

Town of Greenwich

Selectmen's Board of Education Charter Revision Committee

Meeting 19 January 2017

7:00 p.m.

Town Hall – Cone Room

DRAFT MINUTES

1. The meeting was called to order at 7:11 p.m.

a. Attendance:

Committee members: Joan Caldwell (Chair), William Finger, Barry Rickert, Peter von Braun, Brian Peldunas (Secretary) – Present.

Members of the public: Linda Moshier, Irene Dietrich, Richard, DiPreta, Lucy Krasnor, Bob Brady, Robert Krasnor, Wynn McDaniel, Karen Fassuliotis, Jeff Ramer, Leslie Moriarty, Ken Borsuk, Kim Fiorello, Warren Silver, Drew Marzullo

2. Discussion of alternatives:

- a. **Charge configuration – 10 member board, five and five election pattern** – the committee generally was not in favor of this alternative and did not discuss it further.
- b. **Eight member board, Board chair with tiebreak vote** – Mr. Finger noted that as part of the 1966 RTM approved change, the BoE decided not to have a tie break vote. The committee generally was not in favor of this alternative and did not discuss it further.
- c. **Eight member board, three and five election pattern** – the alternative has been referred to as the “Glastonbury” model, given the use in that town. Ms. Caldwell opined that this alternative might be difficult to explain. Mr. von Braun opined that it would be easy to explain, and reiterated that the committee should not consider alternatives that it could not realistically accomplish. Mr. Peldunas found it a favorable option in that voters could decide to elect a balanced board, or a partisan board as they see fit. Mr. Rickert found it a favorable option because it held the possibility of holding a partisan majority accountable, that superintendents prefer smaller boards (versus the 10 proposed in the original charge, based on the discussions with the search firms) and that it would present minimal disruption relating to the current search for a superintendent. Mr. Finger suggested we list the goals of the committee as a way of measuring the alternative. He posed choice/competition and empowering unaffiliated voters. Mr. von Braun included accountability as another goal. Mr. Finger opined that there were other ways to encourage voter behavior, and that the option might have unintended consequences: with an unbalanced board decisions might be made in caucus without full board discussion (he offered as an example the possibility of an intention to change the funding criteria for individual elementary schools). Mr. Rickert indicated that the option would, since a seat was open to both parties, encourage more candidates and would thus encourage those candidates to engage with unaffiliated. Mr. Rickert as noted that he was

disturbed by the need for the Board of Selectmen to appoint a Chair of the current Board of Education.

After additional discussion, Ms. Caldwell suggested that the committee take a straw poll of the alternatives. The votes were: Alternative A (BOS charge) 0-5-0; Alternative B (8 member, chair with tie break) 0-5-0; Alternative C (8 member, elected 3 and 5) 4-1-0, Mr. Finger voting no; Alternative D (seven members) 1-4-0, Mr. Peldunas voting yes; Alternative D (nine members) 2-3-0, Ms. Caldwell and Mr. Peldunas voting yes; Alternative E (status quo) 1-4-0, Mr. Finger voting yes.

d. BOS charge

In light of the straw poll, no further discussion was held on this option.

e. Seven or nine member board

In light of the straw poll, no further discussion was held on these options.

f. Current configuration - Eight member board, four and four election pattern.

In light of the straw poll, no further discussion was held on this option.

3. Recommendation vote.

Mr. Rickert made a motion to recommend Alternative C (8 members, elected 3 and 5); Mr. von Braun seconded the motion. Mr. Rickert voted yes, Mr. von Braun voted yes, Ms. Caldwell voted yes, Mr. Peldunas voted yes, Mr. Finger voted no.

There followed a discussion as to the best transition method, and Mr. Rickert indicated that we could use the same method as used in Glastonbury when they had made their change. Details of the transition and election method would be developed in the written recommendation.

4. Drafting of recommendation document.

Mr. Finger provided the Final Report of the Charter Revision Committee from 27 June 2007 to aid in formatting a report. Mr. Peldunas reviewed (see below) the draft outline of the proposed recommendation document, and suggested adding a section in the recommendation listing points to be encouraged (i.e., which could not be enacted as part of a charter change). Mr. Peldunas was asked to proceed with the drafting.

Ms. Caldwell reported that she had a discussion with a representative of the League of Women Voters, and it appears they would be willing to assist in educational activities as recommended or encouraged by the committee.

A brief discussion was held regarding the 1996 RTM effort to alter the election of the Board of Education. Ms. Caldwell opined that there has been a large change in the RTM since that time, and past performance is not necessarily an indicator of how the body might receive this recommendation.

5. Approval of minutes.

The minutes for 20 December 2016 were approved by motion of Mr. Finger, seconded by Mr. von Braun (5-0-0). The minutes for 10 January 2017 were approved by motion of Mr. Finger, seconded by Mr. Rickert (4-0-1, Ms. Caldwell abstaining as she was absent).

6. Adjourn.

Mr. von Braun made a motion to adjourn at 8:09, seconded by Mr. Finger.

Joan Caldwell, Chair

Prepared by Brian Peldunas, Secretary