

GREENFIELD CHARTER CHAPTERS 7-7 & 7-8 REVIEW AD HOC COMMITTEE
MINUTES
May 8, 2023

Zoom Conferencing System

6:00 p.m.

CALL TO ORDER Chairperson Singer called the meeting to order at 6:06 p.m.

PRESENT Chairperson Singer, Councilor Golub and Helie, Committee Members Mass and Norman.

ABSENT Committee Member Letourneau

CHAIRPERSON STATEMENT: This meeting was being recorded by the Appointment and Ordinance Committee. If any other persons present were doing the same they must notify the chairperson at this time. In accordance with MGLc 30A SS 20(g) “No person shall address a meeting of a public body without permission of the Chair and all persons shall, at the request of the chair, be silent. No person shall disrupt the proceedings of a meeting of a public body. If, after clear warning from the chair, a person continues to disrupt the proceedings, the chair may order the person to withdraw from the meeting and if the person does not withdraw, the chair may authorize a constable or other officer to remove the person from the meeting.”

ALSO PRESENT Members of the public.

The minutes of the meeting for March 22, 2023 were approved unanimously; Norman moved and Mass second.

Chairperson Singer provided a short statement as to what would be reviewed and the goal of the Committee and opened discussion:

- Discussion ensued about whether to have an introduction statement at the beginning of Sections 7-7 and 7-8 so that the public understands what each section means. Examples provided by Al Norman and Gary Seldon as part of the agenda package were discussed.
- It was voted unanimously as follows: The Charter Sections 7-7 and 7-8 shall have as an introduction that has 1.) An objective statement of what the section does, and 2.) a summary of the basic steps in each section

outlined for ease of understanding. The introduction should not use the word “definition”. Councilor Golub agreed to take up the task of writing the introduction at a later date as a member of the Appointments and Ordinances Committee of the City Council. The Appendix drafted by the City Charter Committee 2020 will be used as a public education document but shall not be an Appendix to the Charter.

- The next Agenda item concerned whether 7-7 should have one petition or two petitions with a supplemental petition. Al referenced MGL chapter 43 sec. 39 as evidence that state law does not require a supplemental petition. David pointed out that the law cited requires 8% of registered voters to sign the petition and at the ballot election at least 30% of all registered voters need to vote. Katherine feels strongly that there must be two phases; should be easy to start conversation with council which stimulates public discussion with councilors and discussion among councilors and if impasse occurs more work to do to get on the ballot, ie supplemental petition. Derek, David and Isaac all agree to the need for a supplemental, and cite the power struggle with initiative petitioners, council and referendum petitioners and should go to the ballot only after all three get a chance to either reach agreement or both sets of petitioners gather more signatures. Al believes that the need to additional petitioner signatures for the supplemental isolates the original petitioner signatures while placing an unnecessary burden on the citizen initiative committee and therefore is punitive. Isaac stressed that the citizen committee of 10 is very important and should remain, and Al pointed out that it is critical to have a public hearing before the council as a requirement once the initiative petition is filed.
- A motion was made by Katherine and seconded by Isaac that “7-7 should have a 2-phase process. The initial process should require a lower number of signatures to first appear before the council, and then if the council amends or rejects the petition, a second or supplemental petition is required with the number of signatures being a higher number than to initiate; while also adding the requirement that a public hearing be held by the council when the petition is first filed.” The vote was 4-1, with Al voting no.
- The next Agenda item considered how many signatures are necessary to get to the ballot; whether it be one petition or divided in to an initial petition

and a supplemental petition process. Al stated that currently under 7-8 there is a need for 338 signatures and under 7-7 there is a need for 1,013 signatures, with a midpoint of 675 signatures. Al believes the history of low voter turnout in Greenfield suggests a low number is needed for the ballot process to have any chance of success and involvement. Isaac stated that the number of petitioners should be the same in 7-7 and 7-8. Katherine, David and Derek agreed. The discussion of symmetry was postponed and a discussion of the number of signatures took place. Isaac, David and Derek suggested 150 to initiate, 500 for supplemental. Katherine made an additional suggestion that no more than 100 signatures of the 500 supplemental can come from one precinct. Al suggested 400 signatures with no supplemental; he might go higher but no supplemental. Isaac made a suggestion that to avoid supplemental have a higher initiative threshold of 10%; have the charter provide two options. No vote was taken.

- The symmetry discussion then ensued. That prompted a discussion about whether this committee should discuss 7-8 at all since the Ballot Question of November, 2021 was a no vote to raise the number under 7-8 to 7% of registered voters. Al advocated that the Ballot Question closed the door to further discussion about 7-8 as he believes the message from the voters was to keep 7-8 the way it is. Al pointed out that his Vote No group put out a clear message that keeping 7-8 the same was the reason to vote no, and since the no votes were the majority that means leave 7-8 alone. Isaac, David, Katherine and Derek all think that the message from the Ballot Question vote was narrow; the voters simply rejected a threshold of 7% leaving room for further discussion of a number somewhere between the current number and 7%, which is why Dan Guin included a 7-8 discussion in the mission of this subcommittee. Al thinks there will be voter push back if 7-8 threshold is opened for discussion.
- Katherine made a motion, seconded by David that the voters numbers in 7-7 and 7-8 be symmetrical; that 7-7 have an initial threshold of 150 voters, with a supplemental of 450 voters with no more than 100 signatures coming from any one precinct and 7-8 have a threshold of 600 signatures” Al thinks there will be voter push back if the 7-8 threshold is opened for discussion and change. Al was asked if he could speak to his people to see if he can get authority to discuss this motion at the next meeting.

Katherine requested that the next agenda consist of motions for discussion and vote, as we have beaten the proverbial horse to death going back and forth on all the issues. All committee members expressed hope to have the next meeting be the last meeting.

The next meeting date and time was decided to be on July 5, 2023 at 6 PM

It was the consensus of the Committee to adjourn the meeting at 8:05 pm.