



## TOWN OF CHARLTON

Minutes of Government Study Review Committee Meeting

Tuesday, February 22, 2023, 6:00 p.m.

Zoom Meeting ID: 894 0867 1292

Zoom Passcode: 903228; Phone Access: +1-646-558-8656

In-Person: Meeting Room 1 - Town Hall

### **Committee Members Present:**

Mr. Joseph Haebler, Chairman

Mr. Gerald Doble, Vice Chairman

Mr. Adam Kelly, Clerk

Ms. Jeanne Costello, Committee Member

### **Committee Members Absent:**

Mr. James Nee, Committee Member

### **Others Present:**

Mr. Seth Lemansky, Town of Charlton Tree Warden

Mr. Peter Boria, Town of Charlton Water & Sewer Commissioner

Mr. Bradford Howard, Town of Charlton Constable

### **I. Call to order:**

A. J. Haebler called the meeting to order at 6:04 p.m.

### **II. Approval of previous minutes:**

A. Motion by G. Doble to approve the November 15, 2022 minutes, seconded by A. Kelly, unanimous vote.

B. Motion by G. Doble to approve the January 17, 2023 minutes with clerical correction making "2022" into "2023" in the header date, seconded by A. Kelly, unanimous vote.

### **III. Interviews:**

A. The Committee met with the Town Tree Warden, Mr. Seth Lemansky, to better understand his position and the functions of the Town Tree Warden. Below is a summary of the primary talking points:

1. Interesting to see the actions taken across the Town as a result of the last Government Study Committee White Paper published in 2016
2. Tree Warden is a required position for town as per Massachusetts General Law – "protecting people from trees and trees from people"
3. Mr. Lemansky has been in the roll for 6-7 years
4. There is a Massachusetts Tree Warden Association
  - a) Don't have to be a Tree Warden to attend training courses
  - b) Invites to courses have been shared with the Town Administrator and Highway Department



5. Not having money isn't an excuse to not perform required duties
6. Town has always been supportive of the Tree Warden's position and duties
7. Town of Charlton is in more of a "prevent" mode compared to "preserve" when it comes to trees
8. Trees are known to be deteriorating quicker in this region
  - a) Fungus evolution, bugs, diseases, etc.
9. Tree Warden coordinates with Highway, Board of Selectmen, National Grid, Verizon, and Residents the most
10. It's been noticed that many trees are being cut down around town lately
  - a) National Grid is performing the work
  - b) Work is considered "pre-phase" and typical maintenance
  - c) Trees which have been cut down were considered a hazard to wires and roadways
11. Technology has advanced in foliage management – applications on smartphones can detect health levels of trees
12. "Changing of the guard" between Tree Wardens does cause a tear in continuity as connections and relationships need to be rebuilt with partnering agencies, departments and utilities
13. National Grid has proven helpful in many ways
14. Would be better if position was appointed vs. elected
15. Tree Wardens need to be able to speak to the public and be accessible
16. Budget is \$12,000-\$15,000 annually
  - a) State goal is \$2 per capita
  - b) Budget is currently limited to removal and not replanting
  - c) National Grid has a grant program for planting new trees at a location of the Town's choosing for each tree that is removed
17. Fields 6-10 calls weekly with multiple follow-ups
18. 3-4 hours of work per week on average
19. Tree remediation contracts
  - a) 2 year cycles and then rebid
  - b) Rates are based on per-day
  - c) Quotes are on a tree-by-tree basis for many days the work will take
20. Would be helpful if the Highway Department could dedicate some time each week to navigate various roads across to Town in order to identify any issues
21. "10 out of 10 for everyone working together and being helpful across town"
22. Many "old" roads across town with trees that are significantly aged – an abundance of similarly-aged trees all surpassing maturity and on the decline happening around the same time is problematic

- B. The Committee met with the Town Water/Sewer Commissioner, Mr. Peter Boria, to better understand his position and the functions of the Town Water/Sewer Commission. Below is a summary of the primary talking points:
1. There are some water lines unused currently (Rt. 20 growth goals)
  2. Sewer is expanded as far as needed across Town
  3. Water and Sewer board is comprised of 5 personnel
    - a) Not elected or appointed
    - b) Water/Sewer Commission established ~2003
  4. Water and sewer have separate budgets and are enterprise funds which are isolated from one another
  5. Town of Charlton owns all the water infrastructure
  6. Whitewater operates the Southbridge water supply, which is where Charlton water comes from
  7. Massachusetts has a water supply grant which provides \$200,000 annually for searching and drilling to establish sustainable water sources
    - a) Location identified near Buffumville Dam, Town has purchased the property
    - b) \$7-8 Million project for 200,000 gallons/day supply
    - c) DeSantos Trust land and Nature's Classroom are also potential locations being sought for a potential town well
  8. Town of Charlton has a 500,000 gallon/day agreement for another 15 years
    - a) Current demand in Charlton is ~220,000 gallons/day typically
    - b) Amazon facility expected ~12,000 gallons/day
    - c) Overlook is ~45,000 gallons/day
    - d) If a reliable water source is found for the Town, redundant valves will likely be emplaced as a emergency option to receive water from Southbridge if ever necessary
  9. 240 customers are currently connected to town water
  10. 670 customers are currently connected to town sewer
  11. Tie-in fees, IMA kickbacks from Southbridge, and connection fees are all revenue streams for water budget
  12. Salaries come out of the sewer budget
  13. Operationally, things are going well
  14. Relationships with other departments are good
  15. No heavy equipment in the Water/Sewer Commission
  16. 5 year contracts for the sewer plant
    - a) Contractor is current Veolia
    - b) Resources are shared with surrounding communities that have the same sewer plant contractor

17. Sewer plant discharges into Cady Brook
18. ARPA funds being used to research handling waste
19. Stabilization accounts created 4-5 years ago
  - a) \$3.7 Million for water
  - b) \$3 Million for sewer
  - c) Goal is to avoid loans when possible and be self-sufficient for projects
20. Merging multiple departments/commission/services under a new Department of Public Works should be a 2-part process, which would require Town Meeting approval:
  - a) As a Department Head leaves, the respective department should merge into the new construct vs. hiring a backfill (Boards will need to merge as well)
  - b) As each department merges, in an iterative/proof of concept fashion, conduct assessments for suitability and determine whether the action of merging is still worthwhile to continue pursuing
  - c) Benefits to merging is shared resources such as personnel, equipment, and capacity to perform services

C. The Committee met with one of the Town of Charlton Constables, Mr. Bradford Howard, to better understand his position and the functions of the Town Constable. Below is a summary of the primary talking points:

1. Position is currently elected and Mr. Howard prefers it remain that way
2. Daily activities include: evictions, serving papers, issuing warrants, learning the job on-the-fly
3. Mr. Howard claims that the position costs him money to perform (e.g. Constable badge for \$100+)
4. Town of Charlton "should" be getting a fee from the State of Massachusetts for each service performed outside of the Town of Charlton
5. Focus of the role is on the "human element" and enforcing laws/standards with dignity and respect, especially when handling sensitive situations like evictions
6. Mr. Howard was provided with no training once elected to the position and had no prior experience or knowledge pertaining to the role of a Constable. Mr. Howard also claimed that no position description existed (or could be found) for the role of Constable.
  - a) A. Kelly asked whether such a position would actually be better suited to be an appointed position in order to ensure future Constables have knowledge, relevant experience, and other applicable qualifications that would fit the expectations of the role?

- b) Mr. Howard maintained that the position should remain elected, as the Constable should be a representative of the people, by the people, to handle the delicate situations which must be conducted for maintaining law and order in the community
  - c) Mr. Howard reiterated that “soft skills” are the most critical skills for the job
  - d) J. Costello posed “are soft skills well-elected or appointed?”
7. The 2nd Constable in the Town of Charlton is appointed due to a vacancy which resulted in an appointment vs. an election filling the vacant position.
- a) Mr. Howard noted that the 2nd Constable in the Town was a Private Investigator and also owned a security company – notable experiences that lend well to filling the role of Constable

**IV. Old business:**

**A. Survey**

- 1. A. Kelly will draft a 1-question, open-ended, survey via Google Forms and will send the Form to the rest of the Committee when ready for sharing with the Town Administrator for dissemination
- 2. The Committee reviewed the proposed Town Report. Clerical/grammatical changes were made. Motion by J. Costello to accept the Town Report, as corrected, seconded by G. Doble; unanimous vote.

**V. New business:**

- A. Committee members need to complete the Conflict of Interest training and form as soon as possible.

**VI. Other business:**

- A. Anticipated that the Board of Selectmen and perhaps many others will be in attendance at the next meeting, as the primary topic will be regarding the idea of a Department of Public Works merger.

**VII. Next meeting and adjournment:**

- A. Motion by J. Costello to adjourn, seconded by G. Doble, unanimous vote at 7:47 p.m.
- B. Next meeting is scheduled for Tuesday, March 21, 2022, at 6:00 p.m. in Meeting Room 1 at Town Hall and also available on Zoom.

**VIII. Contact:**

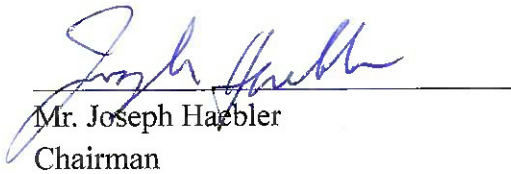
- A. Any questions, comments or concerns should be addressed to the Committee via email at [GovStudy@townofcharlton.net](mailto:GovStudy@townofcharlton.net)

Respectfully submitted by:

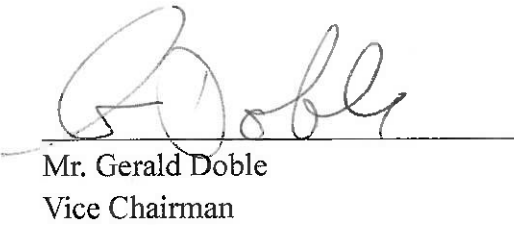


Mr. Adam D. Kelly  
Clerk  
Government Study Review Committee

Accepted by:



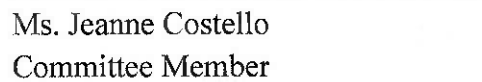
Mr. Joseph Haebler  
Chairman



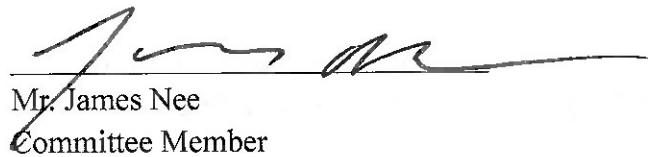
Mr. Gerald Doble  
Vice Chairman



Mr. Adam Kelly  
Clerk



Ms. Jeanne Costello  
Committee Member



Mr. James Nee  
Committee Member