

ATM 34 – Charter Review – Amend Charter

minutes from 2/10/16 A&F meeting

Steve Striar, Petitioner, presented ATM Article 34. This article seeks to amend section 7-6-1 of the Town Charter to read as follows: “At least once every five years, a special committee shall be appointed by the Moderator to review the Charter and submit a report, with recommendations, to the Citizens of Plymouth and Representative Town Meeting concerning an proposed amendments which the committee may determine to be necessary and desirable. Said report shall be published in the local paper of record and on the Town’s website within 14 days of completion.”

Mr. Striar said that he would remove the requirement to print it in the local paper. His reason for proposing this amendment is that the Charter is the Peoples Charter and it should be treated as such. The publication component will provide the public with improved and timely access to the same important information that is provided to their representatives at Town Meeting.

Questions/Comments:

- Why remove the requirement to publish it in the newspaper? (H Salerno) The cost of publishing it in the newspaper may be a barrier. It may be just as effective to post it publicly on the town website.
- Is the primary objective to shed light on the recommendations? (S Stephenson) Yes, 2 primary concerns: Providing valuable information to citizens and involving people in government so they feel a part of it and that they have responsibilities.
- How will an uninformed citizen know this is on the website to see? (M McGraw) That is a growing problem, hope to get it out there so it is easy to view.
- Could you use social media too? (C Merrill) It would be helpful if social media would direct the public to the website, any outlet would be helpful.
- How many signed your petition? Did the signers know that you were proposing to change the language of the article? (J Moody) 15. They signed it based on the actual article language.
- As far as modifying the language of the petitioned article at Town Meeting, you should reach out to Moderator Triffleti or legal counsel in advance. (J Moody)

Betty Cavacco made a motion to recommend ATM Article 34 to Town Meeting. Mike Lincoln, second.

Discussion:

- We must vote on the totality of the article including the portion of printing it in the newspaper because a motion to modify may not be allowed. Also, this is a subject that belongs in the Bylaws not the Charter. I can’t support it as a Charter amendment but would support it as a Bylaw amendment (H Salerno)
- The language needs to be revisited. I like reporting to the people and making it public. I like the idea but not the logistics. I like that it is in the Charter and not a Bylaw. (M Lincoln)
- I agree with Harry Salerno, it is bad policy to vote thinking something might change later. This article is not in a solid state yet. A Bylaw amendment may be more appropriate regarding how the report should be published. (K Canty)
- It is a good idea to shine light on this. I support this article 100%. We have \$1,000 to pay to put it in the newspaper. (S Stephenson)
- I support this article. Maybe since it is a newsworthy topic, the newspaper would print it without charging advertising fees. (P McPherson)
- The newspaper would probably print an article with highlights from the report but not a multi-page document verbatim. (J Moody)
- There is 4 years to get the working right as the next Charter Review Committee will be forming
- 4 years from now. (E Kusmin)
- Maybe try again in the fall with updated language. (M Lincoln)
- We offered the courtesy and extended the option of refining language and coming back to one of our meetings in March to the petitioners of the plastic bag article, maybe we could do the same here. (S Joyce)

The motion fails (4-8-1). Scott Stephenson, Patricia McPherson, Betty Cavacco, Patrick O’Brien, in favor. Shelagh Joyce, abstained.