

## Longmeadow Charter Commission Minutes

DATE: September 3, 2003

TIME: 7:01pm. (Adjourned 9:37pm)

PLACE: School Committee Meeting Room.

This was the 9th meeting of the Longmeadow Charter Commission. Present: Kathleen E. Grady, William Hoff, R. Peter Landon, Joseph A. Occhiuti, Rebecca M. Townsend (Clerk), Roger B. Wojcik (Chair). Absent: Susan R. Altman, Arlene C. Miller (Vice Chair), and Roger F. Nadeau. No members of the public were present.

Mr. Wojcik called the meeting to order and, seeing no members of the public present, closed the comment period.

1. Mr. Wojcik opened review of the minutes of the August 20, 2003 meeting. Ms. Grady moved to accept them as written, Mr. Hoff seconded, and **minutes were approved**.
2. Mr. Wojcik noted that **this evening would complete our Evaluation of Existing Government**. Compliments to Ms. Miller, Mr. Occhiuti, and Ms. Altman for their work in arranging and coordinating interviews. Compliments to the members, a quorum of whom attended each interview. We then developed a list of what we felt were primary government structure problems in Longmeadow. Mr. Wojcik noted that the list is a working list, that those absent are welcome to submit items not already listed, and any member may contribute additional items. A copy of the working list is attached to these minutes. **Additional comments are to be submitted to Mr. Wojcik ASAP for inclusion in the summary sheet.**
3. The **status of our work to engage a charter advisor** was the next item for discussion. Mr. Landon argued in favor of a consultant with expertise in charter work. Mr. Hoff agreed. Mr. Wojcik reported that seven (7) letters of inquiry were sent to individuals or businesses in this type work, and he proposed that the Commission interview the three candidates whose replies appeared to best suit our needs. **We would decide on the procedures following September 12<sup>th</sup>. We likely would bring 3 in one evening. Mr. Wojcik will deliver candidates' replies to the Commission members so that we could choose by the 17<sup>th</sup>.** We then discussed our budget using the information from the minutes of the 7-9-03 meeting as a reference. **Ms. Grady reduced the Outreach program's request to \$1000.**
4. Mr. Occhiuti presented his research on **printing costs** (assuming 8 ½ x 11 size, Ink, 10 lb to 50 #, Fold & Staple). Request 1: 1000 Preliminary Reports and Request 2 was for Final Reports.

Company:		Estimate
Pip Printing,	Manchester CT	\$4915.50 (for 5800)
Pip	Springfield, MA	\$9086.65
Class Graphics	W. Springfield	\$5510
Curry Printing	W. Springfield	\$11000
Advanced Printing	W. Springfield	\$9500; \$18280 to mail it
Bessette Printers		\$5598
Alpha Graphics	W. Springfield	\$9000/10000
A&M Lithography		pre: \$1790; Final: \$3267 (total: \$5057)

We updated our budget as follows:

	\$13,000 for printing and distributing the preliminary report via the <u>Reminder</u> (as per Home Rule Amendment/state law requiring printing and distribution in a newspaper of general circulation)
	\$20000 for a charter advisor to help prepare the charter
	\$1000 supplies and travel
	\$1000 Outreach Program
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Total:	\$35000
Minus	\$5000 (original appropriation)
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Shortfall	\$30000 to be funded

Members discussed our previous decision to request funding at the next Town Meeting, and we noted that consultants would likely not accept an employment offer contingent on Town funding to be determined in November. The printing costs were higher than anticipated, thus spurring the consensus decision to submit a request to the Appropriations Committee for funds via the Reserve Fund. Mr. Wojcik will take the necessary actions for this request.

The printing of the final report is the Selectmen's responsibility, so we did not account for that in our budget. Mr. Wojcik will draft a letter to the Board of Selectmen informing them of the printing costs they ought to anticipate.

5. Mr. Wojcik proposed the following meeting schedule:
  - a. Sept. 10 Evaluate Alternative Models. Guest speaker: Easthampton Mayor (and former Selectmen) Mike Tautznik
  - b. Sept. 17 Guest speakers from the Massachusetts Municipal Managers' Association Speakers' Bureau
  - c. Sept. 24 Finalize Charter Provisions (decide, in detail, what features will be in our charter). Select Charter Advisor
  - d. October 1 Define features/framework of the Charter
  - e. Oct. 8 Select Model(s) to detail
  - f. Oct. 10, 11, 12, 13 Retreat to detail the model(s) selected
  - g. Oct. 15 Start of Public Forums
  - h. Oct. 22 Draft Charter
  - i. January/February/March/April Expand Outreach Program to promote proposed Charter

We discussed this schedule, potentially including a 'retreat' to deliberate controversial points.

6. Ms. Townsend asked members to select charters and organizational charts from the current collection, and to read each in preparation for reviewing them at our next meeting. We have not yet received all requested charters/organizational charts. Among those we did receive, distribution was as follows:
  - a. Mr. Landon: Reading
  - b. Mr. Hoff: Arlington
  - c. Mr. Occhiuti: Princeton and Sudbury
  - d. Mr. Wojcik: Amherst, Princeton, Arlington, Reading

e. Ms. Grady: Arlington, Reading

In addition, members are encouraged to review towns' and cities websites for additional preparation. We can consider calling or visiting or bringing in representatives from some communities to discuss specific items of interest. We already have several readings about alternatives from the Dept. of Housing and Community Development and the Massachusetts Municipal Association.

7. Mr. Landon called for adjournment, Mr. Hoff seconded the call, and the meeting was adjourned at 9:37pm.

Approved September 10, 2003.

Respectfully Submitted,

Rebecca Townsend, Clerk

**A Summary of our Evaluation of Existing Government**

**09-5-03**

This is material gleaned primarily from the nineteen interviews with representatives of Longmeadow's town government over the past two months.

**PROBLEMS or ISSUES** (and why are they a problems or issues) to avoided, minimized, avoided or handled by provisions in the proposed charter.

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**Communication/cooperation failures**, for example the conflicting Town Moderator and Town Clerk perspectives on voting procedures.....breeds lack of confidence in government and in government leadership.

**Town meeting voting procedures** (the use of clicker counters for example)..... has potential for important inaccuracies

**Excessive number of elected Boards and Commissions**..... may promote inappropriate advocates for each service so supported and may reduce focus on servicing the common good.

**Differences in the accounting systems** used in the School Department and Town (and even sub-systems such as the water/sewer department)..... with result that multiple systems must be understood to review financial information and data cannot (easily) be exchanged or integrated.

**Only three selectmen on the Board**..... with the result that the Board is overburdened with activities, has little time for debate, has reduced diversity in decision making, can make decisions with only one selectman's vote and does not vet the department budgets.

**The Town Administrator has little authority**..... with the result that this well paid position is inefficiently used

**School Committee is overburdened with chores.....** with the result that the essential work of setting and reviewing policy, (proposing by-laws?), reviewing and approving budgets and hiring/supervising director level personnel doesn't appear to get done well.

**Non- inclusive accounting.....** with the result that voters lack complete information on which to make decisions.

**Inconsistent and unprincipled personnel policies.....** with the result that pay scales and benefits for similar jobs across town and school services are significantly different and collective bargaining is made difficult. Also, current policies may provide an opportunity for nepotism and patronage.

**Professional positions covering multiple responsibilities and funded by more than one department/function** (i.e. Supt of W & S and Supt of DPW).... lead to conflicts of interest and priorities and supervisory issues.

**Current organizational structure excessively decentralized.....** leading to shortfalls in authority, accountability, confusion, fiefdoms and silos.

**Failure to educate voters regards town meeting procedures** (and perhaps other issues).... leads to voters making decisions with insufficient knowledge.

**Lack of ongoing strategic long term planning** for services and capital needs..... leads to short term band-aid solutions

**The ability of the Town Moderator to appoint Appropriations Committee.....** leads to lack of institutionalized procedures for their selection. Also, since the Moderator may vote in open Town Meeting, it reduces the apolitical nature of their appointment.

**Inflexibility in spending budgeted \$\$.....** results in inability to respond to real life changes throughout fiscal year.

**Waste and inefficiencies in town operations .....** result from lack of coordination, lack of checks and balances, separate but similar functional units (in Town and School service units) for building maintenance, street services, transportation equipment, and etc.

**Election of Town Clerk/Treasurer/Collector.....** may reduce the likelihood of the position being filled by qualified personnel. Another issue resulting from the present three-in-one configuration is job overload, in that the number of duties given to each of the three positions has increased over the years.

**Accounting methodologies and equipment appear to be out-of date.....** leading to time consuming manual work and reduced/incomplete information available for making financial decisions

**Lack of communication with town residents.....** leads to residents feeling that they are ignored.

**Relatively few appointed town government positions (compared to the number of elected positions).....** may reduce the chances of key positions being filled with the best qualified persons.

**Too many elected positions.....** increases the number of 'political' positions and may reduce the number of 'professionals' needed in key service spots.

**The Tree Warden position is part of Parks and Recreation Department appointment authority.....** resulting in dissipation of Selectmen's control over town positions.