

Public Comment Charter Commission Nov 1 Meeting
Peter Neville, Prct 10 Town Meeting Representative

Mr. Neville thanked the commissioners for their current commitment to reviewing the Plymouth Charter with a goal of amending and or revising it to create a more effective foundation for Plymouth Government. He mentioned how difficult it was for him to stop what he was doing and get out of the house to show at tonight's meeting. He thanked the commissioners for their years of service to the town in the variety of elected and volunteer positions that they have held. Clearly this group of individuals has a strong background in service to the town of Plymouth.

Mr. Neville commented the Commissioners for having former Select Board member, John Mahoney presenting his views on the fiscal realities of the town's bond ratings and options for enterprise funds including the fortuitous use of the meals tax to finance the building of the new town hall.

Mr. Neville thanked the Commissioners for asking great questions of themselves and Mr. Mahoney:

When does the Advisory and Finance Committee get involved with the budget process? Is the timing effective?

What is the role of the Select Board? Should it do more than approve licenses? Can it create policy?

Should the Master Plan provide more guidance for the Select Board's policy making?

How can this Charter be more forward thinking?

Are policies being created that speak to the question: How is this good for the Town of Plymouth?

He suggested that the Commissioners invite former chair of the Advisory and Finance Committee, Harry Salerno, to address these questions as an expert in fiscal management as well as serving on prior Charter Commissions. His opinion on how to prepare for Plymouth's future would be interesting if not prescient.

Mr. Neville asked the commissioners to consider the book, Bowling Alone, by Robert Putnam as a data based foundation addressing questions rising about civic engagement and the apparent lack of public interest in town government. Civic engagement is different today. Perhaps the Charter could address credentialing requirements to establish a basic standard of review for Town Meeting Members, including participation in continuing education courses, perhaps through the Mass Municipal Association.

Mr. Neville asked the Commissioners to consider the value of "redundancy in leadership" models being incorporated into the Charter, and to look no further than the Rotary Club as an example of leadership transitions that work for every club around the world. Every President of a Rotary Club has moved from serving a President as the President Elect, and every President has the benefit of guidance from the immediate Past President. At all times the organization has three individuals sharing a vision and passion for leadership.

Finally, Mr. Neville asked the Commissioners to consider consolidating the collective bargaining agreements for the 13 unions. He was not sure of the number, but he suggested that one person be identified by the unions to negotiate with the town. Let the unions settle parity questions among themselves, and then designate one person to come to the town with their expectations for fair and equitable treatment.

Mr. Neville again thanked the Commissioners for the dedication to the town and to their commitment to refining the current Charter to be more supportive to and reflective of the town's Master Plan.