

Town of Greenwich

Selectmen's Board of Education Charter Revision Committee

Meeting 25 October 2016

7:00 p.m.

Employee Lounge in Town Hall

MINUTES

1. The meeting was called to order at 7:00 p.m.

a. Attendance:

I. Committee members: Joan Caldwell (Chair), Barry Rickert, William Finger, Peter von Braun, Brian Peldunas (Secretary) – Present. Mr. von Braun left at 8:15 PM.

II. PTA Council President Michael Trogni and several other members.

III. Greenwich Party Chairs – Jeff Ramer (DTC) and Stephen Walko (RTC)

IV. Other attendees included: Barbara O'Neil (BoE), Leslie Moriarty (BET, former BoE), Lucy Krasnor (RTM)

2. Minutes

Given the presence of invited guests, approval of the minutes was deferred to the end of the meeting. However, since one member had to leave the meeting, approval was held over to the next meeting.

3. Discussion with invited guests – PTA Council.

Mr. Trogni introduced himself and thanked the committee for the opportunity to discuss the topic. Mr. Rickert reviewed the charge; Mr. Peldunas gave some background and indicated the committee was in fact finding mode; Mr. Finger noted one focus was pathways to inclusion of unaffiliated residents, and Mr. von Braun indicated the committee was looking to relate any change to the results of students.

There followed a general discussion between PTAC and the committee on:

- how a change such as that in the charge would improve results,
- whether such a change was injecting politics into the election process and the workings of the BoE,
- the desire for the state PTAC to have non-partisan boards,
- whether the current structure of elections waters down the unaffiliated voters influence,
- the quality of candidates from the parties, given the vetting process each party undertakes,

- the belief on the part of some participants that the BoE was working now, that dialog amongst members was not cutoff by a majority party, and that past processes such as FURB was fair and balance,
- whether a change would lead to a more efficient BoE which could increase achievement,
- the belief on the part of some participants that the town was getting value for money spent

There was a follow-up question about the origin of the proposal, to which Mr. Rickert responded, indicating in part the desire for an election process responsive to all voters.

4. Discussion with invited guests – Mr. Walko and Mr. Ramer

Mr. Ramer, representing the Democratic Town Committee, reviewed the current town demographics and gave some background on the original RTM resolution (1966), indicated that it was difficult to get unaffiliated voters to run, and discussed the DTC's efforts to recruit qualified BoE candidates. Mr. Ramer shared his view that the current system for selecting BoE candidates is burdened not by the local political parties but by CT State statutes. In response to the prospect of changing to a 10 member board in the hope of creating more competitive elections, Mr. Ramer cautioned that if the local town political parties, for whatever reasons, chose to nominate only 3 or 2 candidates respectively then we would still be in a situation where there was no competition. In his view, a move to a 10 person board would lead to an "unbalanced" board and politicized BoE, a result which he is hearing parents say they do not want.

Mr. Walko, representing the Republican Town Committee, indicated the desire to have a process allowing true one person-one vote outcomes; noted that unaffiliated voters were somewhat disenfranchised in the selection process as the current system allows the parties to control the number of candidates and the actual candidates; the current system only allows for a "primary" on election day; and stressed the need for accountability of the BoE to the citizens and the desirability of a process which would allow voters to remove majority parties which were not producing results.

A general discussion followed covering many of the points noted above.

The Party Chairs and the PTAC representatives thanked the committee for the discussion. The committee chair asked attendees to please spread the word to their respective groups about the public hearing.

5. Discussion of answers already received from the Secretary of State office.

Responding to a point raised by a PTAC member, raised previously by a BoE member, Mr. Rickert wondered if it was possible for the BoE to ignore the Next Generation Science Standards, which were adopted by CT, and teach creationism and not evolution.

The committee reviewed answers from the Secretary of State office. Mr. Peldunas was asked to follow up with the office to clarify some answers.

Ms. Caldwell indicated she would speak with the Town's Law Department to clarify questions put to that office.

5. Verify invitations for next meetings.

The committee will extend invitations to former BoE chairs, including Leslie Moriarty, Sandy Waters, Steve Anderson, Nancy Weissler, Jenny Krob, Colleen Giambo, and Lile Gibbons.

Ms. Caldwell indicated she would speak with Josh Brown of the RTM Education Committee about attending.

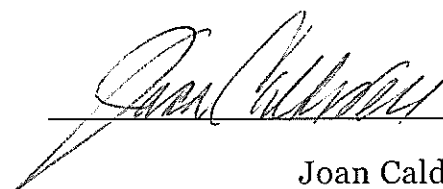
6. Review and discussion of documents.

No further discussions were held.


7. Adjournment

On a motion by Mr. Finger, seconded by Mr. Rickert, the meeting adjourned at 9:42 p.m.

The next committee meeting is planned for 1 November at Town Hall – Hayton Room.



Joan Caldwell, Chair



Prepared by Brian Peldunas, Secretary