Charter Review Committee Minutes
8/3/20

This meeting was held remotely via Zoom.

A quorum being duly present, Chairman Ed Ivaldi called the meeting to order at 7:00 P.M.

Members absent: James Karol-Chik

Approval of Meeting Minutes – 7/15/2020
Thomas Golden motioned to approved. Seconded.
Vote taken by roll call passed unanimously.

Old Business:

1. Citizen Survey/Personnel Interview Update (Tom)

   Mr. Golden and Ms. Mainvielle have been working on the Citizen Survey/Personnel Interview Update. Utilizing Survey Monkey there would have been a limitation of 100 responses to the survey prior to being charged for use. The goal now is to utilize the Town of Bridgewater website for the survey under Town Charter Review Committee Survey.

   Ms. Mainvielle asks if a paragraph can be added to the page of the survey in order to provide and introduction and purpose of the survey. Mr. Golden says they can add this.

   Mr. Ivaldi asks if other committees have utilized the Town website for surveys and is curious of the success rate. Mr. Golden is unsure and stated he would look into this. Mr. Ivaldi is concerned of the process if they are the first committee to use this.

   Mr. Ivaldi states that in the presentation the top portion of the survey is required while the bottom portion of the survey is optional and asks why this is. Mr. Golden states that this is a draft and they can make any field required or optional as they like.

   Mr. Ivaldi states that one of the issues with anonymous surveys is that someone from out of Town could fill out the survey. Mr. Golden states that he doesn't see the real harm in this happening, as if the results submitted are not decent they would not be included and best case scenario they may end up with useful ideas. Mr. Golden states he is concerned that people would be withheld in the survey if they were required to be identified.

   Mr. Ivaldi states that if the required fields on the survey cannot be verified that enables people to provide falsified information as well. Discussion continues on the pros and cons of not being able to verify information on the survey.

   Mr. Ivaldi states the survey looks great. Mr. Persell agrees that it looks better than he had anticipated.

   Mr. Ivaldi asks how this is being shared since the Town website doesn't typically generate a lot of traffic on its own. Mr. Golden states they will be sharing this on Twitter, Facebook, Instagram, dice list serve, use list serve, and can even print and hang flyers.

Mr. Boston agrees that the survey does look good.

Mr. Golden reviews the survey questions with the Committee.

Mr. Ivaldi asks to remove "familiar" from "Rate overall operation"

Question 10 requires some work.

Mr. Pitta is concerned about asking such specific questions without context provided to the public as to what the details of the question are about.

Mr. Golden states that the amount of appropriation for Council Member was added for clarification in one of the questions.

Mr. Ivaldi states there are a lot of controversial issues from the last attempt at Charter amendments and it is important to know the publics opinion. Mr. Ivaldi inquired about adding a paragraph to explain what the questions were about as Ms. Mainvielle had recommended.

Mr. Pitta states that these are difficult issues and he is concerned the Council will flood the survey with responses to sway the survey outcome, which will be reviewed before the Council.

Mr. Persell states that these are just recommendations to see how the town feels, but this will still be required to go before the State for review and come back to the Town as a vote, so if Council responses sway the survey the Town vote would be removed of that sway.

Ms. Mainvielle agrees that those who know about the survey will attempt to skew the survey and some residents are not educated enough about the inner workings of these processes to answer the survey questions.

Mr. Pitta states that at the last Charter Review went to Town Meeting and the discussion was flooded with questions and swayed by certain individuals and is concerned that will happen again.

Mr. Persell states they are aware of the concern of swaying the survey, but utilizing the Town website to host the survey is free.

Mr. Golden asks what is the solution to prevent the conversation from being swayed.

Mr. Pitta agrees there is not a clear solution to this concern. Concerns around Facebook making claims that Council members now want to be paid is something that may sway results.

Mr. Ivaldi states that there hasn't been a Charter related survey in over 12 years, that they should move forward with the survey to see what they end up with.

Mr. Pitta agrees, he just wanted to air his concerns.

Mr. Persell asks if the questions should be more vague.

Mr. Pitta believes that there should be more information provided for the public to make more educated decisions, such as issues of Councilors running unopposed, or lack of people running for Council positions.

Mr. Persell is worried if the descriptions are too long people will not read them.

Mr. Ivaldi asks if links can be added to the survey for people who want to know more information.

Mr. Persell recommends linking a YouTube video that they utilize for information.

Mr. Golden states they could include a simple note that says for more information please attend the next Charter Review Committee meeting. Mr. Persell feels the YouTube video explains it nicely and believes they can add a link to it.

Mr. Ivaldi asks what the next steps are. Mr. Golden states they will not meet again until the 19th. The survey will not be completed to run in August unless the subcommittee is approved to run the survey without a full committee review. Mr. Ivaldi states that the committee should review the survey one more time and that a September release date wouldn't be an issue.

Mr. Pitta state that either is fine with him and he would be comfortable giving permission to the subcommittee to release the survey in August without another full committee review based on the discussions of this meeting.

MOTION: Mr. Pitta moves to give the subcommittee authority to make the discussed changes to the survey and publish. Mr. Boston Seconds.

Mr. Boston asks if there is a way to tell which platform someone used to find the survey. Mr. Golden says there is not. Ms. Mainvielle says they can add it as a question on the survey. Mr. Golden said he can add that question.

Ms. Mainvielle asks if there can be a beta test within the committee to test the data.

Mr. Ivaldi asks if there are amendments to the previous motion.

Ms. Mainvielle says yes, she would like to reconvene to ensure the survey is working. Mr. Pitta states they do not need to reconvene to test the survey. Mr. Ivaldi states that the subcommittee could run the beta test and release the data, but how will the committee know the results of the beta test. Mr. Golden suggests he could sit in on the subcommittee.

Mr. Pitta feels if they are answering the beta questions that could be considered an act as a committee. Mr. Golden states they could utilize John Doe names and clear the aggregate data prior to the survey release so it would not affect the results. Also, do not answer the survey as you would normally.

Mr. Boston states there is no quantification of a "no opinion" option on the survey questions.

Ms. Mainvielle states they could provide a Yes, No, or Unknown option, but there is no way to know that the 'Unknown' response is deliberate. The questions will be altered on a scale of 1-3, unsure, and no opinion/no answer.

These details will be worked through in the subcommittee. Mr. Golden will give a report to the Committee on the 19th. The beta test will be e-mailed to the Committee. Vote on the initial motion Mr. Pitta moves to give the subcommittee authority to make the discussed changes to the survey and publish. Mr. Boston Seconds.

Roll Call Vote: Ed Ivaldi – No
Cleonie Mainvielle – Aye
Steve Persell – Aye
Thomas Golden – Aye
Scott Pitta – Aye
Darren Boston – Aye

Motion passes 5 to 1

2. Committee Planning
   - Review CRC 2020 Working Plan – Final Version (Cleonie)

Mr. Ivaldi states that there will be a presentation to the Town Council and he encourages the members to attend. Ms. Mainvielle states she feels this is the final version and would like feedback. The basic format hasn't changed. June was used to organize and establish responsibilities and rules, full review of charter, spoke with key personnel, gathered data services, citizen survey, personal reviews, baseline assumptions, priorities, schedule and timeline for next year. There will be meetings twice a month.

The second slide discusses baseline assumptions, minimize prior re-work, review special act Chapter 404 to see what was previously changed by the Council. Set realistic goals, identify, important areas, key issues, enhance clarity, and consistency of charter. Use citizen feedback, charter update process, make amendments, not replacing sections.

The third slide discusses familiarizing the Council with the last charter review. Took 3.5 years during the last review process, the vote on charter amendment failed, still working under the 2010 charter, use multi-option approach, MGL 43B Section 10, 2/3 vote to move changes forward, 30 day Attorney General turnaround, April 2021 ballot threshold as a home rule petition – requires Town Council vote. Does not require a citizen vote but it is traditional. Both processes allow for questions, Noncontroversial changes should be done in one article such as spelling and grammar errors,

Review of Articles 1, 2, 3, 6, and 9 and a Special Act for the controversial changes. It is intended to have this ready for 2021 elections. This requires education and participation of the council and the voters. Ideally it would be signed by the Governor.

Next steps are broad dates to major milestones, hold public forums in September, post citizen education material, ongoing communication with Council, phased rollout of recommendations, May is the potential final report date.

There is concern of how influential these efforts will be, if the recommendations will be taken seriously, will previous work be duplicated, and will the work put in result in productive changes. This should be a 15 minute presentation. Mr. Persell, Mr. Boston, Mr. Pitta, and Mr. Golden say it looks good.

MOTION: Mr. Persell moves to approve the CRC working presentation. Mr. Pitta seconds.

Roll Call Vote: Ed Ivaldi – Aye
Cleonie Mainvielle – Aye
Steve Persell – Aye
Thomas Golden – Aye
Scott Pitta – Aye
Darren Boston – Aye

Mr. Golden asks if the Council will have to review educational material for the public. Mr., Ivaldi says yes, to run it by the Council. Mr. Golden asks if there is a formal process. Mr. Ivaldi states that Mr. Pitta will discuss this with Town Counsel Jason Rawlins.

Mr. Ivaldi suggests thinking about baseline recommendation from the prior committee for the next meeting to compare the prior committee suggestions to the state suggestions. A portion of the meeting will be dedicated to recommendations,

Mr. Ivaldi also asks that if members cannot attend a meeting to please text Ms. Mainvielle or himself to let them know,

Mr. Golden asks if they are still looking for additional members and Mr. Ivaldi states they are.

Next Meeting: Wednesday, August 19 at 7 PM

Adjourn:
Motion to adjourn by Steve Persellarren Boston. Seconded by Cleonie Mainvielle
A roll call vote was taken, the motion passed unanimously.
The meeting adjourned at 8:03 P.M.