

Town Council Study Committee Meeting Minutes

Date: Wednesday, March 12, 2025

Time: 3:00pm-5:00pm

Location: 133 Pleasant St meeting room

Present: Attendees included Jeff Carlson, Curtis Barnes, Beau Barber, Jeremy Bloomer, Donna Martino, Rachel Mandel, Joe Grause

Absent: Jill Vieth and Tom Dixon

Call to Order

- The meeting was called to order by the Chair Joe Grause on March 12, 2025.
- The Chair noted that the meeting was being recorded.

Approval of Agenda

- The agenda was presented for review.
- Motion to accept the agenda was made and seconded.
- All in favor; agenda accepted unanimously.

Review and Approval of Minutes

- Minutes for the February 26, 2025 committee meeting were submitted late on the morning of the meeting. These minutes will be reviewed and approved at the next meeting.

Harbor and Shellfish Advisory Board Discussion (Jeff)

- Jeff provided a recap of his meeting with the Harbor and Shellfish Advisory Board:
 - The board inquired about their status (elected vs. appointed).
 - Jeff explained the committee's recommendation to shift from elected to appointed due to a historical lack of candidates and their advisory role.
 - The board strongly opposed the change, voting to request remaining elected, citing reasons such as the signature collection process affirming commitment and better representation.
 - Bob Costa (board member) noted that this issue is minor compared to broader governmental changes proposed.
- Discussion:

- Suggestion to create a chart listing committees as elected or appointed for clarity.
- Consensus that if the board feels strongly about remaining elected and there's no significant issue (e.g., lack of candidates persists), they could stay elected with fallback to appointment if needed.
- Action Items:
 - Jeff to inform the board that their input was heard.
 - Request the Collins Center to adjust the draft charter to keep the board elected.

Meeting with Libby (Chair)

- The Chair met with Libby the previous Friday:
 - Discussed additional funding for the Collins Center, as the \$34,000 budget has been exhausted.
 - Town Manager Libby Gibson is supportive of increasing the budget an additional \$4-5,000. A formal request will be considered at the March 26th Select Board Meeting.
- Action Item:
 - Commons Center to submit third revision of contract to Town. Will be considered at March 26th Select Board Meeting.

Nantucket Civic League Town Governance Forum

- Jeff and the Chair represented the committee at a forum hosted by the Nantucket Civic League the previous Saturday, March 8th:
 - Format: Q&A with Mandy Jo Haneke, current Town Councillor in Amherst, followed by a TCSC presentation and, finally, a round-table discussion.
 - Attendance: Estimated 20–25 attendees plus 9 panelists; 47 registered, but numbers fluctuated. Streamed on YouTube.
 - Mandy Jo provided real-life examples from Amherst's transition to a town council, highlighting:
 - Finance Committee structure (5 counselors + 3 non-voting residents).
 - Requirement to post votes online promptly.

- Opportunities for public debate (e.g., petition thresholds).
 - Key takeaways: Need to clarify role of non-voting Finance Committee members, emphasize public input options in the charter, and consider timely vote postings.
- Action Item:
 - Reach out to Amherst for clarification on “non-voting” members of the Finance Committee.

Draft Charter Updates

- **Salaries:**
 - Previous discussion proposed \$40,000 base salary per counselor, \$50,000 for the president, with health benefits excluded from calculations.
 - Debate: Some felt \$40,000 might shock the public; others noted cost-of-living and workload justified it. Suggestion to let future councils adjust after the first year.
 - Motion: Set base salary at \$40,000 and president at \$50,000, adjustable by future councils.
 - Vote: Unanimous approval (no “nays” recorded).
- **Election Dates:**
 - Discussion on setting election dates and dates for pulling and submitting ballot papers to finish Elections section in draft Town Charter..
 - Concerns: Alignment with budget process (pre-June 15 adoption) and avoiding state election conflicts (fall).
 - Proposal: Third Tuesday in May election, swearing-in July 1 (post-budget), with flexibility for public input.
 - Action Item: Collins Center to refine dates with KP Law guidance.
- **County Charter:**
 - Minor updates needed (e.g., deleting obsolete sections); to be finalized with town charter cleanup.
- Action Item:
 - Chair to send updated draft to Anthony/Collins Center for final revisions.

Citizen Outreach Planning

- **Info Sessions:**
 - Proposed 3 sessions before May 3rd town meeting: 2 evenings (e.g., Thursdays), 1 Saturday morning.
 - Locations: Atheneum (2), Four Fairgrounds (1), with possible Salt Marsh Center or digital-only options.
 - Zoom suggested to expand reach; town technical support to be confirmed.
 - Materials: Develop a 1–2 page handout with key points, process chart, and links to charters/Barnstable meetings.
- **Subcommittee Formation:**
 - Info Session Group: Curtis, Rachel (materials/social media), others TBD.
 - Report Writing Group: Chair, others TBD.
- **Action Items:**
 - Chair to check 4FG Community Room availability.
 - Caroline to check Atheneum availability.
 - Rachel to draft FAQ/graphics for handouts.
 - Invite Mike Kellogg from Barnstable for a future meeting (Curtis.)

Town Meeting Presentation (May 3rd)

- Sarah approved a 3–5 minute statement and handout distribution (with cleanup).
- Speaker: Jeff proposed as primary (Vice Chair), with Curtis and Beau as backups; scripted statement to be prepared.
- **Action Items:**
 - Draft speakers statement
 - Draft handout to be made available morning of ATM
 - Finalize speaker roles next meeting.

Public Communication

- Suggestion to write letters to Inquirer & Mirror, Current, and Daybreak updating the public.
- Action Items:
 - Chair and others to draft letters.

Other Business

- Suggestion to study zoning impacts under a town council for info sessions.
- Final report to include aspirational statement on counselor motivations.

Next Meeting

- Scheduled for March 26, 2025.

Adjournment

- Motion to adjourn made and seconded.
- All in favor; meeting adjourned.