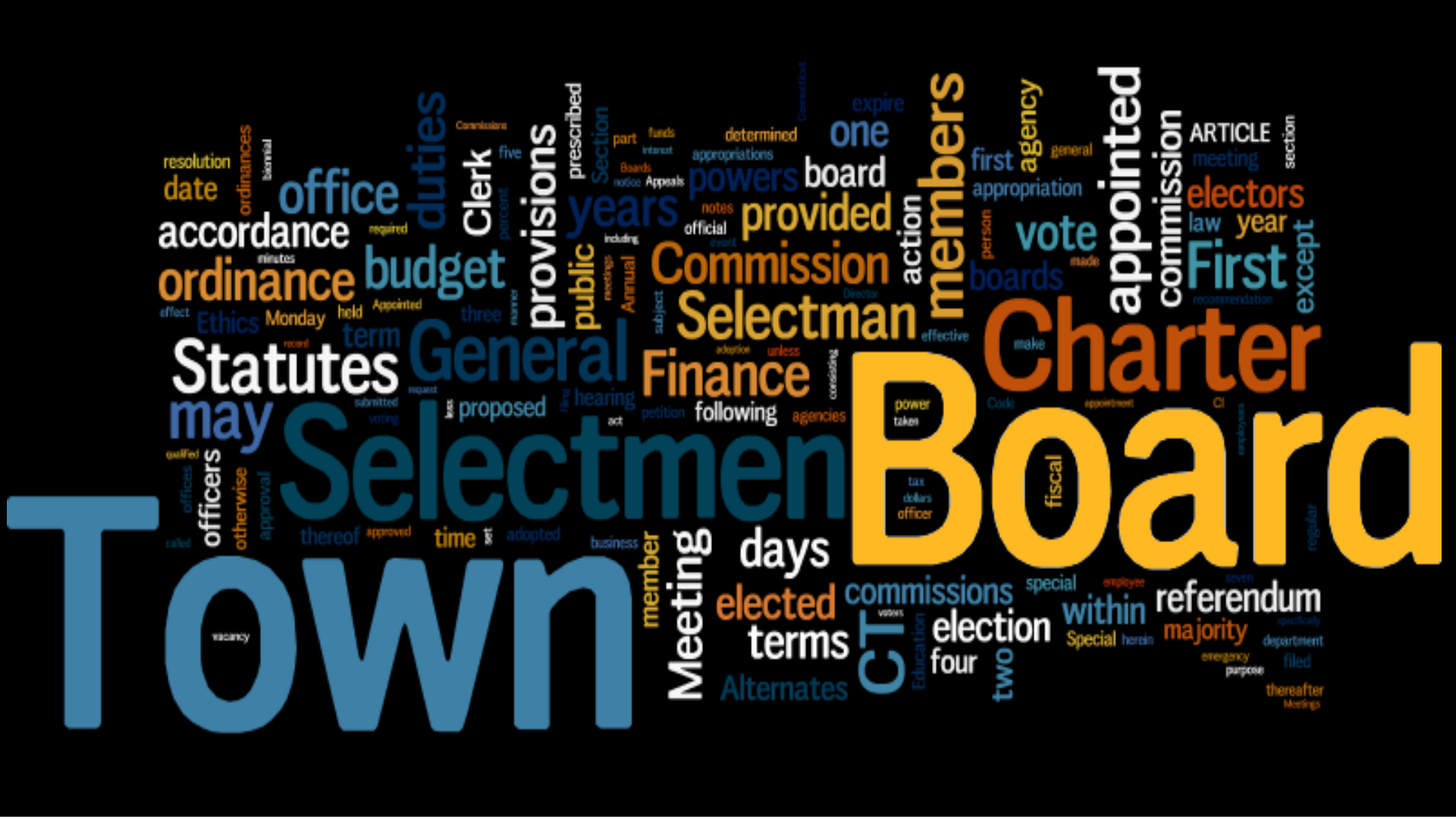

Brookfield Charter Revision Commission

Public Hearing March 2, 2017

Background

- This Brookfield Charter Revision Commission ("CRC") was established by a unanimous vote of the Board of Selectmen (BOS) on July 20, 2016.
- The CRC has 7 members:
  Joni Park (Chair) • *Jerry Friedrich (Vice Chair)*
  Loretta Donovan • *Dotti Dori* • *Mark Ferry*
  Todd Hand • *Ron Jaffe*
- The CRC has considered/discussed all charges by the BOS as well as all ideas brought by members of the public.

This Presentation

- The following slides list the charges (issues) that the CRC was asked to consider — by both the BOS and the public.
- For each charge, we also present the CRC's current thinking (recommendation and rationale).
- We have created a survey that follows this presentation, and provides the public an opportunity to let us know what charges they do and don't support and what their priorities are.
- After getting input following the Public, the CRC will finalize its recommendation to the BOS.

BOS Charge #1

Charge

Consider correcting errors in the Charter that conflict with each other.

Recommendation

No change

Rationale

While the CRC agrees that housekeeping changes would be beneficial, we did not find conflicts of significant nature other than those relating to petitions which we deal with elsewhere.

BOS Charge #2

Charge

Consider a Charter change to allow for a capital referendum to be done in conjunction with the annual budget referendum without a 45 day wait. This would only apply for the annual budget referendum.

Recommendation

No change

Rationale

We believe that there is benefit in having an extended timeframe for the Boards and the Town to consider large capital projects, and encourage the Boards to consider annual expense and capital projects at different times.

BOS Charge #3

Charge

Clarification of what items can be petitioned to a town meeting.

Recommendation

Proceed with this change (Charter section §C8-5 B).

Rationale

Fix the Charter to allow petitions such as the one ruled invalid in 2015.

BOS Charge #4

Charge

Consider eliminating offices that no longer exist.

Recommendation

No change

Rationale

While the CRC agrees that housekeeping changes would be beneficial, we do not believe this is a high priority.

BOS Charge #5

Charge

Clarify the standards, authority and jurisdiction of the Board of Ethics to the authority the Board has as defined by State Statutes.

Recommendation

Redraft the Ethics section (Article X) to streamline it and to more appropriately reference relevant sections of State Statute to insure the Board of Ethics authority is clear, including the right to engage counsel if needed.

Rationale

Clarify the abilities and role of the Ethics Commission and insure their ability to function.

BOS Charge #6 (part 1)

Charge

Review budget transfers allowed to be made by the BOS and BOF. Consider raising or eliminating the dollar amount the BOS and the BOF could reallocate in a budget at any time before going to a town meeting for approval.

Recommendation

Increase $ amount from $20,000 to $40,000 (§C8-5 A) that BOS can reallocate within budget lines to the level they requested, but retain the need for BOF approval of inter-department transfers.

Rationale

The new $ levels recognize the growth in the town budget over the years, but we believe the BOF should continue to have oversight in transfers between departments.

BOS Charge #6 (part 2)

Charge

Clarify the reallocation process — one part of the charter gives them the right to reallocate unexpended funds but other parts require a town meeting.

Recommendation

See below

Rationale

Covered by part 1 of charge 6 and charge 8, CRC interprets this as dealing with appropriations (§C8-5 A)

BOS Charge #7

Charge

Consider permanently appointing the Town Attorney as Parliamentarian of all Town Meetings.

Recommendation

No change

Rationale

We did not see this as an essential or necessary change.

BOS Charge #8

Charge

Review updating Special Appropriation levels and time requirements for construction projects.

Recommendation

No change

Rationale

We believe this Charge is addressed by our responses to BOS Charges #2 and #6.

BOS Charge #9

Charge

Consider increasing the number of members on Library Board of Trustees.

Recommendation

Increase the Library Board to 9 members. (Addendum A III G)

Rationale

This Library Board has been asking for this increase for years and will have additional work as a new library is being considered The CRC supports this request.

BOS Charge #10

Charge

Consider making grammatical changes as needed for clarification.

Recommendation

No change

Rationale

While the CRC agrees that housekeeping changes would be beneficial, we do not believe this is a high priority.

Public Request #1

Charge

Separation of votes for First Selectman and Selectmen — losing First Selectman candidates would only be eligible for the position they run for and would not be included in the Selectmen vote.

Recommendation

Recommend this change. (§C3-2 A)

Rationale

We view these positions as 2 distinct roles which should be voted on separately.

Public Request #2

Charge

Eliminate charter requirement to pay Selectmen a minimum salary – putting Selectmen remuneration into the budget process.

Recommendation

No action

Rationale

The Charter does not set the salary but requires a base level of 5% of the First Selectmen's salary. We did not see this change as a priority.

Public Request #3

Charge

Increase the BOS to 5 members.

Recommendation

Change the charter (§C3-2 A.2.) to a 5-member BOS, which pursuant to current charter section (§C3-2 A.2.) would result in majority of no more than 3 from one party.

Rationale

A 5-member BOS allows for more representation, increased communication between members, better ability for members to function as ad-hoc members of other town boards and commissions, and more. Most towns of our size have 5 member BOS.

Public Request #4

Charge

Establish minimum (10 days) before boards can appoint replacements

Recommendation

Proceed with this change (amend §C2-6 B)

Rationale

Currently, the boards that can name replacements for their own vacancies have 60 days to do so before that task falls to the BOS. A 10-day waiting period would ensure that townspeople had the time to be notified of the vacancy and put their name forward.

Public Request #5

Charge

Establish Conservation Commissioner as salaried position.

Recommendation

No change

Rationale

We believe this is an operational issue that should be addressed by the Board of Selectmen.

Public Request #6

Charge

Establish Town Manager position as a Charter required position.

Recommendation

No action

Rationale

While we believe this is a very important topic for the town to consider, we would recommend that it be considered separately on its own merits.

Public Request #7

Charge

Make the Town Clerk an appointed position.

Recommendation

No action

Rationale

While the idea has merits at this time we see no reason for a change.

Public Request #8

Charge

Clarify the Charter so that wide-scale transfers cannot be made early in the fiscal year.

Recommendation

Proceed with this change. (§C8-5 add H)

Rationale

All funds are unexpended at the beginning of the year so this is a clarification to insure that operational goals as approved by town vote will proceed and transfers can be made in the final fiscal quarter.

Public Request #9

Charge

Add the ability to restore individual line items at the Annual Town Meeting but only to levels approved by either the BOS or BOE.

Recommendation

Using the same barrier in §C9-3B (4% of registered voters present) allow for limited restoration of fund requests.

Rationale

The charter already allows reduction of individual line items at the Annual Town Meeting. The CRC felt this was worth bringing forward for public input on the ability to restore BOS/BOE approved requests as well.

Process / What Happens Next

- Having received and considered public comment and additional feedback, the CRC will deliberate and present its recommendations to the BOS.
- The BOS may then ask the CRC to do additional work, but only on items presented. It cannot ask for consideration of new charges.
- The CRC will then deliberate and issue its final report to the BOS.
- The BOS can accept the report in whole, in part, or reject it.
- The BOS will hold a Public Hearing before taking a final position on what (if anything) will be taken to the voters.

Your Input is Needed

- Complete and submit the survey.
- Complete text of all discussed charter changes is available on the Town website on the Charter Revision Commission page.
- The CRC includes times for public comment at the beginning and at the end of all of its meetings.
- You can provide additional input by sending an email to:

CharterRevision@Brookfieldct.gov

Thank you for participating

The floor is now
open for comments.

CharterRevision@Brookfieldct.gov