



Town of Ridgefield

Form of Government Committee Unapproved Minutes

Meeting of Monday, October 7, 2024
Draft FINAL

I. Call to order

The Form of Government Committee meeting convened at 7:00 PM on Monday, October 7, 2024 in the Town Hall large conference room.

Members present: Laurie Christiansen, Michael Rettger, Charles Robbins, Jonathan Seem, Rachel Sondheimer, Dennis Tracey, Steve Zemo, Robert Hendrick

Members absent: Todd Zagorec

Others Participating: None

II. Public Comment

There were no comments from the public.

III. Meeting Minutes

Motion to approve the minutes of the September 16, 2024 meeting by Ms. Christiansen, seconded by Mr. Robbins. All in favor

IV. Old Business

Motion to amend the committee's Mission Statement adopted at the previous meeting by replacing the words "Task Force" with the word "Committee" throughout to reflect the change in the committee's status approved at the last Board of Selectpersons meeting. Motion made by Ms. Christiansen, seconded by Mr. Hendrick. All in favor.

Update – Use of Zoom for Meetings

Mr. Hendrick reported that he has the equipment needed to enable use of Zoom webinars by the committee. Members discussed the option of using Zoom to enable remote member participation in meetings, as well as the option to employ Zoom regularly, in parallel with live streaming, to provide another means of access for the public to observe and provide public comment at meetings. There was general consensus to use Zoom regularly going forward at future meetings.

Update – Use of Dropbox

This discussion was deferred because of the absence of Mr. Zagorec from the meeting.

IV. New Business

Conversion of the Task Force to a BOS-Appointed Town Committee

Mr. Tracey reported on the discussions at the recent Board of Selectpersons meeting, where the BOS voted to change the status of the group from a town task force to a committee appointed by the BOS. The change should not affect the committee's operation and deliberations, as members had already determined to conduct its deliberations in a manner consistent with town committee regulations and FOI requirements. Mr. Tracey noted that going forward, it is important for all committee-related communications to be conducted using town email accounts that have been assigned to the members. *Ms. Christiansen will have her email designated as the primary point of contact for the public on the committee's page on the town website, for members of the public wishing to contact the committee. She will monitor such communications and forward emails to the full committee or specific members as appropriate.*

Communications Plans

Ms. Christiansen outlined her recommendations for preparation and distribution of an initial press release by the committee on its purpose and plans, and solicited member suggestions for additional communication goals. *Based on the input provided, Ms. Christiansen will complete drafting an initial press release, circulate it for comments from members, and finalize the content in discussion with the chair and vice-chair.*

Discussion of the Work Plan

The members discussed their thoughts and suggested edits to the latest version of the committee's work plan that had been circulated by Mr. Zagorec. Suggested changes included the following:

- Moving the initial public hearing(s) closer to the front of the process. It was agreed to defer the setting of public hearing dates to a future meeting.
- Including discussion sessions with appropriate staff and/or staff groups who could be affected by changes in the administrative structure, for their thoughts and suggestions
- Not developing a formal preliminary report as proposed in Sec 2 c, but deferring the timing of any draft report until significant work on Sc 3 has been done.
- Clarifying that development of concepts for a town administrator would not necessarily be limited to just the town meeting alternative (Sec 3 c).
- Adding a component in the analysis and any report on the possible budgetary effects from any recommendation for changes.
- Clarifying that the draft report(s) developed by the committee would be made available to the general public as well as to the Board of Selectpersons (Sec 5 c).

Mr. Hendrick and Ms. Sondheimer offered to begin the research and assembly of the "level-set" information described in Section 1.

Members discussed the value of reaching out to community groups to provide education on the committee's charge and workplan and to encourage public participation in hearings, public

comment at meetings, and other forms of input to the committee's work. *Mr. Seem will develop a proposed listing of these outreach targets groups.*

The members discussed potential invitees for individual and small group interviews as outlined in Section 2 b, including the Board of Selectpersons, both individually and as a group, local business owners and business organizations such as the Chamber of Commerce, and civic and affinity groups like the League of Women Voters and Founders Hall. *Mr. Zagorec will be asked to develop a proposed list, and to take the lead in reaching out with invitations.*

The members discussed setting up meetings with groups such as WestCOG and the Connecticut Conference of Municipalities early in the research process, as that might facilitate the committee's work by providing historical background, identifying towns that have conducted similar study efforts, and other helpful background information. *Mr. Seem will contact Mr. Marconi for his recommendations for such groups and contacts.*

V. Adjournment

Motion to adjourn at 8:50 pm by Mr. Zemo, seconded by Mr. Seem. All in favor.

Next meeting October 21, 7:00 pm.

Respectfully Submitted by
Michael Rettger