

SPECIAL SELECTBOARD MEETING
October 20, 2011

Present: John Quinn
 Bob Bancroft

Ira Allen
Nanette Rogers

Bob Bancroft called the meeting to order at approximately 7:00 p.m. Approximately 30 residents were present.

The Selectboard explained what a charter is and why they feel it is time for a charter. The primary reason the Board feels a charter is needed is to improve financial controls. The draft charter proposes the Treasurer, Delinquent Tax Collector, Listers, Auditors and Cemetery Commissioners become appointed positions. The Selectboard advised they have no authority over elected officials and how their responsibilities are carried out. The Board feels a charter will provide greater accountability.

The Board explained State Statute requires elected officials be a resident of the town but does not require minimum qualifications. The charter will allow for non-residents to be appointed in the event no one from town is interested and/or qualified individuals are appointed. The draft charter includes a provision to allow for the recall of any elected official. This is not an option under State Statute.

A few people asked the Selectboard if there is any fraud or embezzlement taking place. The Board doesn't think there is. They added the Town has entered a contract with a CPA firm to conduct an outside audit. It was pointed out that the informational flyer mailed to residents lead people to believe there was an issue of fraud or embezzlement. The Board stated it was not their intent to imply there was an issue.

Seth Jensen suggested having a combination of elected and appointed auditors.

Someone stated they would like to see financial controls incorporated into the Charter.

Alex Weinhagen made three points: the charter should include a provision increasing the Selectboard to five members, the voters should vote on the appointments for the Treasurer, Delinquent Tax Collector, Auditors and Cemetery Commissioners, and the recall provision should also apply to appointed positions.

A resident stated money should be included in the budget for a professional audit regardless if the Treasurer position is elected or appointed.

It was stated that qualifications for Selectboard members should be included in the Charter.

Chris O'Donnell stated that most charters are developed by a committee of residents not the Selectboard. She feels it takes away from democracy.

A suggestion was made to conduct an informal poll to determine interest in adopting a charter.

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Ed Chase feels the Town Clerk position should be added to the appointed positions.

The meeting adjourned at approximately 9:00 p.m.

Respectfully Submitted,

Robert L. Bancroft, Chair
Westford Selectboard

Nanette Rogers
Town Clerk