

Oct 30, 2024 | Town Council Study Committee Meeting Minutes

Location: 131 Pleasant Street Room A

Attendees: Beau Barber, Curtis Barnes, Caroline Baltzer, Jeremy Bloomer, Jeff Carlson, Joe Grause, Rachel Mandle, Jill Vieth, Donna Martino, Kelly Steffen

Guests attendees: Libby Gibson, Town Manager

Collins Center attendees: Anthony Wilson, Mel Kleckner, Patricia Lloyd

Minutes:

00:00 Call to Order by Chair Joe Grause

00:42 Approval of agenda by majority voice vote.

01:45 Joe asks if there are any comments or grammatical edits to the FAQ sheet and for those to be sent to Jeff Carlson.

02:25 Joe asks about adjusting the pace of meetings or rescheduling upcoming meetings. There was a consensus that the pace should be set by Collins Center's availability for five more meetings - and getting the draft Charter to KP Law in time for a potential Special Town Meeting around September 2025. Mel of Collins Center discussed the Special Town Meeting process. The Select Board can call a Special Town Meeting at any time, but if they do not, citizens need to get signatures, which takes longer.

The committee agreed to meeting dates through the New Year of November 6th, December 4th, and January 8th.

12:40 Collins Center discusses progress thus far, including *Articles 1-5*. They are waiting for answers from the town administration for some remaining administrative organization questions. The remaining *Articles* are 6, *Financial and Fiscal Procedures*, 7, *Elections*, and the *Transition Article*. With *Article 8* being discussed in the current meeting, only three remain unless other specifics arise. The County Charter will be reviewed as the final step.

14:00 Caroline raised an issue from the public about "Proprietors" and whether that role would carry over to Town Council members. Joe said he would research this further.

17:15 Discussion on citizen interactions with Town Council, *Article 8*. Pat noted that there are 14,251 residents and 9,732 registered voters in Nantucket. Emphasizes acquiring signatures has become easier via social media outreach.

Pat introduces *Section 8.1: Open Meeting of the Voters* as a less common and newer provision, frequently seen when there is a shift from Town Meeting form of government to Council form. Sometimes called "Town Hall," it requires the town to hold a meeting to discuss a specific matter upon the written request of a certain number of voters. Action from the Council is not required. An *Open Meeting of the Voters* is more substantial than a regular Council meeting as the Council is expected to assemble and make knowledgeable people available on the subject in question. Refer to Collins Center materials from this meeting for a chart listing signature thresholds for other towns implementing a Council. In conclusion, the Committees support this vehicle as it adds another avenue for citizen participation. The TCSCI needs to consider signature requirement thresholds.

27:40 Pat continues with *Section 8.2: Free Petition a - Resident Petitions, Action Discretionary*, which ensures the Council will receive any petition signed by one or more residents. *Section b - Group Petitions, Action Required*, while similar to *Open Meeting of the Voters*, requires the Council to take some action on

the petition filed. Actions include a wide range of options. The hearing must happen within 3 months of the petition's filing—quantity of signatures for section *b* - and other specifics to be determined.

30:30 Collins Center has used language in the draft Charter that has been used in other Massachusetts Town Charters already approved by the Attorney General.

43:30 Committee supportive of using both *Section 8.1* and *Section 8.2* in draft Charter. Signature thresholds still to be decided.

47:55 Pat discussed *Section 8.3: Resident Initiative Measures* is a signature-initiated process that requires the Town Council to take a specific action. If the Town Council opposes the action, it can go to the ballot with additional signatures.

49:00 Pat shared some general comments on additional citizen participation mechanisms, which will be covered in future meetings.

53:00 Libby Gibson, Town Manager, joined the meeting to answer questions from Collins Center and the Committee.

53:20 Mel to Libby, most of the executive functions of the Town Manager have been included in the draft charter. Need advice on handling Boards, Commissions, etc., under the current Charter are referred to as “in or out of town administration.” This terminology is not carried over to the draft Charter. Collins Center has prepared it in a way that assumes everyone is in and then creates an exception provision. Committee has requested that this structure stay similar during the shift to Town Council. Clarification was requested on handling departments such as Parks and Recreation, the library, and the airport. Emphasized the Committee's intent to maintain similar structures as the current Charter.

54:51 Libby explains the status of Parks and Recreation, its inclusion under town administration, and the Town Manager's involvement in hiring. She also elaborated on the airport and Water Commission's independence.

57:03 Libby discusses appointment processes and existing exemptions. Issues related to non-uniform airport and Water Commission compensation practices were highlighted.

1:02:13 Joe raised questions about integrating departments like the Sewer Commission and the implications for governance.

1:08:02 Libby discussed consistency and challenges in governance structures, particularly regarding compensation and classification issues.

1:18:35 Mel asked about the library's governance and funding. Libby clarified that it operates as a private entity receiving town funds but is not under town administration.

1:22:57 Libby discusses the role of the Assistant Town Clerk, who is appointed but also requires the approval of the Town Manager.

1:25:18 Libby shares a list of added town departments not explicitly mentioned in the Town Charter. These include Housing, Solid Waste, Human Resources, Sewer, Information Technology, Natural Resources, and Culture and tourism.

1:26:02 Mel advises against including specific town departments as if there are changes. The Town would then have to petition the legislator for a charter change.

1:28:58 The Committee then discussed the Nantucket Planning and Economic Development Commission, the NP&EDC, with Libby. The Planning Director is hired by the NP&EDC but has split duties between reporting to the NP&EDC and managing the Planning and Land Use (PLUS) department. It is a complicated organizational structure. The TCSC intends to keep the current structure (as much as possible) if a conversion to Town Council moves forward.

1:32:16 Brooke Mohr, Chair of the Select Board, attending as a member of the public, offered some comments on the nature of the chair's role and noted its workload and responsibilities.

1:39:30 Brooke advocated for compensating elected officials to make roles accessible to a broader demographic, stressing the need for inclusivity and financial feasibility for potential candidates.

1:43:32 Joe acknowledged the need for continued education and public engagement regarding the Charter and a longer timeline than originally discussed.

1:48:03 The Committee discussed the potential for a Sense of the Meeting Vote and a ballot question to gauge interest in a Town Council form of government.

1:49:10 Motion to adjourn majority voice vote.