

NEWTON CHARTER COMMISSION  
Wednesday, April 6, 2016  
7:00 p.m. – City Hall – Council Chambers  
MEETING MINUTES

Present: Chair Josh Krintzman, Vice Chair Rhanna Kidwell, Bryan Barash, Jane Frantz, Howard Haywood, Anne Larner, Karen Manning, Brooke Lipsitt, Jose Morgan  
Absent: Chris Steele

The meeting was called to order at 7:00pm.

**Public Comment**

Sue Flicop, 145 Florence St, asked for clarification on the Citizen’s Assistance Officer position. Is it a position that may be well suited for the City Council so that Councilors would contact the individual in this position rather than having 24 Councilors call the department heads about constituent concerns.

Susie Heyman, 70 Varick Rd. urged the Commission to retain the 2-year term for School Committee members because this keeps them accountable to the public. She also urged the Commission to clarify the residency language by providing an exact date by which a candidate must reside in the ward from which s/he is running.

Sallee Lipshutz, 45 Radcliff Rd., said that the charter should include a provision for dealing with schools that are closed. Any property owned by the city with a closed school building should be leased and not sold.

Claire Sokoloff, 41 Oxford Rd., spoke in support of term limits for the School Committee and City Council. 8 to 10 years gives members time to make productive contributions. Terms limits make it easier for a member to separate because it is difficult to leave. Term limits weaken any one individual’s hold on power. Turnover on the City Council is low and people rarely leave voluntarily. She was not sure what the best “number” was but that term limits enhance democracy.

Margaret Albright, 166 Edinboro St., urged the Commission to find a way to stagger the terms of the School Committee to avoid a possibility of having a Committee with all new members.

**Approval of Minutes**

Anne made a motion to approve the minutes from the March 1, 2, 9, and 16th meetings, Bryan seconded. (8-0)

**Article 3: Executive Branch**

Commissioners asked for a discussion of the pros and cons of a city manager form of government. Further discussion about Article 3 was tabled until a later date. Jane

Frantz made a motion to table the discussion about the form of government, seconded by Brooke. (7-1, No: Krintzman )

#### **Article 4: School Committee**

Jane Frantz introduced the discussion by noting the dramatic change in public education and the role of the School Committee since 1972. The goal is to write an Article with language that can better withstand the test of time. Therefore, she proposed using language from the NPS Mission Statement and current state law to accurately reflect the role of the School Committee and the value Newton places on its public school system. These two documents have been in place for over 25 years.

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Karen Manning explained the research process. Sixteen current and former School Committee members who served over a 30-year span were interviewed. In addition, the Collins Center provided research and language that was included in the annotated draft.

Section 4-1: Composition; Eligibility; Election and Term.

a.) Composition: Jane made a motion that School Committee members should continue to be elected at-large by ward, seconded by Anne. (8-0)

b.) Eligibility: Jane noted that many people had requested clarification of residency language in the charter. Brooke suggested setting a date that determines when a candidate must be a resident of the ward. The Commission unanimously agreed to make July 1<sup>st</sup> that date.

c.) Election and Term: There was strong consensus from the interviewees that the 2-year term should be retained as it forced members to have contact with constituents. The Commission weighed the pros and cons of a 2 or 4-year term.

Jane made a motion to retain 2-year terms, seconded by Anne (5-2-1), No: Kidwell, Haywood)

Brooke made a motion to remove term limits. No one seconded the motion. Jane made a motion to retain the 8-year term limits, seconded by Josh. Brooke proposed an amendment to the motion to extend term limits to 12 years, seconded by Bryan. The Commission voted to amend the motion to extend the term limits to 12 years. (6-2, No: Frantz, Krintzman). The vote on the amended motion passed. (4-2-2, No: Frantz, Krintzman; Abstain: Manning, Liptsitt).

Section 4-2: Organization; Quorum; Rules of Procedure

a.) Organization: The Commission discussed the timing of the election of the Chair and Vice Chair of the School Committee. Jane noted that the Collins Center said that by law the election cannot take place until after members are sworn. Anne said the

actual vote took place on January 1<sup>st</sup> and that the newly elected members joined the current members at a caucus. According to Anne, the Attorney General has looked at this matter and this process has been judged acceptable.

b.) Quorum: No deliberation or change.

c.) Rules of Procedure: The Commission accepted the Collins Center alternative provision.

#### Section 4-3: General Powers and Duties

Jane suggested that the Commission use language from the Education Reform Act of 1993 to reflect Newton's priorities. The charter's language should enable residents to easily understand the School Committee's role. The Commission agreed to the concept.

#### Section 4-4: New School Buildings

Jane suggested that the section include language to reflect the following practices: the School Committee determines when a new school building or major renovation is necessary; the School Committee approves the educational specifications for new buildings or renovations and that it will align with whatever body oversees the school building process in the Commonwealth; representatives from the School Committee shall serve on the board or the committee for a new school building or renovation. Jane made a motion that Section 4-4 include language to reflect these three concepts, Anne seconded. (8-0)

#### Section 4-5: Prohibitions

It was noted that the Commission deliberated on this item during the Article 11 discussion. Rhanna made a motion that the Commission add language to Article 11 saying that no elected official can serve simultaneously on more than one municipal office, including a Charter Commission. Josh suggested that we add this to the list of items that will be revisited or discussed at a later date.

#### Section 4-6: Filling of Vacancies

The Commission decided to table this discussion until a later date.

Josh informed the Commission that the City Council approved the finances for the Commission.

The meeting adjourned at 9:45.

#### **Documentation:**



**Article 4 Discussion Guide School  
Committee Members**



**Article 4 Draft (for 4/13/16  
Meeting)**



**Collins Mar. 30 Memo with  
Comments on Final Annotated  
Draft (Art. 4)**



**Comparison Data from Collins  
Center - MA School Committees  
Ward Representation elected AL**



**Cover Letter for Article 4 Review  
on Apr. 6**



**School Committee Annotated  
Document for April 6 Review**



**School Committee Interview Data  
for Apr. 6 Review**