

**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.

1 • Comments on the form of government – anything apart from a city. He stated he
2 was unsure how much would be on the ballot if there was town council. He also
3 stated he thought the second deliberative session does not represent the people at
4 all. He then spoke about having a default budget similar to SB2 towns which
5 should only include annual expenditure.
6

7 Mr. Pat Cooney, 10 Shore Drive, Salem, stated the only form of government he does not
8 like is the Town Meeting as it takes place on a Saturday and there is never a not good
9 turnout. He thought Salem should stick to the 66% majority vote, and spoke about the town
10 about not being able to do everything at once.
11

12 Mrs. Joan Molin, 9 Nowell Court, a Salem resident for 60 years, stated she assumed the
13 Commission will be considering a form of government as it relates to the current
14 population. She spoke about her understanding of how the petition warrants work for an
15 open town meeting and the disadvantages of this as there appeared to be no other avenue
16 for pursuing residents' requests/issues. She also spoke about her impression that town
17 employees do not have the flexibility to carry out certain requests, citing the repaving of
18 Ball Avenue and Nowell Court as an example. She stated there needs to be more flexibility
19 and something other than the Town Meeting option.
20

21 Mr. Lawrence Levine, 17 Nowell Court, Salem (a Salem resident for 40 years) pointed out
22 that only a very small percentage of the population is involved in town meetings and he felt
23 this caused a lot of problems. He suggested a city form of government to expedite the
24 process. He also spoke about the lack of water and sewer in his area which had been
25 defeated by just a few votes, and stated he was in favor of changing the type of government
26 to improve efficiency.
27

28 Ms. Pam Berry, 7 Leeside Drive, Salem stated she felt the Commission has a lot of work
29 ahead of them and needs to resolve with the general town population the misconception that
30 anyone wanting change wants to spend more money and raise taxes. She also stated the
31 Commission needs to decide whether the citizens of Salem are currently participating in the
32 running of their town and whether it would like them to participate in the future. She
33 pointed out she would like to see the school district stay autonomous whatever change is
34 made and she did not think a city form of government would have an interest in the school
35 district. She also made the point that the School Board and the Board of Selectmen are now
36 salesmen which is a byproduct of the charter and SB2, and this has quadrupled the amount
37 of time elected officials have to spend doing their jobs, making it less appealing for citizens
38 to run for those positions.
39

40 Mr. Jeff Hatch, 8 Scotland Avenue, Salem stated he was not sure that a lack of resident
41 participation is an issue for the Commission, but rather how much participation it would
42 like to see. He stated he felt the Commission should investigate all options and discuss
43 them fully before making a decision. He also stated he was unsure whether he would
44 support a city form of government and will wait until he hears more before making his
45 decision. He commented on the condition of the roads, the police station and the schools
46 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

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

3 Mr. Ganley commented it was ironic that residents commented about good projects failing
4 by a few votes at times but they also did not want to reduce the voting percentage for bond
5 issues. Responding to Mr. Hatch's comment regarding decaying infrastructure, he pointed
6 out that people have to recognize that there will be good projects like building and road
7 repair and replacement which will not be done if they want the voting percentage to stay at
8 66%.

9
10 Chairman Campbell commented the town needs to involve the Press and get information
11 out to residents.

12
13 Mr. Gary Azarian, Salem life resident, commented he thought the current form of
14 government needs to be improved, but he was amazed that people think it is broken and
15 should be replaced. He thought the problem lay in the low voter turnout. He pointed out
16 there has been an influx of residents who do not understand how the town's form of
17 government works and they should not complain if they do not participate. He stated he
18 thought the Commission's mandate should include getting more people to turn out and vote,
19 as well as how they can move forward to get outstanding projects completed affordably.
20 He stressed that a change in the form of government would not necessarily result in
21 improved voter turnout.

22
23 Selectman Hargreaves stated he agreed with Ms. Berry that the school district should be left
24 alone. He commented that there used to be banners around the town advertising important
25 events and turn out had been better and people better informed. He commented he felt that
26 in the past everyone had discussed things and all the committees had been on the same
27 page. He stated the town needs to look at its current population and the age groups
28 involved and inform them better. He also stated he likes the current form of government,
29 but understands it needs to be fine-tuned.

30
31 Referring to Ms. Berry's comments, Ms. Stacey spoke about the marketing techniques used
32 by the schools and suggested tapping into those.

33
34 Ms. Cooke stated the town must do something about gaining the public's trust and that
35 when people take time out to vote they need to know it will count. She stated she had
36 received negative feedback from residents about having to vote multiple times.

37
38 Chairman Campbell spoke about the venue of the next meeting, confirming it would be in
39 the Knightly Room. He reported that a representative from the LGC (Local Government
40 Center) would attend to discuss the legal aspects of the various forms of government. He
41 handed out an updated list of e-mail addresses and telephone numbers for members of the
42 Commission.

43
44 Responding to Chairman Campbell's query as to whether members of the Commission had
45 any other business they wished to discuss, Mr. Lyons clarified how they would proceed
46 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 Without further business, the meeting adjourned at 8:06 p.m.
18

19 Notes/Minutes Taken by: Sandra Maxwell
20

21 Approved: Salem Charter Commission
22

23 Date: July 9, 2009 as amended
24