

**MINUTES OF THE  
SALEM CHARTER COMMISSION**

**SALEM TOWN HALL  
33 GEREMONTY DRIVE  
SALEM, NH 03079**

**REGULAR MEETING OF  
JULY 2, 2009 7:00 P.M.**

The Charter Commission held a meeting on Thursday, July 2, 2009 at Salem Town Hall, 33 Geremonty Drive, Salem, NH.

**PRESENT: Robert Campbell (Chairman), Patrick Hargreaves (Vice-Chairman), Michael Lyons (Secretary), Arthur Barnes, Stephen Campbell, Annette Cooke, William Ganley, Cathy Ann Stacey**

**ABSENT: Kevin Breen**

**CALL TO ORDER**

Chairman Campbell called the meeting to order at 7:00 p.m. to consider the work of the Commission and to receive public input. He introduced the Commission members and joined them in the Pledge of Allegiance.

**1. Approval of Meeting Minutes**

**MOTION:** by Mr. Lyons

*Move to accept the minutes of the meeting on June 18, 2009*

**SECOND:** Mr. Stephen Campbell

Ms. Stacey and Ms. Cooke requested the minutes be amended to reflect the correct spelling of their names by adding an 'e'.

**VOTE:** 8-0-0

**The motion carried unanimously.**

**2. Chairman Comments**

Chairman Campbell referred to the agenda he had distributed and spoke about the forms of government the town might adopt, inviting members of the public to give their opinions.

**3. Discussion on Forms of Government**

Mr. Tom Linehan, 151 Lowell Road, Salem, reported he had spoken with a number of people and summarized the feedback he had obtained as follows:

- The term of office for town officials should be changed to eliminate people from running more than once.
- The town should decide major issues like contracts, bond issues and things which affect residents over the long term by a super majority.
- Residents prefer it when there is transparency within their government.

- Comments on the form of government – anything apart from a city. He stated he was unsure how much would be on the ballot if there was town council. He also stated he thought the second deliberative session does not represent the people at all. He then spoke about having a default budget similar to SB2 towns which should only include annual expenditure.

Mr. Pat Cooney, 10 Shore Drive, Salem, stated the only form of government he does not like is the Town Meeting as it takes place on a Saturday and there is never a not good turnout. He thought Salem should stick to the 66% majority vote, and spoke about the town about not being able to do everything at once.

Mrs. Joan Molin, 9 Nowell Court, a Salem resident for 60 years, stated she assumed the Commission will be considering a form of government as it relates to the current population. She spoke about her understanding of how the petition warrants work for an open town meeting and the disadvantages of this as there appeared to be no other avenue for pursuing residents' requests/issues. She also spoke about her impression that town employees do not have the flexibility to carry out certain requests, citing the repaving of Ball Avenue and Nowell Court as an example. She stated there needs to be more flexibility and something other than the Town Meeting option.

Mr. Lawrence Levine, 17 Nowell Court, Salem (a Salem resident for 40 years) pointed out that only a very small percentage of the population is involved in town meetings and he felt this caused a lot of problems. He suggested a city form of government to expedite the process. He also spoke about the lack of water and sewer in his area which had been defeated by just a few votes, and stated he was in favor of changing the type of government to improve efficiency.

Ms. Pam Berry, 7 Leaside Drive, Salem stated she felt the Commission has a lot of work ahead of them and needs to resolve with the general town population the misconception that anyone wanting change wants to spend more money and raise taxes. She also stated the Commission needs to decide whether the citizens of Salem are currently participating in the running of their town and whether it would like them to participate in the future. She pointed out she would like to see the school district stay autonomous whatever change is made and she did not think a city form of government would have an interest in the school district. She also made the point that the School Board and the Board of Selectmen are now salesmen which is a byproduct of the charter and SB2, and this has quadrupled the amount of time elected officials have to spend doing their jobs, making it less appealing for citizens to run for those positions.

Mr. Jeff Hatch, 8 Scotland Avenue, Salem stated he was not sure that a lack of resident participation is an issue for the Commission, but rather how much participation it would like to see. He stated he felt the Commission should investigate all options and discuss them fully before making a decision. He also stated he was unsure whether he would support a city form of government and will wait until he hears more before making his decision. He commented on the condition of the roads, the police station and the schools and also the age of the buildings and about the possibility of having to rebuild them all at

1 the same time at great cost to the town. He spoke about needing a government that can  
2 promote the right types of projects.

3 Mr. Bill Carter, 61 Lake Street, Salem stated he was independent on what he would like as  
4 a form of government. He pointed out he participates in voting and serves on a committee,  
5 and spoke of the need to empower the town and residents which does not always happen.  
6 He stressed everyone has the opportunity to empower the rest of the citizens in town. He  
7 stated he was unsure which form of government will be the best fit, but would like to see  
8 government for and by the people. In response to a request from Chairman Campbell for  
9 clarification he stated he thought some actions taken by boards and committees do not send  
10 the right message or plan for growth.

11  
12 Mr. Levine, 17 Nowell Court, Salem stressed the town is at an important crossroads and  
13 sees the work of the Commission as important. He stated he was disappointed there were  
14 not more people attending to provide input.

15  
16 Mr. Linehan said that it is the opinion of some residents that 66% is high for bond issues.  
17 He stated he felt if there was a good proposal people would vote for it. He also spoke about  
18 a lack of participation, stating it was always the same small number people who are  
19 involved in multiple things in town, but he was unsure whether this could be changed and  
20 whether a city form of government will resolve money problems rather than create more.

21  
22 Chairman Campbell thanked everyone for coming along and providing input. He reported  
23 Mr. Bill Scott, Community Development Director had contacted him regarding putting a  
24 survey up on the Internet which would allow large numbers of people to participate and  
25 provide feedback and he confirmed the Commission will discuss this at a future meeting  
26 and will continue to provide opportunities for input. He stated the Commission needs to  
27 reduce the options for the forms of government, and look at the statutes pertaining to those  
28 they decide to look at further which will refine the direction they take.

29  
30 Mr. Cooney spoke about the lack of notification and residents' lack of awareness of things  
31 going on in town.

32  
33 Chairman Campbell then asked members of the Commission for their input.

34  
35 Chairman Barnes pointed out he believes there is a traditional closed Town Meeting option  
36 not on the list and Chairman Campbell agreed, stating he would check into it further.

37  
38 In response to Mr. Stephen Campbell's suggestion to possibly use the Reverse 911 system  
39 for notifying residents of important things, Mr. Ganley clarified the town has replaced the  
40 Reverse 911 system for emergencies and pointed out the town would not wish to dilute the  
41 effectiveness of this type of system by using it for non emergencies.

42  
43 Responding to the comment that people thinking any change will increase taxes, Mr.  
44 Stephen Campbell stated he felt that in the short run this would be the case and under  
45 current economic conditions the Commission needs to consider this. He also stated the

comment that a certain percentage of the population will not accept change from that perspective is well taken.

Mr. Ganley commented it was ironic that residents commented about good projects failing by a few votes at times but they also did not want to reduce the voting percentage for bond issues. Responding to Mr. Hatch's comment regarding decaying infrastructure, he pointed out that people have to recognize that there will be good projects like building and road repair and replacement which will not be done if they want the voting percentage to stay at 66%.

Chairman Campbell commented the town needs to involve the Press and get information out to residents.

Mr. Gary Azarian, Salem life resident, commented he thought the current form of government needs to be improved, but he was amazed that people think it is broken and should be replaced. He thought the problem lay in the low voter turnout. He pointed out there has been an influx of residents who do not understand how the town's form of government works and they should not complain if they do not participate. He stated he thought the Commission's mandate should include getting more people to turn out and vote, as well as how they can move forward to get outstanding projects completed affordably. He stressed that a change in the form of government would not necessarily result in improved voter turnout.

Selectman Hargreaves stated he agreed with Ms. Berry that the school district should be left alone. He commented that there used to be banners around the town advertising important events and turn out had been better and people better informed. He commented he felt that in the past everyone had discussed things and all the committees had been on the same page. He stated the town needs to look at its current population and the age groups involved and inform them better. He also stated he likes the current form of government, but understands it needs to be fine-tuned.

Referring to Ms. Berry's comments, Ms. Stacey spoke about the marketing techniques used by the schools and suggested tapping into those.

Ms. Cooke stated the town must do something about gaining the public's trust and that when people take time out to vote they need to know it will count. She stated she had received negative feedback from residents about having to vote multiple times.

Chairman Campbell spoke about the venue of the next meeting, confirming it would be in the Knightly Room. He reported that a representative from the LGC (Local Government Center) would attend to discuss the legal aspects of the various forms of government. He handed out an updated list of e-mail addresses and telephone numbers for members of the Commission.

Responding to Chairman Campbell's query as to whether members of the Commission had any other business they wished to discuss, Mr. Lyons clarified how they would proceed from here.

1  
2 Chairman Campbell asked the members to e-mail him with questions for the LGC  
3 representative in advance of the next meeting, stating he would forward these to the LGC  
4 attorney prior to the meeting.  
5

6 Mr. Ganley spoke about the by-laws which the former Charter Reform Committee had put  
7 together and requested that Chairman Campbell look at these.  
8

9 • **Upcoming Meetings**

- 10 ○ July 9, 2009  
11

12 **MOTION:** by Michael Lyons

13 *Move to adjourn*

14 **SECOND:** Patrick Hargreaves

15 **VOTE:** 7-0-0

16 **The motion carried unanimously.**  
17

18 Without further business, the meeting adjourned at 8:06 p.m.  
19

20 Notes/Minutes Taken by: Sandra Maxwell  
21

22 Approved: Salem Charter Commission  
23

24 Date: July 9, 2009 as amended