

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

November 29, 2022

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 Letourneau, Mass and Norman.

**ABSENT** Committee Member Stempel-Rae.

**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** Mary Byrne, *the Recorder* and members of the public.

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

- The Committee's main focus would be on Chapter 7-7 of the Charter, as it was noted Chapter 7-8 of the Charter became a question on the ballot and decided by the voters of Greenfield approximately one year ago.
- In 2003, the voters of Greenfield decided to change the form of government from a Select Board/Town to a Mayor/City. As a result, the Greenfield Charter reduced the number of Councilors from 27 to 13.
- Section 7 of the Charter allowed Citizen's to file a petition to place a vote previously made by the Council on the ballot for the voters to decide.
- Section 7-7 of the Charter should be put on the ballot for the voters to decide since it was also a specific mechanism available for Citizens.
- The Charter was recognized as a legal document and therefore specific language would need to be written in a way to follow any State Law associated with Citizen Initiative policies and procedures.
- Clarification on language regarding the Council to act on the petition within 30 days of submission would be interpreted as the Council would have to vote on the petition within that time frame to prevent any stalls in subcommittees or any other time delay.
- Suggestion was made to abandon the bifurcated process due to the change in the number of voters and the change in increased elections.
- The language appeared too tedious and confusing to follow in section 7-7 that could intimidate and deter someone from filing a petition; however, the process language cannot be too plain and simple.
- An extra step to submit a supplemental petition and gather additional signatures to cement their original petition to request an issue be placed on the ballot was too cumbersome.
- A simpler process would not result in an increased volume of Citizen's petitions submitted or the filing frivolous petitions. It was understood that there were some issues the citizens believed should have been voted on by the public via the ballot and not the Council.
- Other avenues could be taken to place an issue on the ballot aside from filing a petition.
- May be some confusion with the language in 7-7(d) regarding the Council's choices in handling initiative petition.

- Suggestion was made for a petitioner to weigh the recommendation of the Council and decide whether to accept it.
- Policies and procedures from other surrounding communities on how they address Citizen's petitions.
- Suggestion to make process easier to submit petition before the Council and make it more challenging to get an issue on the ballot and extend time frames for both the Council and petitioner.
- Charter Sections 7-7 & 7-8 should be used as a "last resort" by the public if they were unsuccessful in receiving reasonable action from their Councilors.
- Summarized the discussion as two competing concerns: 1) To see the legislative body be a strong branch of government elected by the voters, and 2) To ensure that not every petition ends up as a question on the ballot.
- Would like to see more open dialogue between the Councilors and the public in regards to issues that were heavily supported, contested and debated.

The next meeting date and time to be determined.

It was the consensus of the Committee to adjourn the meeting at 7:55 pm.