



**TOWN CHARTER COMMITTEE MEETING MINUTES  
OF JUNE 24, 2024**

Members: Judy Bickford\*, Don McDowell, Chris Palermo, Laura Streets, George Cormier, Richard Craig, Brian Yeaton, Christopher Moks

Absent: Craig Santenello, Sara Haskins

Staff: Brent Raymond, Town Manager; Carrie Johnson, Project Manager; Judi Alberi, Executive

Guests: Assistant;  
Martin Green, Alexander Cyr

*\*participating via Zoom*

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**5:30PM - CALL TO ORDER**

Don McDowell called the Charter Committee Meeting to order at 5:30PM at the Tegu Building.

**5:31PM - AGENDA CHANGES/ADDITIONS**

No changes.

Christopher Moks asked to have a conversation surrounding the meeting of 4-22-24. Christopher objected to the meeting and questioned the value of community members on the committee. After much conversation, it was agreed upon that the minutes of 3-18-24 were not approved properly and would be added to the 7-16-24 Charter Comm meeting. Several members reassured Christopher that the community members are valued and bring a great deal of input to the meetings. A better effort will be made by the administration to provide staff notes to the committee members with more detail ahead of the meetings.

**5:32PM - APPROVE MINUTES**

The minutes of 4/22/24 were approved by

**1. Approve Minutes 4-22-24**

***Motion made by Chris Palermo to approve the minutes of 4-22-24. Motion seconded by Richard Craig. Motion carried. (7/1/0) Christopher Moks nay.***

**5:35PM - NEW BUSINESS**

**1. Review timeline of committees work November 2023 - June 2024**

Carrie Johnson reviewed the previous timeline discussed in April. The committee has some options with the new legislative update regarding the Local Option Tax that no longer requires a town charter. The charter can be presented to the voters as soon as November or the committee can slow down the process and create a charter with more depth and substance and bring it to the voters in March. The other option discussed is whether continuing with a charter is necessary at this time. The committee felt a charter was still best for the town but no decision was made as to when the voters would vote.

**2. Legislative Update (re: Effective 7/1/2024 - Local Option Tax (LOT) authorization no longer requires town charter**

The committee was informed that due to the legislative decision the local option tax can be done without a charter.

**3. Discussion and listening session (re: Local Option Tax Benefits & Challenges and Charter Vision)**

In light of the new legislation indicating that the town does not need a charter, Don McDowell directed the committee to focus on the following options.

1. The town can have a charter without the local income tax (LOT).
2. The Town can pursue the LOT
3. The Town can have both, a charter, and the LOT.

Discussion ensued regarding these options. Laura Streets said she has always wanted the town to have a charter and the LOT is not her agenda. She continued that there are many business advantages to having a charter that could be suited to the town's unique aspects and other areas such as appropriations. She proposed a fourth option, to have a simple charter, then review the goals and needs to develop the charter to suit them. Christopher Moks suggested they take the LOT out and develop the charter while continuing the discussion about the LOT. He thought both should be pursued but separately. Brian Yeaton favored the division with both being pursued. He felt the charter needed to be clear and state how it functions. Chris Palermo noted that the charter must respond to the state guidelines, be approved, and then add more details. Christopher agreed to a simplified charter and identified the charter development would continue into the following year. There was agreement among others with George and Judy liking the simplicity of the charter. Laura stated the timing would allow the committee to learn what the state would expect. It was the concession of the committee to use the fourth draft of the Charter with the modification of eliminating item number three.

Although Laura felt that a decision had been made to separate the charter and the LOT, the committee should not discuss the LOT at this time, the Chair continued with the agenda as planned and distributed. Laura objected to this decision. Other committee members wanted to continue, as noted. The committee continued as Don McDowell clarified that the LOT can be pursued as four separate items. The LOT can apply to alcohol, room and board, meals, and sales. George Cormier did not want the decision about options made without the public's input. It was noted that the discussion must include the public, but they must be educated about the issue. Public meetings about LOT have been planned. Laura felt that the committee was blurring the charter and the LOT for the public and suggested separate information. A community member agreed with Laura that both of these topics should not be discussed together. Another community member commented that no decisions would be made at this time, which would allow the conversation to continue. A committee member agreed that these issues needed to be discussed with a plan decided when the committee goes to the Selectboard. The Chair, Don McDowell, stated, without a majority objection, that the committee would discuss the LOT at this time.

Chris Palermo said that the public should be presented with all the information, including the four areas of taxation and the figures on each option's predicted income included in Jeff Carr's report. Brian Yeaton spoke to 88 homeowners and reported that they are more concerned by the allocation of the funds gained through the LOT. They want to off-set current taxes and no new taxes. Christopher Moks also wanted to reflect the difference between taxing room and board, which would bring in the smallest amount, and the sales tax, which brings the most money with the most opposition. There was

agreement that each article would be proposed separately. The need for good communication was confirmed and the collection of how other towns handled this was discussed. Members agreed there must be a mechanism to show the public how the town would use the money and how it would reduce taxes. Also, the public needs to be able to track the income and the intended expenditure, whether it be lowering taxes or improving bridges and roads. Brian Yeaton told the committee they have inherited distrust from the public, they think the money will disappear, and they will not gain personally. The roads and bridges need repair and the public would profit from the improvement. One idea was to put 100% of the LOT gains into property taxes only for the first year as this would be the lowest income year. In the following years, the income could go into infrastructure. Laura added that the town needed to put more effort into fundraising and identifying grant funds.

Discussion ensued about the design of an easily understood ballot for voting on the LOT. Communication must be maximized and designed efficiently to explain the issues. Carrie Johnson suggested the committee look at her communication plan which, in addition to print media education, includes public meetings where people can ask questions and hear from their neighbors. She will distribute the plan before the next meeting.

The group talked about whether the committee should split by topic. Brent Raymond asked if the Selectboard should be asked to change the committee. After some opinions were shared it was decided to meet again in the same configuration.

#### **6:35PM - OLD BUSINESS**

- 1. Communication Schedule (Revision to be based on vote being held November 2024 or March 2025)**  
No discussion - will continue this item at future meetings.

#### **6:45PM - OTHER BUSINESS**

- 1. Schedule next meeting 7-22-24 (Monday 5:30PM)**  
The next meeting has been rescheduled for 7/16/24 (Tuesday 5:30 PM)

#### **6:48PM - ADJOURN**

***Motion made by Chris Palermo to adjourn. Motion seconded by Richard Craig. Motion carried. (8/0)***

Meeting adjourned at 7:38pm  
Submitted and filed this July 5, 2024  
Bonnie McDermott and Judi Alberi, Scribes

*Please note all minutes are in Draft form and are subject to approval at the next Town Charter Committee meeting.*