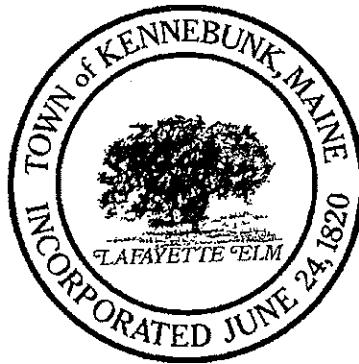


Town of Kennebunk, Maine



Charter Commission MEETING MINUTES

Wednesday, January 21, 2023

In-person meeting, Town Hall, 3rd Floor, 1 Summer Street, Kennebunk

This meeting was held in person and televised on Cable TV Channel 5.
It is available for public viewing at any time at TownHallStreams.com.

Chairman Christian Babcock called the meeting to order at 10:00am.

Secretary Janice Vance called roll.

- Present: Susan Bloomfield, Christopher Babbidge, Janice Vance (Secretary), Brenda Robinson, Richard Smith (Vice-Chair), Ted Trainer, Stephen Sayers, and Christian Babcock (Chair)
- Also present: Merton Brown, Town Clerk
- Absent: Christopher Cluff

C. Babcock asked members to briefly introduce themselves, and then explained that there were several handouts available on a table in the room: a trifold information piece, a primer on the Town Charter, and copies of the Charter. He covered the agenda of the meeting – a Power point describing the Articles within the Charter, some subject matter already identified as needing to be discussed and possibly changed - with time for public comments and discussion with members.

A few questions arose prior to the presentation regarding whether there was an attendance policy in force for committee members, if there would be time for attendees to look at the handouts, if the controversial recall information in the Charter would be discussed, if the meeting was being recorded, a request that the committee consider minority comments and not simply majority, and how best to contact the Committee, access to members, and if questions would be answered in “real time.”

C. Babcock. M. Brown and committee members explained that all members now have a Town email address and that residents may use those to contact individual members or the entire group, and

stressed that the charter review process is just beginning and will continue for several months, the committee's twice-monthly meetings will be open to the public, and that no decisions on possible changes will be made for some time.

After the break, C. Babcock opened the meeting to detailed public comments:

- Gayle Spofford: Noted that the 2022 School Board recall cost the Town not only financially, but also resulted in needless divisiveness.
- Dan Sayre: He is serving his first term as a State Representative and informed that three legislators have submitted bills for the new legislative session regarding recalls (he is one). If any pass, they will take effect in the fall. He will keep the committee apprised on progress but recommends the committee proceed as if nothing will happen.
- Rachel Phipps: Asked how the final stipulations in the Charter will be enforced. She is in favor of citizens being the town legislative body (current town meeting format).
- John Costin: Cited enabling legislation, which specifies the commission is "fully independent." He is in favor of the current town meeting form of government. He advised the commission to look at other New England states to see how they handle charters, and to avoid a simple rewording of the charter and "start fresh."
- Maggie Bartenhagen: Serves on the Energy Efficiency Committee and raised the issue of how town committees interface with the Select Board and town staff. Needs a more clearly defined process that improves the communications flow; advised looking to see how other towns with committees handle the relationship. She cited prior restrictions on committee activities that have "stifled" the willingness for residents to get involved, and that the expertise (at no cost to the town) is vital. B. Robinson noted the wide variety/structure between the different committees due to varying needs. M. Bartenhagen stated the town should encourage, not restrict, committee involvement.
- Marie Louise St. Onge – Reiterated the cost of the 2022 recall, not only financially but on the community. She asked about the Code of Ethics, and what consequences occurred when behaviors were breached. She asked the committee to pay special attention to the language in the charter that specifies the number of days petitioners have for gathering signatures.
- Claudia Sayre – would prefer that the Town Clerk be an elected official rather than appointed by a Town Manager. She expressed concern that the charter does not better define the policy pertaining to the Budget Board process, and that it should be driven by the Town Manager. She felt a 5 year plan should be provided to the Budget Board, with communication to the electorate. She wanted better-defined rules for Select Board hearings after seeing what happened during the 2022 recall process. She wanted to see policies, goals and strategies outlined in the Comprehensive Plan be reflected in the Charter.
- Barbara Fleshman – felt it was important for all committees to go before the Select Board on a regular basis to discuss goals, which would improve defining measurable goals for committees. She noted that the Comp Plan actually is a 10 year plan, and the goals/strategies/policies in it should be used to formulate goals.

- Rachel Phipps – mentioned previous sexism shown in committee appointment procedures, and previous Town Clerk/Town Manager conflict issues. She noted the town budget is “a policy document” that spelled out how the town would move forward, not just numbers.
- Dan Sayre – asked how Comp Plan strategies were dealt with in the Charter, and what the procedure was/should be for measuring the success of achieving the goals.
- Gayle Spofford – suggested redesigning the Select Board meeting agenda, and considering increasing the number of Select Board members. She felt committee members need to be heard by the Select Board – not just the committee chair – and this should be spelled out in the Charter.

C. Babcock called the public meeting to a close at 12:20pm.

Respectfully submitted,

Janice Vance (Secretary)

Janice Vance 3/8/23

