

Nov 6, 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

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

Minutes:

00:00 Joe: Call to Order

00:15 Multiple Members: Agenda Approval by majority voice vote.

00:36 Multiple Members: Meeting Minutes accepted by majority voice vote.

01:04 Joe: Primary agenda item

- Topic: Resident participation in the Town Council framework.

01:24 Patricia: Resident participation via *Open Meeting*

Key Considerations:

1. Thresholds of signatures for *Section 8.1: Open Meeting*
 - What should the threshold be based on?
 - Examples from Amherst's charter were cited, where residents (including non-citizens and unregistered voters) can petition for meetings.
 - a. Amherst includes permanent residents for inclusivity, allowing non-voting individuals with ties to the community (e.g., students, non-citizens) to participate in petitions.
 - Discussed defining "residents" for Nantucket, focusing on whether Street List or voter registration should be the determinant.

02:24 Curtis:

- Proposal: Suggested 200 voter signatures as a reasonable threshold for convening an *Open Meeting of the Voters*.

03:22 Group discussion: pros and cons

- Support for 200 Signatures?
 - Ensures seriousness and community-wide support for issues.
 - Aligns with Nantucket's special town meeting requirements.
- Arguments Against High Thresholds:
 - Concerns that it might limit accessibility and engagement, especially for smaller groups.
 - Balancing inclusion while preventing frivolous petitions.

04:37 Patricia: Reference to Street List

- Practical Tool: The street list was suggested as an accessible and accurate way to define eligible

petitioners like the town of Amherst does.

08:02 Participation clarification

- Final Distinction:
 - Voters would be eligible to sign petitions.
 - Residents, including non-voters, can attend and participate in an *Open Meeting of the Voters*.

15:47 Group consensus

- Outcome: 200 voters set as the threshold for petitions to convene an *Open Meeting of the Voters* and emphasized that non-voting taxpayers could attend but not sign petitions. School committee excluded from petition processes.

29:41 Patricia: 8.2: *Free Petition* thresholds

- Overview: Discussed a separate mechanism for residents to bring matters to the town council agenda.
- Threshold: Proposed requiring 100 voter signatures for *Free Petition*

31:36 Group Consensus

- Outcome: Committee agreed to set 100 voter signatures as the threshold for *Free Petition*.

34:13 Patricia: 8.3: *Resident Initiative Measures*

- Detailed Process:
 - Step 1: Petition with 100 voter signatures submitted to the council.
 - Step 2: If Council rejects or amends the proposal, petitioners must collect 10% of voter signatures to place their *Resident Initiative Measures* on the ballot.
 - Step 3: Ballot question validated if at least 20% of voters participate in the election.

39:20 Group Discussion: *Resident Initiative Measures* thresholds

- Consensus:
 - 100 signatures for initial council petitions.
 - If Town Council rejects or amends the petition, petitioners can decide if they want to collect 10% of registered voter signatures for ballot inclusion.
 - 20% voter turnout for validation.

48:30 Patricia: 8.4: *Voter Veto Procedures / Referendums* measures

- Purpose: Allows voters to overturn Town Council decisions.
- Proposed Thresholds:
 - 5% voter signatures to initiate a referendum.
 - 20% voter turnout required for validation.

51:41 Group Consensus

- Outcome: Approved referendum provisions with thresholds as proposed.

58:57 Patricia: 8.6: *Submission of other matters to voters*

- Allows Town Council to submit matters to the ballot via its own motion. Committee, to be consistent with previous actions, removed School Committee from this section.

1:03:12 Patricia: 8-8. *Recall of Elected Office Holders*

- Overview: Outlined process for removing elected officials mid-term.
 - Requires 10% voter signatures to initiate.
 - 20% turnout required for validation.
 - Recalls prohibited within the first or last six months of a term.

1:04:24 Group consensus

- Outcome: Agreed to retain *Recall* provisions as written.

1:16:00 Discussion: Non-binding measures

- Concerns: Non-binding articles in the current Town Meeting system often consume resources and time.
- Resolution:
 - Town Council system expected to streamline actionable items and address most issues efficiently in regular meetings.
 - Only Town Council is able to put non-binding initiatives on the ballot. There is an assumption that resident petitions are legal and enforceable.
 - Note to be made in Charter draft for KP Law to weigh in on if 8.5: *Ineligible Measures* is necessary to include in the Charter.

1:30:11 Caroline: Proprietor inquiry

- Follow-Up: Research confirmed that proprietors were officially phased out in the 1990s and are not included in the current charter.

1:30:52 Joe: Next steps

- Sense of the Meeting Vote: Discussion on including in either or both the Town Meeting and as a ballot vote.
- Drafting Process: Joe will prepare draft language for review by KP Law.

1:36:36 Adjournment

- Motion: Meeting adjourned by majority voice vote.