

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

January 12, 2023

Zoom Conferencing System

6:00 p.m.

CALL TO ORDER Chairperson Singer called the meeting to order at 6:00 p.m.

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

ABSENT Councilor Helie.

CHAIRPERSON STATEMENT: This meeting was being recorded by the Ad Hoc 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.

ACCEPTANCE OF MINUTES: On a motion by Committee Member Norman, second by Committee Member Letourneau, it was,

MOVED: TO ACCEPT THE AD HOC COMMITTEE MINUTES OF NOVEMBER 29, 2022.

DISCUSSION: It was noted the minutes stated the vote on Chapter 7-8 was made a year and a half ago when in actuality it was approximately 1 year ago. A friendly amendment was accepted to correct the language.

It was unanimously,

VOTED: TO ACCEPT MINUTES OF NOVEMBER 29, 2022, AS AMENDED.

Chairperson Singer opened discussion:

- When comparing other surrounding City and Towns policies and procedures for Citizen’s petitions and initiatives, consideration would need to be made in terms of population, percentages, time frames, etc.
- Some Communities similar to Greenfield were researched as guidance tools including Winthrop, Southbridge, Longmeadow, Montague, Amherst and Amesbury.
- Signatures collected should be from all registered voters and not a percentage of voters who had voted in the last election.
- Charter should have plain language and list the total number of signatures needed instead of a percentage required.
- Time frame to collect signatures needed for a Citizen’s initiative/referendum should be forty (40) days.
- Suggestion was made for an initiative/referendum to be considered by the Council within sixty (60) days. If no action was taken by the Council on this measure it could be forwarded to the ballot.
- The rules on initiatives and referendums were not constitutional but statutory rules.
- A significantly small percentage of voter signatures should not dictate how an issue was placed on the ballot.

- There should be a higher threshold of signature gathering for a citizen to place an issue on the ballot than for someone who was running for local office.
- To place an item on the ballot should not be the narrow goal of a citizen without making a serious effort to place an item before the Council for serious discussion and consideration.
- Citizens have just as much right to disagree with the same officials they elected to make decisions on their behalf and should be provided an avenue where they can take their issue to the next level if they feel the elected officials are not taking their issue to heart.
- How to reach that threshold to encourage Councilors to engage and compromise and doesn't undermine the process.
- Moving forward from tonight's conversation to provide a proposal(s) the Committee could use as a starting point to establish language that would be fair and easy for residents to follow.
- Suggestion was made for 60 days to hold a public hearing and 120 days for the Council to vote on the petition.
- Confer with the City Clerk as to whether ballot questions could be placed on State ballots.
- At the next meeting, the Committee members were to present their proposals on the procedure and time frames when an initial petition was submitted to when it would be placed on the ballot.
- The ideas of allowing voters to seek a referendum when the City Council or School Committee approves or disapproves of a measure as discussed.

The next meeting scheduled for Thursday, February 23, 2023, 6:00 pm, via Zoom.

All proposals would need to be submitted to the Clerk's office by Wednesday, February 15, 2023, in order for them to be distributed through the agenda packet.

It was the consensus of the Committee to adjourn the meeting at 8:00 pm.