recommendation we make will go to the voters.

Ms. Renzi expressed dissent. Because we are not getting enough people to attend OTM we need to consider interventions to increase numbers. She believes a special committee should be created to look at the aspects of the issue and consider actions to increase attendance, such as education and using every-day language on the warrant. The committee could be formed according to precinct. She also believes that RTM is for larger towns/cities and Sandwich's population has not increased. This would create another level of bureaucracy and would leave out people who attend OTM who want to vote but not be elected a representative; each person deserves a vote. If we can't get 200 people to attend OTM, how will we get 200 people to run for election?

Ms. James has also done some reading and is not convinced RTM is the way to go. OTM provides direct input into priorities, and everyone is allowed to participate and vote. It does leave things open for a one-issue attendance, however. RTM might be more representative of voters and less likely to be single-issue. It does, however, take away the democratic nature of OTM. It also might require that elected representatives hold meetings at times other than town meeting. The election of numbers of representatives from each precinct will also add an additional layer of work for the town clerk's office. Ms. James is concerned about the number of people needed and that it might be difficult to have people run.

Mr. Sampson entirely agrees with Mr. Fitch. He sees the difference as creating some accountability for decisions. He is also concerned about candidates stepping up, but he has not heard of this happening in other towns with RTM. He thinks towns should take advantage of having informed voters. He wonders if OTM is seen to be equitable.

Despite not having a full committee present, it appears the majority are in favor of RTM. **Mr. Fitch moved that the Charter Committee recommend transitioning from an Open Town Meeting form of government to Representative Town Meeting. Mr. Schrader seconded. Approved by roll call vote: Yes – Mr. Sampson, Mr. Schrader, Mr. Coogan, Mr. Fitch; No – Ms. Renzi and Ms. James**

No details for RTM have been set as yet. There are templates available, and Town Counsel can help with language.

Public Comment Mr. Sampson allowed Mr. David Darling to provide comments. He is in favor of term limits for committees, electing the town clerk, restricting the Town Manager to a nine-year term in that

