



**TOWN COUNCIL
Charter Review Committee
Selectmen's Conference Room**

**Thursday April 21, 2016
MEETING MINUTES**

Councillor Jennifer Cullum **Chair**
Councillor Will Crocker Jr.
Councillor Frederick Chirigotis **Vice Chair**
Councillor Paul Hebert
Councilor James Tinsley

I. BUSINESS

A. Roll Call:

Members present: Chair of the Committee Councilor Jennifer Cullum; Councilor Frederick Chirigotis, Councilor Will Crocker Jr., Councilor Paul Hebert; Donald Lynde **Also present:** Maureen Niemi, Town Tax Collector; Attorney Ruth Weil

Chair of the Committee Councilor Jennifer Cullum introduced Maureen Niemi, who is responsible to collect taxes in the town from residents. It is a lot of responsibility and we do it short staffed. Real Estate quarterly is a lot of work, excise taxes, betterments, and the 5 fire districts. There is a pay-over that is done weekly for the 5 first districts.

The position currently is an elected position; Chair of the Committee Councilor Cullum asked the benefit of elected vs. appointed. Maureen explained that she is readily available, and numerous residents in the town will only talk to her and no one else, they are familiar with me as I have done this job for many years, we have a great relationship with the Assessor's office and often refer residents to the various programs that are available to the residents of the Town. Her knowledge as far as options available to residents if they can't pay the total tax, she has knowledge to help resident set up a process to pay taxes if the bill can't be paid in full. The mailing of the tax bills is a huge cost, only to find out that they have lost them and we need to reprint them at an additional cost. This year she noticed that it has been a very trying year, a lot of questions and a lot of problems with individuals. You have to spend hours on residents bills, I do a lot of spreadsheets because there may be 5 owners, so we receive 5 checks from people, so if you miss one or do not log one in on that property it creates a whole set of other issues. There are a lot of little steps that we do that no one else knows. The Chair of the Committee asked Maureen how she felt if the position was elected vs. appointed. Ms. Niemi said she has done this job for 14 years and she feels that someone off the street with no experience would definitely not be very good. There is a lot of training that needs to go into this and that is done. She feels that it is a job of professionalism and not political, Maureen says she has never treated the position as a political position. Chair of the Committee said that the position should she feels be appointed and not elected so that whoever applies has the qualifications to fulfill the job and is not put into the position because they were elected by a popular vote, because if you put someone in there based on an election, we may not get the correct candidate.

Mr. Lynde explained that he would have an issue with just the Town Manager appointing someone to this position; it should be the people who decide. Chair of the Committee said ultimately it falls under the Town Council if in the end the Town Manager appoints someone and we as a Council do not like them, we have the power to remove them, ultimately.

Councilor Tinsley feels that the position should be appointed because of the credentials of that individual. Councilor Tinsley feels that he has the financial knowledge to fulfill the job as it is written,

however he stated that he could not jump into that position, it is a skillful job and it requires that type of person. Ms. Niemi mentioned also that the mailing of the bills is crucial because if you do not mail them in an accurate time, you can't collect on those monies. This is very important in the process. Ms. Niemi says she spends a lot of time outside of the office hours making sure that the bills are correct, there was a huge problem around December of this year when betterments were not put on the bills, and therefore we can't collect. This created a huge issue with the bills that were sent out, that had to be resent out.

Attorney Ruth Weil stated that whoever currently sits in this position will remain in the position until the process changes or if it changes.

Chair of the Committee asked if the Committee members had any other questions from Ms. Niemi regarding the position, seeing none, Chair of the Committee asked for Town Attorney Ruth Weil to explain the term limit language, Town Attorney Ruth Weil to modify it to the special election section. The other corrections presented were more of a housekeeping change due to spelling in some of the sections that are in the Charter as it is today. Chair of the Committee asked for a motion to accept the changes in the section of filling vacancies. Councilor Frederick Chirigotis made the motion to accept the changes as written for the filling of vacancies; this motion was seconded by Councilor James Tinsley, all members present voted in favor of accepting the proposed changes.

Attorney Ruth Weil will prepare the document for all of the Council to view at the next regular Town Council meeting. The Chair of the Committee asked for a motion to adjourn, Councilor Frederick Chirigotis made the motion to adjourn; this was seconded by Councilor James Tinsley, all members present voted in favor.

ADJOURNED: 6:30pm