

Town of Chester
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CHESTER GOVERNANCE STUDY COMMITTEE

**Meeting Notice- 1st Meeting Minutes- Approved 12/19/22
November 16, 2022 at 3:00PM**

Location: Chester Town Office Meeting Room

1. Reading of the Charge

First Selectwoman Charlene Janecek called the meeting to order at 3:02PM.

In attendance were Governance Study Group appointees Pat Bandzes, Cindy Lignar, Jon Joslow, Ed Meehan, Mike Sanders, Richard Strauss. Committee member Briana Jewczyn was unable to attend. Audience of citizens in attendance in the room consisted of Brian Dailey, Linda Carlson, and Karin Badger. There were many Zoom attendees.

Charlene read the official charge:

"To identify and analyze alternative governance structures for the purpose of improving the Town's ability to proactively plan and manage its affairs."



BOS Charge- Chester Governance Study Committee

Charge, Deliverables and Timeframe per the Board of Selectmen on 8/17/22

Charge

Identify and analyze alternative governance structures for the purpose of improving the Town's ability to proactively plan and manage its affairs.

Current Situation

Chester faces significant challenges associated with leadership continuity, town wide engagement/stewardship, succession, and shortages of elected and appointed officials/volunteers to operate key functions, departments and resources needed to implement town-wide initiatives.

Deliverables

Define the various forms of town government organization and structure that may achieve a more effective governance structure relevant now and in the future.

Recommend the next steps to achieve these prospective improvements, as indicated by the findings and conclusion.

Timeframe

60-day "study period", beginning on the date of the said Committee's first meeting. The Committee will provide a report to the BOS at the end of the 60-day period (the 60-day timeline may be extended if necessary).

Termination

This Study Committee shall terminate upon acceptance or rejection of its final report to the Board of Selectmen.

Composition

Briana Jewczyn, Cindy Lignar, Ed Meehan, Jon Joslow, Michael Sanders, Pat Bandzes, Richard Strauss

Considerations

Set up a logical process of discovery to assess how other comparable Connecticut towns and municipalities have adapted to meet the current challenges of municipal governance and management.

Develop an understanding of benefits and risks associated with alternative forms of governance available to the Town of Chester.

Identify options aimed at improving the organization's accountability, efficiency and effectiveness, continuity and responsiveness as outlined in "the charge."



2. BOS Expectations

Charlene listed the expectations of the Board of Selectmen:

- Define the alternative governance structures authorized by State of CT.
- Analyze and compare how Chester's current and future challenges might be better served by each alternative.
- Present the study committee's scope, process, findings and potential next steps to the BOS
- Disband after the committee concludes its presentation to the BOS-- expected 60 days from the first meeting.

3. Elect chair for this meeting

Charlene called for a vote to elect a chair for today's meeting: Jon Joslow was nominated and was seconded by Ed Meehan and Pat Bandzes, respectively. Unanimous approval.

4. Study Committee composition

Pat Bandzes, Cindy Lignar, Briana Jewczyn , Jon Joslow, Ed Meehan, Mike Sanders, Richard Strauss

Jon presented the background on the committee in order to bring the public up to speed so there is a clear understanding as to what the Committee was to do, our process and what to expect when we are done in January.

7/13/22- Mike Sanders and Jon Joslow proposed to the BOS that the town study alternatives and options to its existing governance structure. 8/10/22 BOS approved a project plan incorporated into these minutes below:

The Committee's charge is not to make final recommendations on governance, but to provide the BOS with alternatives to its existing structure as permitted by the State of Connecticut.

5. Scope of Work, 6. Timing considerations and committee meeting schedule, \$7 Subcommittees and Assignments:

Jon called for a vote to change the agenda order by moving #5, Scope and combine with #7 Committee Assignments since they are tied together, Motion to do so by Pat, Seconded by Cindy. Unanimously approved.

Jon explained that the short window for this study necessitated some advance planning before the committee agreed to form and begin the 60 days of its expected existence. To this end, he



provided background to the AUDIENCE OF CITIZENS as to the origin of this initiative and the organization of this Committee (the prospective committee members met on 10/28 and the slides presented during this meeting are embedded in these detailed minutes that follow):

The appointed members of the Committee met to discuss the following agenda on 10/28/22:

Proposed Chester Government Study Conversation Agenda- 10/28/22

Purpose of today's discussion

Charge of the Committee

Scope

Effort / Process Considerations

Discussion of Commitment to Convene and Timetable

Next Steps

The Charge of the Committee and potential scope were discussed, potential major elements of the study, and on how much time it might take to for the members to devote to this project. We also discussed the timing. This handout was used to consider 21 different start dates.

CHESTER GOVERNANCE STUDY COMMITTEE PROJECT PLANNING WINDOW STUDY PERIOD OPTIONS									
Week									
1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	
10/31	11/7	11/14	11/21	11/28	12/5	12/12	12/19	12/26	
11/7	11/14	11/21	11/28	12/5	12/12	12/19	12/26	1/2	
11/14	11/21	11/28	12/5	12/12	12/19	12/26	1/2	1/9	
11/21	11/28	12/5	12/12	12/19	12/26	1/2	1/9	1/16	
11/28	12/5	12/12	12/19	12/26	1/2	1/9	1/16	1/23	
12/5	12/12	12/19	12/26	1/2	1/9	1/16	1/23	1/30	
12/12	12/19	12/26	1/2	1/9	1/16	1/23	1/30	2/6	
12/19	12/26	1/2	1/9	1/16	1/23	1/30	2/6	2/13	
12/26	1/2	1/9	1/16	1/23	1/30	2/6	2/13	2/20	
1/2	1/9	1/16	1/23	1/30	2/6	2/13	2/20	2/27	
2/1	2/8	2/15	2/22	3/1	3/8	3/15	3/22	3/29	
3/1	3/8	3/15	3/22	3/29	4/5	4/12	4/19	4/26	
4/1	4/8	4/15	4/22	4/29	5/6	5/13	5/20	5/27	



The consensus was that the study should start immediately because the Town will require as much time as possible to consider changes to its governance and management structure. The intention is to provide the Town options in advance of the next election where at least two of the three serving selectmen, will retire. Continuity is an issue as is volunteerism as pointed out in Charlene's letter to the public. The week of 11/14/22 was selected. Based upon the 9-week window for completion, the Committee plans to complete its report to the BOS in the 2nd week of January 2023.

The Committee then looked at a timeline of how much time would be allocated to organizing, researching, summarizing and presenting based upon on starting the week of 11/14/22:

Planning and Scheduling Window 11/16/22										
Milestones	Week#	Week								
		11/14	11/21	11/28	12/5	12/12	12/19	12/26	1/2	1/9
		1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9
Study Committee Mtg- Formation and Planning	1									
Task Team engagement: re Tasks, Findings, Conclusions, Recommended next steps			X	X	X	X	X	X	X	
Study Committee Mtg- Task Team updates	2									
Study Committee Mtg- Report: Finalization	3									
Study Committee- BOS Presentation to the Board of Selectmen										X

The group decided to split the various tasks into subcommittees with assignments permitting some work to be done in parallel and others, in sequence. The three subcommittees should complete their work in 3-7 with weeks 8 and 9 for summary and presentation.

7. Proposed Subcommittee Assignments :



TENTATIVE ASSIGNMENTS

Task Teams

Alternative Forms of CT Government
 Chester's future key governance and management and issues
 Interview relevant municipalities
 Findings, Conclusions, Next Steps/ Presentation

Leader

Richard
 Briana
 Pat
 Jon / Mike

Team Members

Briana, Mike, Cindy
 Richard, Mike, Ed, Cindy
 Ed
 Committee

Administrative

Secretary
 Communications- General
 Communications- Social media

Jon or volunteer
 Pat Briana
 Briana Pat

Subcommittee #1: Alternative forms of Connecticut municipal government

This part of the study will focus on Connecticut's approved alternatives to our existing Selectman/Town Meeting form of government. It will include research into the pros and cons of various structures. Richard Strauss will lead this effort.

Richard summarized examples of legislative and executive structures in various combinations as provided by state statutes, including examples of direct vs representative governance.

He found detailed statistics by town and observed that 60% of Towns have Selectmen/Town Meeting form of government. 35% of the 60% operate under state statute, 25% operate under a charter. Across the State, 2/3 of the towns operate under a charter, 1/3 under state statutes. The reasoning behind these various structures is part of the research. His team will include comparisons with some of the attributes of Chester's specific needs as identified by Subcommittee#2, below.

Mike pointed out that of the majority of towns our size that operate without a charter, they might be governed differently (maybe how we run day-to-day operations). Governance structure might remain the same but perhaps how we administer and manage might require examination. This line of questioning and comparison may be considered by the subcommittees among the range of options.

Subcommittee #2: Identify Chester's key governance and management issues



This includes the identification of present and future attributes of governance and management that should be considered as part of the evaluation of alternative structures. Jon mentioned that although this might be subjective, the thought process would be laid out so that anyone can change the assumptions and then compare to alternative structures. Briana Jewczyn will lead this effort.

Briana, who was part of the discussion before the committee officially formed with today's meeting, was out of town and could not attend today's Committee meeting. However, she has agreed to facilitate a subcommittee that will identify specific attributes and aspects of governance and management that the Town can consider. This might lead to a weighted rating system to compare various of governmental forms over the same criteria.

Subcommittee #3: Interview relevant Connecticut municipalities

Discuss the experience, concerns, and lessons of those who have or are considering a change in their town's governance and/or management structure. Pat Bandzes will lead this effort.

Once we overlay the aspects of governance that can be improved by a different structure, then Pat and Ed will call representative towns to find out how the concept played out. Rating mechanism for various forms of governance to help narrow the options to research and examinations of the next step. Scope might stay within. The subcommittee will create a standard set of questions for the interviews based upon input from Subcommittees 1 and 2.

The **BOS presentation** will outline the process, assumptions, scope, findings and potential next steps for the BOS and public to consider.

Jon agreed to be the Secretary. Cindy offered to help.

8. Rules of Engagement

Ours is not a political committee but a group of residents that want to help. We are not here to make recommendations and this is not about a committee formed to recommend a charter committee. We are here to explore options that relate to helping Chester now and in the future. Roberts Rules of Order will be respected.

9. Community input and involvement

Jon explained that the challenge with this committee is that the public will have suggestions, information and comments now and in the future. The time for engagement begins when we present our findings to the Board of Selectmen where they will consider the next steps.

We are not soliciting public input at this time because we are focused on research. Information, comments or suggestions that might help us, can be sent to the first selectwoman's office.



10. Communications

We are communicating this meeting in person and via zoom to make this more convenient to as many people as possible.

Minutes will be posted in accordance with the Freedom of Information

11. Elect Chair(s) of Government Study Committee

Jon Joslow and Mike Sanders were elected as co-chairs of the Committee. Motion by Pat Bandzes, Seconded by Cindy Unanimous approval

12. Other:

None

13. Audience of Citizens

Representative Christine Palm:

She thanked the committee for time and expertise. She wondered what legislative steps would be required to change our form of government. Ed informed her that our town would need a referendum to form a Charter Commission or to change its form of government.

Brian Dailey:

How many people are working in Chester government at this time? We have openings for around 20 positions on boards and commissions. In some cases these boards can't meet due to lack of a quorum. A point made that regardless of the form of government, Chester still has many positions to fill with volunteers. Chester reduced the number of elected positions several years ago because people did not want to run. Those positions are now appointed and still there are openings suggesting the need to consider administratively structural changes.

Karen Badger:

Two of the three selectmen have been appointed, not elected. There are options available to Chester not requiring a Charter.

Linda Carlson:

Do we advertise for board and commission vacancies? They are posted on the Chester website. She would like to see a weekly posting with job descriptions to make it more visible. Jon mentioned that the Chester EDC is working on a program to recruit potential volunteers to a series of orientation sessions in 2023.

Donna Tuths:

If the primary driver of this Committee is continuity, succession and volunteerism, Donna asked whether it was appropriate to consider the root cause of why the committee is being established.

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She suggested the consideration of addressing internal reorganization in addition to steps to understand governance alternatives.

14. Adjournment

Motion to adjourn meeting: Motion, Richard Strauss, Seconded, Cindy Lignar

Meeting adjourned at 4:09PM

Submitted by:

Jon Joslow

Co-Chair

12/18/22