

**TOWN OF BEDFORD
CHARTER COMMISSION MEETING MINUTES
June 21, 2023
10 Meetinghouse Road**

ROLL CALL: A meeting of the Bedford Charter Commission was held on Wednesday, June 21, 2023, 10 Meetinghouse Road. Participating were Terry Wolf (Chair), Kelleigh Gleason (Vice Chair), and members: Susan Labrie, Matt McLaughlin, Linda Camarota, Paul Brock, Bryan Lord, Jeff Kerr, and Lori Radke.

2. PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE – Led by Mr. McLaughlin.

Chairwoman Wolf read the ballot item, “Shall a Charter Commission be established for the sole purpose of establishing official ballot voting under the current form of government.” The answer was ‘yes’, so that’s why they are there. There was information on the Town website at Bedfordnh.org/Boards and Commissions/Charter Commission. All four of their meetings can also be viewed on BCTV. Their email address is chartercommission2023@bedfordnh.org

3. PUBLIC HEARING

Chairwoman Wolf stated that they received three comments: Jay Nash in favor of official ballot voting, Linda Gould in favor of official ballot voting, and Phil Greazzo in favor of traditional Budgetary Town Meeting.

MOTION by Vice Chair Gleason to open the public hearing. Seconded by Mr. Lord. Vote taken – Motion Passed – 9-0.

Bill Jennings, 6 Arrowhead Drive, has lived in Town for 31 years. One of the first people he met when he moved into Town was Matt McLaughlin. A lot of people watch these meetings on Video on Demand. He took a look at the numbers and the numbers weren’t high, 10 or 11 people. Streaming numbers for their meetings were extremely low. The School Board has more people streaming their meetings. To watch the meetings, go to their website www.bedfordtv.com and type in ‘Charter’ or scroll down to ‘Charter Commission Meeting’. On the agenda, there is a hyperlink, which says ‘Materials included’. You can click on that and it will bring up all of the items that you can read. He recommended the May 31st meeting with the NH Municipality Association; it was very informative. You can watch the meeting and there are chapter markers that you can quickly get to. For the May 31st meeting, they didn’t break down who the presenters were that evening. Vice Chair Gleason wanted to know if it was typically broken down by presenter and Mr. Jennings responded that it is. The reason it wasn’t, was they weren’t quite sure who was up 1st, 2nd, 3rd, and 4th. He will take care of that so they can quickly go there. Vice Chair Gleason wanted to know if there was a way to throw a graphic up at the beginning of the meeting and at the end of the meeting with just the email address for the Charter Commission if people have comments. Mr. Jennings stated that would mean a whole new processing; they can do it. They can put something up like, ‘The following meeting is XX. For more information...’ and they can put up the email address. Vice Chair

Gleason wanted to know if they could do it easily for this meeting. Mr. Jennings stated that he can do it post, but he can't do it right now.

Mr. Jennings mentioned that he and Mr. Brock were at a meeting last night and got into the discussion. When you have a libation in your hand you can solve everything. He was a strong proponent for the Town Budgetary process. One of the things that helps in the organization is Terry. Terry published something that he wished they had gotten out a long time ago, which was explaining what the Charter Commission's mission was. Nobody knows what's going on or the importance. It's their role to try and get that information out; the Commission, BCTV, whatever they have to do. Most that will start to pick up as they get to whatever the phase is that they are getting into. He understands what the Commission says, "Shall a Charter Commission..." He wanted to know where they were going. He was still trying to understand the petitioner's reasoning thinking there was an issue. Terry laid it out what the proponents had mentioned that absentee ballots could be used and increased voter participation and the ability to vote on School and Town budgets at the same time. Participation in the old days when they had School issues where they were filling the rooms down at McKelvie. When there were issues that required a lot of participation, they were getting them. Low participation might be just a change of the times. He was also looking at the fact that they have a AAA bond rating, the lowest tax rate, a pretty good budgeting process to give the public several opportunities for input: two public hearings, and a Budgetary Town Meeting that might have gotten 57/58 people the last time that actually beat the School's deliberative session. He's seen some people say that they'll still have the deliberative capability on an SB2, but nobody is showing up for that. Then they've got the voters coming in. In a perfect world they would have every voter coming in, intelligent, versed, knowing what they are voting on. It's not that way at all. People are coming in, and he's not discouraging an SB2 thought; it's just that he loves to see the direct dialog; initially at McKelvie way back when and in the theater, so there are some pluses. The other thing that concerns him if they change the formula going into some of the debates he heard what they do if they go to SB2, they're not going to lose the AAA bond rating. He wanted them to show him an SB2 town that has a AAA bond rating; they're not out there. He thought it was the fear of the unknown on his part. As a traditionalist, as Norman Rockwell said, 'the purest form of democracy is the Town Meeting.' It's still true nowadays. 10 years before he got involved in the Town, he wasn't going to the Budgetary Town Meeting. He was going to everything School related, but he wasn't going to the budget Town side. I elected officials and figured they knew what they were doing and that's why he doesn't see as many people maybe going to the Budgetary Town Meeting, because they believe in their elected officials; they live with it and breathe with it. They are starting their budget process now. He can look at Kelleigh Gleason who was the chair for so many years, Lori Radke, Town Council, and they grill us. Everybody thinks that that final budget that's coming before us hasn't been looked at and scrutinized and they're coming into the Budgetary Hearing with a recommendation from Rick and the Department Heads, which they've had open meetings to hear their initial presentations. There's so much available for people, but they're not showing up. What they aren't doing is, come in and vote and make a decision, because you have an opportunity to vote. He's not discouraging that. He's saying put the control of the budget with the people that know the budget. If you take a look at their tax rate, it demonstrates how well they pay attention and look at the growth of the Town. Some argument might be that they are big enough now they should have an SB2. He would venture to say that could potentially be disastrous. He's not trying to say the sky is falling, but they have a working formula. He

doesn't know why the petitioner was not there to explain to him, as a voter, as a resident of 31 years, why they got this way. Why was a perceived problem of a lack of participation at Town meetings the call to 'we need to get more voters in there, let's get everybody down when everybody else is voting.' There is some logic to that, but when he went in to vote and got his ballot, and he received it for the Town with all of the different amendments that were coming out of there, which were there a lot of them, he had one person say that they skipped all of that, they had no idea what they were talking about. Potentially what they might have by going with an SB2, they still control what he understands several options. He thought the mission, and Mr. Brock told him there was going to be a majority report and a minority report, but still the Commission was responsible for defining what goes in the Charter. He suggested they take a look at what Londonderry did. They have an official ballot Town Council, so the Charter provides for voting on some or all legislative matters at Town Meeting by official ballot. Conceivably, you could keep the operating budget under the authority of the Town Council, but they could put any bonds or zoning ordinances. Instead of complicating it, if you heard the NHMA, Littleton, and you've heard the phrase voter and ballot fatigue. That is true. In Littleton they had 44, they get around 30 and they had no idea what they were looking at. The Charter Commission has been charged with taking a look at something that's been around for 100 years. He still didn't think they had outgrown the Town Meeting. He didn't think the lower numbers there represent they aren't getting something or they're missing something. He thought it was a true vote of confidence in the School Board, a true vote of confidence in the Town Council. He asked that they seriously consider keeping the Town Budgetary Hearing. If there is still, and he thought 95% of the Commission members were predisposed that's where they're going. He hoped that their eyes were open, that they were taking the time to read this and just think about it. He actually had his eyes opened learning a lot about SB2. He didn't know what they went through in the School. He didn't know how they had to define the default budget. He remembered when capital projects were pulled out, whatever it was and didn't understand any of that. He said to himself he wished they were under a Town Budgetary Hearing. It's conceivable that they would still be in a nice position, so that all that extra effort could be rewarded with a lot of input that comes from the basic, the Department Heads, the administrators. He's not going to go into Jeff Kerr's business and tell him how to run his business, but as a shareholder, Mr. Kerr probably wants to give him input if Mr. Kerr has invested in his company, but he's not getting into Mr. Kerr's operating expenses. Maybe that's a poor analogy; he thought it was a good analogy. Keep the decisions with the elected personnel. They have seven good councilors, and have faith. He looks at Kelleigh, he looks at Lori, and he looks at Dave back there. To change for the sake of change was not necessarily good. He challenged the petitioner to say where the problem was. He's not here; he's behind sending emails. He's there, as a 31 year resident, asking them to really be unbiased in their assessment. What scares the crap out of him is default. Half of that municipality association presentation was what they need to do for a default. That's a lot of work. That's a lot of redefining. Only Terry and Paul probably understand all the work they had to go through to create a default budget. He didn't know enough about it other than basically it's unless it's defined in the default. He wanted to know if they knew what a default budget was. He asked Ms. Radke who gets hurt with a default budget.

Chairwoman Wolf interrupted and stated that she didn't give any parameters for the presentation time, but he had been going for 20 minutes. She didn't want to get into a back and forth. He did say final, so that's why she didn't pause him. They have other

people eagerly waiting to share their opinion. Mr. Jennings stated that he understood, but they've had problems with lack of participation, so he's using up some of their time. Chairwoman Wolf stated that that's not normally how it works. Mr. Jennings stated that what he hasn't heard in any of these meetings was an opposite discussion. If he's creating some thought right now. Default budgets as he knows, unless you're under a contract, honoring DPW, honoring Police, honoring Fire, the Town of Bedford administrative employees and their management staff are not under contract, so if they have a default budget, he wanted to if the administrators don't get their salary increases; do they have to unionize. He wanted to know what they had to do. Vice Chair Gleason asked him if he was a paid employee of the Town and Mr. Jennings responded no, he's not. Vice Chair Gleason asked him does he not work for Bedford Community Television and Mr. Jennings responded that he does. Vice Chair Gleason asked him if he pulls a paycheck for Bedford Community Television and Mr. Jennings responded yes, he does.

Mr. McLaughlin stated that public comment was not a time for interrogating the Commission. It's the Commission's chance to hear his input. It's not to have a back and forth with them. All they want to know is his thoughts and then the next people. Mr. Jennings thought that what they're telling him it's different than a BCTV-WBNH, Zoning Board, and Planning Board; the Charter Commission has different rules. If he misunderstood, he'll take a step back. Chairwoman Wolf stated that they didn't lay out ground rules; she was just going by past practice. Whenever she has participated or has been on that side of the table for a public hearing, it's always to share your information. If you want to ask questions they are to be answered at a later time; not a back and forth. Mr. Jennings stated that he didn't understand the rules. It's like when you get five minutes before the Council and Vice Chairwoman Wolf responded that's exactly what it is.

Mr. Jennings stated that he didn't get into the forms of town government, but they do have options. If they take a look at that one page that he had displayed on the screen, when they have a chance. NHMA, their presentation was superb and he hopes it helps them, because it gives a lot of guidance. He thanked Chairwoman Wolf for the extra time.

Mr. Brock mentioned that not that the petitioner needs any defense, but he believes the petitioner was out of Town and Chairwoman Wolf confirmed that was correct.

David Gilbert, 269 Pulpit Road, referred to what Bill Carter said at their last meeting, if it's not broken why try to fix it. He took a look at the percentage of the total tax rate; School-73%, Town-22%, and County-5%. Only 23% of the voting public showed up to vote, so they get low turnout. Of all of their warrant articles, this one (Charter Commission) received the least amount of voter support. He thought that was crazy and it was said that the stupid rooster got most of the people out to vote. He questioned what the voters really knowing or dealing with. He has been a resident of Bedford for 26 years and the Town Council for seven. He had not seen any evidence of a complaint about the Town budget and how it's developed and the process they use. He did not see the petitioner, so he's going to skip that. His opinion was that voters had abdicated their responsibility to be informed voters. By that he means that they do not come to budgetary meetings and ask questions or complain about the process, because of one or two things, in his opinion. Either they believe the elected officials they voted into office do a good job of developing a needs-based fiscally conservative budget, which is what he tries to do. That was also expressed to them by Londonderry and Durham. The 2nd thing was that voters do not

care to be involved, because they vote to put elected officials in place to do the job for them. That could be said for the School and the Town, based on the number of people who show up at the budgetary meetings. As stated earlier, it was less than 60 for both meetings this last time. It was pretty incredible to him, he was at the School Board meeting, that only two people asked a question. Otherwise they just rubber stamped it. He was one of the people who asked a question. He thought that people needed to step back and look and say elected officials really decide budgets in a representative form of government; like the Federal and State government. He thought that's what people in Town were trying to do; that's his opinion. If people don't like the way their officials are doing things, they can ask for a recall or they not vote them in. He believed that nobody had been recalled in this town. As was stated earlier, the Town holds two meetings in January and invites the public to come and discuss the proposed budget that they put forth every year. He could count on one hand how many voters show up and ask questions. He knows Sue Labrie does and that's fine. They want more people to ask questions. Nobody shows up; he's not going to shame them, but he knows who shows up at these meetings and he didn't see a lot of them there. He thought people had abdicated their responsibility to let the people who were doing this job, School and Town; they know what they're doing. Look at their tax rate; over the last 7 years he's been on the Council, in 2016 the tax rate was \$4.97 and today it's \$3.80. He gets that they have revaluations, but they're keeping it pretty flat, so he thought they were doing a good service for the Town as far as what the taxpayers have to pay. If they decide to ask the voters by putting it on the ballot, he asked that they please look at it this way, in his opinion, they could put the operating budget on the ballot, but they really needed to leave the capital budget to the Town Council. The reason he says that was they would be taking away the flexibility to adjust their expenditure plans going forward. What they try to do is plan for the future. It's different than the School. The Town is able to save money for the future to buy things they need like fire trucks, equipment, etc. If they didn't have that availability, and they had to go to a default, then the costs would spike and they would be expected to do bonding, which for some of those things it didn't make sense. Bonding over time with interest, if they are saving money now to pay for it, why would they bond and have interest for it. It didn't make sense to him over time. It also affects the tax rate. The length of the ballot would increase also if they did that, and that's an option. They could do whatever they want, that's what they are there for, to do what they want. If they break all those things out, they had 51 capital items at the last meeting. That's voter fatigue and nobody is going to pay attention to that. If the Secretary of State determines that the waiting times were too long, because people are spending too much time at the polls to figure it out, they might say they need another polling place. That would require more manpower and increase the cost to the taxpayer. If they define a default budget, he asked that they please include a provision to also include increases in the utility and solid waste, such as trash, electricity, water, sewer and gasoline, which they don't have a lot of control over. Some of those things are going through the roof and if they don't get a way to have inflation or higher costs in there then they're default budget is going to be behind and they're going to run into a case where they might have to choose between taking the trash out or keeping an employee, which didn't make any sense to him at all. It's also a protection against inflation and unexpected future events; COVID was an example, and that didn't help anyone. Also, collective bargaining agreements should not be part of it, because he didn't think they could be. He wanted to know how that would affect non-union employees. As stated, if they go to a default budget, they are going to have to choose between something that's capital or an employee and that's really not fair.

It's going to hurt the Town; it's going to hurt people who want to come to the Town and work here. They are going to look at that and say there's no room for advancement. There's no room for a raise. That's not a good choice. The default budget, if they go there, doesn't have to follow the Select Board style of government per the NHMA, Secretary of State, or the DRA. They can tailor it to what they think the Town wants and that's important; what the Town wants. If they must go there, please do their best to figure this out. His goal on the Council over these seven years has been to protect their AAA bond rating and property values while managing the Town budget and providing the services our residents expect. That's his goal. When people say to him is his representing a special interest in Town, and he says yes, it's called the taxpayer of Bedford. That's who he represents. His last statement is what Bill Carter said, 'If it's not broken, don't fix it.' He's not in favor of changing what is working. The Commission has a job to do.

Mr. Lord wanted to know if they could ask questions. Chairwoman Wolf stated that if there's not a back and forth, there's not a back and forth.

Susan Tufts Moore, 27 Bedford Center Road, agreed with the last two speakers. If it ain't broke, don't fix it. She's been going the Town Budgetary Hearing since 1980 and doesn't think she's every missed one. She didn't remember any huge changes in the budget. People have asked questions and there's been debate and discussion. Occasionally, there have been hot tempers, but things on the budget in her recollection haven't really changed all that much. She didn't think the public came to the two budgetary hearings just as they don't come to the two Planning Board public hearings in January. Sometimes she's the only one in the audience. She thought the Town Budgetary Hearing gave the residents a chance to have some debate. Many towns in the State immediately put all that current use penalty money into land conservation funds. Bedford did not do that. They put in 30%. Property in current use decreases over the years, so that funding option disappears. In about 2000, on the floor at the Budgetary Hearing, she proposed that they increase that amount from 30% to 70%. She was talking to the Town Manager at the time, she wanted to go to 100% and the Town Manager said no, they better make it 70% to make it more palatable. She proposed from the floor that they raise it to 70%. There was some discussion and it passed, but it had no effect on the Town budget. They were using that money for the Town budget, but it should not have been used for the Town general expenses, because it was land that came out of current use and was being developed. A lot of towns did it right from the beginning when they put 100% of that money into a conservation land fund. It was a good opportunity and she would rather do something like that at a Town Budgetary Hearing than at one of the two January budget hearings, which she would be talking to the Town Council, but she wouldn't be talking to the Town residents as a whole. She felt something like that was more appropriate at a Town Budgetary Hearing in March. She can't remember at least in the last 20 years, their budget has hardly ever changed at the Town Budgetary Hearing. If it is, it's really a drop in the bucket and it almost never happens, because she thought a lot of people had faith in the Town Council members and their whole budgetary process. It's a long complicated process. She thought most residents had faith in the Town Council and thought the Town Budgetary Hearing was a great opportunity for those who want to come out and listen and make comments. She didn't know why more people didn't come except that they trust the Town Council. She thought it was a great opportunity to let the residents who want to participate in Town government participate. She really hoped that the Town Charter Commission will not recommend that they change their form of government.

Bill Foote, 14 Pheasant Run, stated that he didn't come to speak, he came to watch, but he's a big proponent of SB2. He's on the School Board, but he's not speaking for them, he's speaking for Bill Foote. As far as he knows, the School District has been an SB2 since 1997 and despite the concern of default budgets, it's mechanical at this point. There is no emotion involved. If they don't get a capital expenditure they work their way around it; that's the way a budget should work. They work on a budget, slide it across the table with the taxpayer and they either support it or they don't support it and they move on from there. It's not an emotional decision; it's not a fear driven decision. Bill (Jennings) and Dave (Gilbert) mentioned that they wanted to maintain the AAA bond rating. Bedford School District has a AAA bond rating with \$87M budget and they have no problems maintaining that. That comes with fiscal governance, which he thought the Town side did a good job of maintaining. To Susan (Tufts Moore), Dave, and Bill's comment, he thought that people didn't come to those meetings, because most of the stuff was deep in the weeds. If you're not inside watching it all the time, it's going to sound like Greek to you. He goes to these meetings and he understands what's going on only because he was deeply immersed in it. Also to Dave, Sue and Bill's comment about not having seen any change, he remembers complaining two years ago when \$2M was taken out of the Town reserve fund to pay for land, and apparently the deal just closed for the Police Station; a Police Station they haven't heard anything about. He's not against the Police Station at all; he was just against reappropriating that reserve money, because that money actually belonged to the taxpayer, not the reserve fund for the Town to just spend. The year before that they spent \$1M on turfing Sportsman Field. Again, not against the project; he's against taking the reserve fund money to do that, because that should have been returned to taxes. The way the Town side manages stuff, he would say he has a complaint even though Dave, Bill and Sue don't have a problem with it. He has a real problem with using reserve funds for those kinds of purposes. If the voters asked for that kind of stuff then they would support it or they wouldn't support it, but it would be up to the voters; not left to the Town Council to decide. He was not for having the Town Council make a budgetary decision on how they spend that money. So far they've taken \$3M of money that he would have considered to be returned for taxes, to be used for projects that they supported without voter input. On that basis, he thought they definitely needed SB2. He's sorry Jay (Nash) wasn't there, because he knows Jay has been championing this thing for probably the last two years. It's good to see that it actually gets some traction and come forward. He's heavily for SB2 and if he could ask the Commission to bring a decision forth to the Town Council, please recommend SB2 for Bedford.

MOTION by Vice Chair Gleason to close the public hearing. Seconded by Ms. Labrie. Vote taken – Motion Passed – 9-0.

4. NEW BUSINESS

a. Discussion

Chairwoman Wolf thought that they had some deadlines, so for those of you who have not been following closely, they needed to have a public hearing before they made any kind of decision and then they need to write a report. They are going to draft the report and then the report needs to be published. Then they have another hearing and then the report needs to go to the Secretary of State by October 15th. If they backup their timeline, that's a little tight with everything that their doing.

Vice Chair Gleason stated that she had been cornering people in the grocery store, on the baseball fields, on the softball fields, in her neighborhood walking around, and asking them what they think. She found that in Bedford, if you wait for the people to come to you and tell you what they think, it's probably too late. If you reach out to them they are fairly educated. What's cool about this town, the median income is \$143,119; the average income in this town is \$175,443; 97.5% of Bedford residents have a high school education or higher and 65.5% of Bedford residents actually have a bachelor's degree or higher, so this is not an uneducated town. This is a town full of entrepreneurs, successful CEOs and people that go to work every day that are very well educated that pay attention to the world around them that do trust their elected officials, but that also have feelings about oversight. Of the approximately 50 people that she's spoken to over the course of the last 60 days, she has not run into, outside of this meeting, and she's going to give Susan Tufts Moore credit, because she has been involved in politics for far longer than she has and she does her research and speaks her mind and when she speaks up she listens. Susan Tufts Moore is not an employee of the Town. She doesn't work for a branch of the Town, literally or figuratively. Everyone else who has spoken out in favor of keeping the power with the Town Council, and this was really important to consider, everyone else is a Town employee, literally or figuratively. The Town Manager or a current or former member of the Town Council with the exception of Susan Tufts Moore. Her concern with that was there was an inherent bias when you are saying essentially don't allow my power to be subject to public oversight. She has an issue with that; that raises concerns. There is an inherent problem that she has with the messaging that's happening here when they are saying the voters, the people that live in this town that go to the polls that make the decisions on the ballot, they aren't intelligent enough. They are not well-informed enough to make decisions about the budget. You're not smart enough. That's really derogatory and she didn't think that there were people in the town that aren't intelligent enough to make these decisions. She thought they came from a very well-educated very well-informed town. Statements that have been made in...here's what she's hearing most often, 'Our AAA bond rating could be jeopardized.' There is no evidence to back that up. There are no other towns in NH that have ever had this AAA bond rating to compare to; they don't exist. That argument is lacking in factual predicate and she has an issue with it. 'This is the way we've always done it' is the most patriarchal she has ever heard advanced in support of a cause. It doesn't hold any weight with her. It's without merit. 'This could potentially be disastrous.' It's fear mongering. It's not based in fact. Just because something is different, doesn't mean that it's a bad idea. Allowing the educated population of this town who, by the way, they trust to vote on the School budget, they are just not trustworthy to vote on the Town budget? That didn't make any sense to her. The people want the power to make the decisions. The fact that this intimidates people that get paid by the Town; that doesn't hold a lot of weight with her. Because she has been speaking to constituents and because the constituents she's spoken to feel so strongly about the issue, she was strongly in favor of SB2. She thought that people want it and she thought they should give the people what they want.

Ms. Radke stated that Susan Tufts Moore represents the past. She represents what this town was built on. Ms. Radke believes by going to SB2, you are taking away what they have. You are ripping away a little at a time. You take away your Budgetary Town Meeting, they are gone; the past is gone. The pure democracy is gone and that bothers her. Where is everybody? Where are all your constituents Kelleigh, where are they today? Why didn't they show up at the public hearing? Where were they two weeks ago? They're

not here. She didn't think people really care. That's her opinion. The 50 people that Vice Chair Gleason spoke to, she probably gave them information about it and said this is what it's about, and they said 'Oh sure, that's a great idea.' If it ain't broke, don't fix it. That's her opinion. Is the Budgetary Town Meeting the best way? Probably not. Maybe they can look at others. She just didn't think SB2 was the way to go. That's how she'd vote. She would not support it based on so many issues that she truly believes will be unintended consequences. You may not see them now, you may not believe it, but she truly believes they are. Vice Chair Gleason asked Lori, you are a Town Councilor, right? Ms. Radke responded I am and I'm also a resident of the town and I've been here for 23 years. She's seen things in her 23 years. She asked, how long have you been here Kelleigh? Don't ask me questions like that when...Vice Chair Gleason responded since 2009. Chairman Wolf stated to take it easy on the back and forth. Ms. Rake stated you ask me how I feel. And that's how I feel. She didn't feel they should be ripping away our past. That's her opinion. There are too many unintended consequences.

Mr. Foote wanted to know if they were making a decision tonight and Chairman Wolf stated that she didn't know what they were doing tonight. They're are having a discussion and they are in unchartered territory. They also have a timeline that they have to do.

Mr. Lord stated that this was the first time that they've actually started the discussion. They've done a lot of learning. He feels like he's still coming up the learning curve. There is a lot of complexity involved in the details and how these different things fit together. This is the first time to speak and share some points of view amongst the Commission.

Ms. Labrie was wondering why they want to stay in the past and why can't they move forward into the future. You don't want SB2, because it's the future? You want to stay with the Town Meetings, because past, it's always worked? Ms. Radke responded that it's the purest form of democracy. You take that away and it's done. Ms. Labrie stated that other towns have it, so their democracy is not pure?

Mr. McLaughlin stated that voting on a ballot was still pure democracy. Everybody shows up, they vote. For those who actually skip questions, because the ballot's too long, that's no different than skipping the meeting the following night. For him, attendance is important. He thought the Town Meeting form was always good when it was an agricultural economy and everyone lived in Bedford and stayed in Bedford. He travelled for work. He's sure many of the residents of Bedford who are in the big jobs travel all the time, so being able to vote by absentee was very important. Method of creating the budget, he's heard concern about that. He didn't think that was going to change. The Town Councilors will still interview the Town people who manage the various departments, they'll still get all the input, they'll still have budgetary meetings, the exact same thing they do today. He didn't see that as an issue that's going to change. The process of creating a budget will not change. It's just the method of the voters approving the budget is what will change. He hasn't seen one argument that changes with going from Budgetary Town Meeting to SB2. He thought it was just more voters would have an input on the process. From where he's sitting and from what he's heard over the past few weeks, he's going to be in favor of recommending a change to the budget process.

Ms. Camarota reiterated that she believes residents have faith in the Town Council and Councilors. Same as they do in the School Board. She believes they do a good job. It

makes her think back when Londonderry was here to tell them about their experiences with becoming an official ballot town. She remembered her gut feeling at the end of that long discussion was if they look at their ballot, and they were a voter and had to go through each and every one of those items that were on the ballot, they would even appreciate the job of the Town Councilors even more, because then they would understand what's going on in the town and where their money was going. Right now, because of the faith in their form of government, she doesn't know where the money goes. She went and voted all day yesterday and worked the polls and she didn't feel like going out the next night to vote. That was her own problem. She was one of the original people, she's been here 37 years, and was one of the first to support the SB2 when it first became a law. She said this is exciting, because back then people played games that a whole bunch of people would show up at the meeting and then everybody would go home because it was 10:30 at night and then somebody would reconsider an item and the budget would be blown out. She thought that was disrespectful to the voters, so they took care of that by learning the mechanisms of running a meeting. She's been very pleased and never heard any complaints about the School Board being on SB2. She's in favor of the Town budget being on SB2, because she wants to appreciate the benefit of absentee ballots, the veterans, not that they vote a whole lot on Town matters probably. She thought it would be an education for the voters and better understand what's on the ballot and what our Town Council is doing. From what they heard, they would be able, with assistance from legal and others, to design it in such a way, produce a document in such a way, that they protect things that need to be protected and then give the rest to the voter to say 'okay would you vote on this and here are the articles.' She thought they could design it that way. She was in support of SB2 for the Town budget.

Mr. Brock stated that in the mid-late 90's he was sitting on the School side of things and he was among the loudest to proclaim that the sky was falling, the world would end, budgets would become impossible, and it would greatly disrupt the operations and the budgeting processes of the School system. His argument did not prevail. In the late 90's, the School adopted SB2, and surprise, the sky did not fall. For the School side, he thought they now had a set of people in Town who are much more engaged on Schools, School issues, particular School budgets, because they are getting to vote on those items; whether capital items or budgetary items. They forecasted that the sky would fall; it did not. Everything is working just fine. This Commission is going to write a report. They are going to essentially at that point, turn it over to the voters of Bedford. The Commission is not going to decide to change Bedford's form of government. Ultimately, it's going to be the voters' decision whether or not this is adopted by Bedford or not. There are people that might believe that this Commission was going to make a decision of how Bedford is going to change; they are not. The people in Bedford are going to make a decision if Bedford is to change at all.

Mr. Lord stated that he was on the fence, just to be clear. He thought there were pros and cons and thought that made the decision a whole lot harder than actually being presented either point of view. He thought in its purest form, democracy is a great ideal in theory, but thought in practice, what they've learned over the course of 200+ years, was that really being a representative form of government was a whole lot more effective when they are dealing with very complicated issues. Frankly, while they talk about the adherence to the past, he's sympathetic to that. He thought an alternative issue that they haven't quite wrestled with enough was the complexity and the fact that they were

amongst the largest towns that still have this Town form of government and they've got a complicated set of issues that need to be dealt with. His worry of SB2 was that ballot fatigue was part of it, and putting 50 items on the ballot was problematic. More problematic was that he didn't think they could run a complicated enterprise by having items be given, the amount of time it takes to read and the amount of time it takes to say 'sounds good' 'doesn't sound good', which puts a lot of faith in actually the way that ballot item has been worded to be able to get proper determination about what the right answer is. It's not about people being educated or not. He thought it was about the practicality that all of them have to sort of take into account as to whether or not people will really come into that ballot understanding the complexity in those dozen words and making an informed decision that gets the right outcome, the better outcome, whatever that might be. He didn't have a lot of faith in his own experience of studying each of those coming into the ballot box to say that he would have a lot of faith in himself. He wouldn't cast any aspersions on people and how educated people are not. He's not an educated enough voter to be able to know the complexity that he thought Town Councilors would be able to have. To that end, he's not in favor of the purest form of democracy saying let's just put all those items on the ballot. He thought that was a very random way to make decisions at the end of the day; he didn't support that. He thought on the Town Council side of things, he thought the bigger issue was actually, he's been struggling to figure out how to frame this, a numerator and denominator problem. What he means by that is the problem with the Town Council was two-fold. It's the number of people that it takes to make a decision on the numerator, but it is actually was equally more problematic that there just aren't a lot of people that show up to participate in the Town Meeting in the first place on the denominator. If they've got a very small denominator, it takes a half plus one on the numerator to be able to make a decision. That's also very random. He thought to Jay's (Nash) impassioned appeal that led to all of this, it's the denominator that's the biggest problem in the Town Meeting. It's not the fact that what they have is a democracy in its purest form, but they are really actually being even more subject to the randomness to say that the Town Council is going to do its stuff and then they are going to rely on that, whatever it is, Wednesday night, and the count on that denominator to then throw all of that up for effectively randomness as well. They've got a situation where they've got randomness potential and only by the grace of God it seems to him have they not had runs on Town Meeting where they get a bunch of people and some school buses together and say...the question he wanted to ask was if you are a Town Councilor and you've invested 100 hours of work into this process, do you worry about what Town Meeting was going to go like and say we've got all this work and we did our damndest to get to this point and I sure hope that school bus doesn't show up this year that totally packs that room – and says let's just have whatever, we'll change the name of the Town and we'll do whatever else we want to do. They are the one state in the union who actually has instances where people have said 'NH is the place we should go to do these sorts of things.' It's not that fanciable to wonder whether or not you can stack Town Meetings to be able to come up with crazy outcomes. He thought Bedford was a real asset. He thought for them to potentially be sort of willy nilly about subjecting either one of those to the randomness of both of those points that he made runs the risk of really being willy nilly with the asset that they have in the Town. He's not persuaded by either one of those points of view for those reasons. He thought it was good in theory, probably both flawed in practice. Personally, he doesn't have a formulated proposal yet, but he thought if he could take a swing at it, it's something like what they need to do is to provide input beforehand and thought that exists in the current format. He countered to what he would have expected coming into this. He frankly didn't

like the Town Meeting structure and having that subject to as much randomness in the process that they talked about either. He would do away with that as much as he loves the country style of all that, and he would put in place sort of a format where you have kind of an up and down check on the Town Council. You go into the ballot box with a simplified format. He hasn't thought through the complexity, folks made some impassioned points about default budget, but assuming it's not that hard to put together a default budget; maybe that's a bad assumption. He'd do something where they say 'this is what we think we ought to do, if you vote 'no' this is what the default is.' You then have two forms of protection. You've got your representative form of government; vote the bums out if they don't do a good job. They've got a secondary check where they can say 'Look, even that, there was a runaway train, these crooks are doing bad things; they can't vote them out, but at least they've got an ability to sort of stop the runaway train by voting in something that came to a default budget. That's more philosophy than it was actually thinking through the granularities of the practice, but that's where his head is.

Mr. Kerr stated that he's learned a lot through this whole process. He tried to come into this without doing a whole lot of research, trying to have an open mind and understand what was going on. He really thought the Charter Commission, after talking with Matt (McLaughlin), was just going to be changing a few words here and there and they would be done. What he learned was there was a whole lot more involved here; from the application of ballot fatigue and what could potentially happen with SB2. What he really thought was driving this, from the people he talked to, the biggest concern they have is the example of what happened in Croyden where a group came in and derailed the school budget. They look around and say our School budget is protected by the default budget, so that's good. They look at the Town side and it is very subject to what Bryan (Lord) was talking about in terms of people coming in with a low turnout day and lowering all of the numbers across the board on the Town budget. They don't want that to happen. He thought the appeal of SB2 was the default budget was a backstop. He really thought that's what people were looking for; a way to protect the Town, protect the work the Town Council has done on the budget, and make sure they have a floor. If they have that floor that's a default budget, then it's up to the Town Council to sell why not the default. Let's go with the budget they've prepared and they spent all this time on and it comes down to the Town Council to sell that. He thought that was a good way to go. He thought implementing SB2 comes down to how they implement it. They've heard lots of input from different towns about being careful about just saying you're SB2, because the legislature changes it every year and they don't want to be falling in that trap by having to follow legislature. You want to divorce yourself a little bit from the SB2 statute, so you can get your format in place and do it. You also don't want to have every single item on the ballot, because ballot fatigue is real, and the points that were made are real. He thought they could do both. He thought they could have the default budget as a backstop and arrange what they are going to do here to have a budgetary meeting, have the discussions done, have that put on the ballot in such a way they don't have 50 items on the ballot, but they have a reasonable number, so that the people in Bedford can see what a good job the Town Council is doing yet have ultimate say in the big ticket items, but maybe trust the Town Council on the smaller items. He thought they could get to a point like that and he thought that's what the people in Bedford want. That's where he thought they were heading and hope they will end up. Ms. Radke stated that she would support that.

Chairwoman Wolf stated that she knows so many of them, because of her participation in the government process over many years, but they've all seen it change; they've seen it change so much. One of the things that really struck her after one of their meetings was she remembers sitting outside of the School Board meeting, so she wasn't on the Board yet, talking to two reporters, because reporters would come to their meeting. She would sit there and talk to them and they knew the information just as well as anybody on the Board or anything. Now they don't even have reporters. It's changed so much. She thinks about that. She didn't think there was anything in the Union Leader; she tried to get something in there. Here they are making the effort to give them the news. It's changed so much. She loves Town Meeting, but sometimes she can't move, she can't go, she voted yesterday, and it shouldn't seem like it's a big deal, but it takes time and effort to change your schedule to do everything. She knows that people were thinking that people weren't asking, and she agrees. She's talking to people that were asking. They have no idea that the vote takes place on the Wednesday after; they had no idea. Then they ask 'Why would we do it that way when we are voting in person on the Tuesday before? I literally had ballots in my hand. Why aren't I adding voting on this?' She thought SB2, and she hears the concerns and she gets that and she's said before she thought that those were logistics to be worked through. She didn't think they were reasons not to do this. SB2 is really normal in Southern NH. This is not like an unusual thing. It's just something that's new to the Town side. They've done it since 1997 on the School side. She really thinks if any School Board member said 'let's go back to Town Meeting and forget having people vote on the budget', can you imagine what the reaction would be. People would be very upset. They want to vote on the issues. They voted on the sprinkler bond, and there are other items they've voted on in recent years that in the past they might have stuck in the budget and they were pulled out and voted on separately. Her biggest issue and the reason she supports going to SB2 or some variation is that you cannot vote absentee. We are denying people the ability to vote. You have to be available at 7 PM on the Wednesday night after the election. It's access to voting. Even if people are going to vote the opposite of what she wants, she thought they had the right to be doing that and that is huge. Mr. Kerr covered what she was thinking about the default budget. It is a formula, a pretty standard formula. It's not a lot of we need to do all these calculations and do duplicate budgets. It's pretty much a formula; it's not that difficult. She totally sees it as a floor. She completely sees it as a protective mechanism from her getting 40 or 50 of her friends, because right now, with 57 people showing up at Town Meeting, she could get 30 or 40 of her friends and she could make some changes to that budget. It's not really that hard and it did happen in Croyden and they got very lucky, because they are in a small town, but we're not. She thought the voters can be very engaged when they want to. She really looked at the Londonderry ballot and she thought of it as a communication tool. It was a very good communication tool on the different items that were happening and being proposed by the Council. She thought they should be making a recommendation to support it, and letting the voters decide on it. The Commission needs to put forward the proposal, so they can make a decision. She thought where they really are is the biggest thing is they need to figure out what the Charter recommendation should be. She thought there were some very standard items such as Deliberative Session. The rules for Deliberative Session are fairly straight forward. The same for voting day. Those are going to be the same in each Charter. Default budget they could debate. It's interesting; Londonderry created their own definition for it, which is interesting, because the definition of default does come up in the legislature. From what she's heard on the Commission is the number of items that would go on the ballot; some kind of

parameters. At first when people mentioned ballot fatigue and streamlining that, she agreed, but now she doesn't. Partly because if you don't want to go the end of the ballot that's your right, if somebody doesn't want to. People who have been SB2 learn you prioritize the importance of your items. You put your most important items at the top and downward and then people still have the opportunity to vote. She really didn't want a 50 ballot item, she's just saying she thought they really needed to consider how they frame that piece. She likes some of the places. They saw one where there were 18 items where they had categories, but they would have to look into that charter. She thought they move forward with that they were going to put this on the ballot and then they have a subcommittee that looks at the Charter and makes some recommendations. Then they could have a subcommittee that also drafts a report. Then they come back together and look at those drafts and discuss those proposals. That's where her thought was right now.

Ms. Camarota stated that the School Board helps the voter out by putting 'School Board recommends this' or 'School Board does not recommend', and that helps me get a sense of, and it would be nice if they were able to do that in the long run. Chairwoman Wolf stated the Town doesn't do that? Doesn't make recommendations? Ms. Camarota stated that if they went to ballot. That would be helpful. Vice Chair Gleason stated that they do currently with zoning and bonding. Ms. Radke stated that anything that's on the official ballot typically has a recommendation or not recommendation from the Council. Mr. McLaughlin stated that one of the things he saw on some of the ballots they saw if they do that, it should say 'The Council supported this 5-2', you should know whether it was unanimous, 4-3, because if it was 4-3 and it just says they supported it, if he knew 3 didn't, it would be maybe he should do some research on this.

Mr. Brock had a process question. He wanted to know what was ultimately going to, assuming this Commission decides that they want to propose something to the voters of Bedford, what would appear on the ballot next March. He wanted to know if it was literally going to be a 3-page red-lined Charter revision or do they have the freedom to summarize it. Chairwoman Wolf stated that her understanding from the lawyer was it is a summary; it's not the full. Mr. Brock wanted to clarify that they weren't publishing all the revisions to Bedford's Charter, do you approve or not approve. Chairwoman Wolf stated that her understanding from the lawyer was that no, they won't be putting the specific red-lined recommendations on the ballot; it doesn't go that far. Mr. Brock stated that assuming, as it feels likely, our report says we think the following kinds of things should belong to the Council and the following other kinds of things should belong to the voters of Bedford. He wanted to know if that degree of itemization would appear on the ballot. Chairwoman Wolf thought that was a question for legal.

Rick Sawyer, Town Manager, stated that just to reiterate what the Chairwoman said, they have an opinion from the Town attorney on this. It is a very simplified question that's on the ballot, but they are publishing their entire report that does lay out all of the changes to the Charter, so the voter needs to get educated by reading that stuff before they go into the ballot box. Mr. Brock stated that the ballot article could say 'do you support the findings of the Charter Commission as identified in the report X, Y, Z dated October 15th'. Mr. Sawyer stated that the language was provided to them, but it's along those lines. Their final report becomes the document that voters should be looking at to see all of the changes to the Charter that would outline whether capital is in the default budget or not and those types of things. Mr. Brock thought they were back to that informing the voter

problem again. Mr. Sawyer stated problem or opportunity. Mr. Brock thought that was better said than he did. Chairwoman Wolf stated that she did see it as an opportunity. It's their responsibility to make sure they get out there and share the information with people. Ms. Radke stated that's why it's important that they get it right. Mr. Lord stated that that question was a good litmus test for whether or not you would have confidence in submitting all of these other matters to the will of the voter in the ballot box. It's the same question. Chairwoman Wolf wanted to know what he meant. Mr. Lord stated that when they submit something, which is their mission, they have to live with the challenge of being able to describe their judgement to the voters. It's a perfect test case to say 'how do you feel about the Town Council submitting its recommendation to the will of the voter?' They're going to be putting in a lot of time and energy into this and then hoping that they do a good enough job to communicate the judgement that they think is the right judgement. It gives them a good opportunity to feel what that's like and say 'is that what you want to do?' and replicate on every one of the items that they're going to put potentially into that bucket to say that they want to put through that same process. Try that out; wear those shoes as they go through this process.

Chairwoman Wolf thought to one of the comments of some people aren't engaged in some of the process, because it is very in the weeds; it's very hard to grab, it doesn't seem logical. She loves talking to people who haven't lived in NH long, because they think Town Meeting is bananas and they don't understand what a deliberative session is either. It forces them to try and think how to explain things in a way that is regular people talk instead of government and RSA language.

Chairwoman Wolf stated that they have to go to October 15th. They have to submit a report by October 15th, so that means everything has to be completed. She didn't want to wait into October to finalize. That backs them up to September that they would have to have a public hearing. They do their draft report and then they have to have a second public hearing so people can read the report and get back to them. That puts those meeting dates at either September 6th or September 20th for the second public hearing, which means they have to have a draft report done by then. She wanted to know if there was any language in the statute that says how long they have to publish the draft report before they have the hearing. Mr. Sawyer stated that the hearing has to have a seven day notice, so they would certainly want to have it done in that seven day window, but they also need to have the attorney review the report prior to. Mr. Brock wanted to know where the Secretary of State was in that process; was it before or after. Chairwoman Wolf stated that they do the draft report for their public, they finalize the report, and then they send it up there. There's a timeline also that needs to be followed. She had been thinking two subcommittees: a Charter revision subcommittee and a report subcommittee drafting the report. Those drafts would then be presented and shared with each other to be reviewed and discussed in a meeting and then building in one or two meetings to discuss if they want to have more revisions, yay or nay, they're heading in the right direction or they are completely not heading in the right direction. Then they have to build in time for the attorney to also look at that. She would like to hope that there's not going to be anything really far astray that they need two or three meetings to say 'yes, I'm kind of in agreement with it.' If they got to 80%, 75%, then the attorney would take a look at it and tell them if they're going down the right road or not.

Mr. Brock stated that Chairwoman Wolf implied that the two subcommittees were kind of operating in parallel. He didn't see how a report subcommittee could operate without having the output of the Charter revision subcommittee first. Chairwoman Wolf stated that the way she would do it is she would just start with the framework. Start with the framework of the report, build in some of the research that that they've done up to date, and then plug in the holes. Mr. Brock stated start with a skeleton and they'll throw some flesh on it as they go. Chairwoman Wolf didn't think the list for the report was as big, because it's more probably just distilling the information they've heard, because they've gotten so much information on this. Creating a framework, she thought Londonderry was a great model. They would just start that lead spot to plug in any recommendations and then a final vote, final report.

Ms. Radke gave an example of the CIP, and stated that there was talk about having the CIP fall under the umbrella of the Town Council and that the operating budget would then go on the official ballot; very much like Newmarket. Newmarket was a prime example of a hybrid type of situation. She wanted to know who makes that decision. She wanted to know if it was the committee that revised the Charter or was it the committee that's going to be doing the final report or was it all of them that was going to make that decision before they get to that point. Vice Chair Gleason thought all of them had to make that decision before they get to that point or it's inherently unfair. Ms. Radke agreed; that's why she was asking the question. Chairwoman Wolf stated let's take that capital example. They got about eight different charters, so it's an opportunity to go back and review those charters, maybe look at their ballots for sure, and to her it might be choice A or choice B for the subcommittee. These are the two that might make sense. That comes back to all of them for discussion, so they are not all doing the work, but that subcommittee section is. She feels like there should be consensus on what that is. Vice Chair Gleason stated that she looked back and looked at the Charter provisions and how each individual one dealt with capital improvement items in particular. She thought that's where they are getting hung up on; are there too many items on the ballot, is it going to create voter fatigue, it is going to be overwhelming. She gave this a lot of thought over the weekend and started outlining. She thought there was the question of what do we send. The speakers that presented prompted three major questions in her head. 1) Is there a dollar amount to which they send it to the ballot. For example, if the expenditure is over \$1M in a CIP improvement fund, let's say \$.5M. If they are going to put \$.5M into a line item, does that automatically trigger a provision and sends it to the ballot. 2) If their CIP contributions are in excess of \$5M a year, does that trigger a provision that goes to the voter where they get to vote on it. What made her super nervous was Durham where he said as long as we keep it under this amount they can aggregate them all together and they don't have to send anything to the voters. She thought that felt like cheating and don't know if she liked that particular approach. 3) What if they are establishing a line item on the CIP. For example, the Town is squirreling away money to buy property for a future safety complex that hasn't passed the Town yet. If that's a new line item in a particular point in time, does that go to the voter to say 'do you want to put money away for this?' She thought it should. Her thought is not the thought of the Commission necessarily and she didn't know what other people think or feel. Those are the three major categories she came up with for making parameters about when things get sent to the voter. She thought they had to discuss it, because while it's complicated, she feels it is going to be the sticking point. Ms. Radke agreed. Vice Gleason thought they should try and reach consensus on what makes sense on that.

Mr. Brock wanted to know if he was correct that their ultimate report will have both a majority opinion and a minority opinion; will they have the ability to include both sides of the argument so that people in Town can make a choice. Chairwoman Wolf stated that Londonderry had a minority report. She has no issue. Mr. Bock thought they should. Vice Chair Gleason thought it was a requirement. Mr. Lord stated that the only reason they wouldn't would be because they are 9-0.

Vice Chair Gleason wanted to know if they get hung up on the CIP issue or what should and should not go to the voters, and there's a minority there. Say they are 5-4 at the end of the day on what the parameters are for sending various budgetary items to the public. She wanted to know if that was enough to trigger a partial minority report if people have strong feelings. She thought everyone on this Committee was elected by the citizens and everyone on the Committee should have a voice in the report. Mr. Lord thought they let the facts play that out. If it turns out that it structures in a way that everybody is on board with most items and there are three points of view, then they figure out which one prevails and they have two dissenting views on other things. The challenge with that is he didn't know how they necessarily structure ballot question on that front. Chairwoman Wolf thought it was important to try to have a strong consensus on the ballot. It's going to turn into what the voters are going to select, so if you have three different points of view that's going to be very confusing. They would have to come to some kind of consensus on what that recommendation is. Mr. McLaughlin agreed. They can have a majority report and a minority report and that's it. Mr. Lord stated that chances were not high this question is going to come up. They are probably going to have something like 6-3 and chances are the three is not going to have a 2-1 split; it's probably going to condense pretty carefully. He thought they could cross that bridge when they come to it. Chairwoman Wolf thought that some of these issues they just need to work through as they do the work.

Mr. McLaughlin wanted to know if subcommittees could meet other than sitting there, trade emails and say 'here's a thought I have' and drafts can go back and forth. Chairwoman Wolf thought they could as long as there wasn't a quorum. Mr. Brock stated no more than four. Mr. McLaughlin thought the subcommittees should be with 4 and 4.

Mr. Kerr wanted to know if that was subject to the record retention, the communication of the subcommittee. Mr. Sawyer stated that it could be, but the reason it's not a quorum, they aren't making full decisions of the Commission. It would be great if they took some notes or advertised when they were meeting, but they weren't required to. Mr. Kerr was worried about the communication via email and whether or not that needed to be recorded. Chairwoman Wolf stated they are allowed to do that, it's okay; they aren't making any official decisions. It's a working body to try to work through sticking points, do research. The communications were still subject to the right-to-know law and they would still want to write them and assume it's going to end up on the front page of the paper.

Mr. Brock wanted to know if those subcommittee meetings needed to be noticed and Chairwoman Wolf responded no. Mr. Kerr thought they should potentially copy a Town of Bedford address when they are sending stuff back and forth so there is an official record of that. Chairwoman Wolf stated that they don't have to. Mr. Kerr was saying to comply with the official records act, which Kelleigh (Gleason) said they needed to comply with. Chairwoman Wolf stated that what she was saying was if somebody said 'I would like to see your email communication on the capital budget discussions', they would need to

comply with that, which is why you don't want to say anybody is stupid when you write an email. Mr. Brock thought what Mr. Kerr was suggesting was that if an official Town of Bedford email address was copied on all correspondence, then by definition they are archiving all correspondence. Chairwoman Wolf stated that would be correct, but they don't have to. Mr. McLaughlin stated that if four people meet at Inside Coffee to discuss it or at a bar, and there's no written anything, it's just discussion; that's fine too.

Mr. Sawyer stated that regarding the minority report, the statute says that minority report can't be more than 1,000 words.

b. Schedule of future meeting dates

Chairwoman Wolf stated that to continue working through a timeline; she was looking at availability, because the Town Council meets on Wednesday nights. Available dates were July 26th, August 2nd and August 9th. She would think that if they were going to go ahead with the idea of researching charters she would recommend meeting on July 26th, because it gives them runway if they want to make a lot of changes or redirect and research or do something. She would rather err on the scheduling more meetings and then not having one. Mr. Brock wanted to know if they were bound to the availability of that room; could they meet someplace else if there's a place to meet. Ms. Radke stated that it won't be televised. Ms. Camarota stated that the set up was so easy for the community. Chairwoman Wolf stated that they are televised. Mr. Sawyer stated that they don't have to do Wednesday nights. Chairwoman Wolf stated that technically they could meet somewhere else if they wanted to. Mr. Brock stated that he didn't want the availability of the room to gate their ability to meet. Chairwoman Wolf stated that she likes Wednesdays that's why she was sticking with them. It seems like so far everyone has been available on this night. She had July 26th tentatively as their next meeting. Then she was thinking maybe August 9th. Ms. Radke stated that on the 26th the collective group would meet and wanted to know if before the 26th of July she was expecting the subcommittees to meet and report on the 26th. Chairwoman Wolf responded a draft. That gives them a month. Mr. Brock stated that his expectation was the July 26th meeting, both subcommittees give their initial what they came up with. Chairwoman Wolf stated that's what she was thinking and then they get feedback from everybody. Then they have that discussion, they have time to revise and meet again maybe on August 9th. If they booked the 23rd or the 30th of August, then they could go to final drafts or what they hope is final. Mr. Kerr wanted to know where the next public hearing would be in that. Chairwoman Wolf stated after. They would do their final drafts and then they would get feedback from the public. Ms. Labrie wanted to know when it goes to the attorney, the 23rd? Chairwoman Wolf stated that they would probably do it right around then or they could decide on the 9th to send it to the attorney. Mr. Kerr thought they needed to have a preliminary draft between the 1st and 2nd hearing and then after the 2nd hearing then they do the final draft. Chairwoman Wolf responded final draft for them; a rough draft that they feel pretty good that they're ready to present to the public.

Vice Chair Gleason stated that Councilor Strand had just arrived from advocating for the Town at a PFAS meeting that prevented him from being at the public hearing, but wanted the opportunity to speak.

Mr. McLaughlin thought they should finish all of this discussion first. Mr. Brock thought they should wrap up the dates and then give Mike (Strand) the floor. Ms. Labrie wanted to know if they were going to meet at 6:00. Mr. McLaughlin stated that he likes 7:00.

Chairwoman Wolf did a recap: July 26th and August 9th. July 26th would be a rough draft of Charter recommendations by the subcommittee. They would discuss those recommendations. There could be revisions, modifications, and they would be represented and discussed on the August 9th meeting. There probably needed to be some consultation with the attorney. They would need to decide that on July 26th when they bring the attorney into this process based on where they are with that rough draft. Mr. Brock assumed that on the 26th it's a rough draft from both subcommittees. Chairwoman Wolf confirmed yes. Ms. Camarota stated that draft was going to become the preliminary report. Mr. Brock didn't think they were there yet. Ms. Camarota stated that they tweak it. Chairwoman Wolf stated that it's just a rough draft of a report.

Chairwoman Wolf wanted to know if the Commissioners liked August 23rd or the 30th better. On the 9th hopefully they're pretty close to making some decisions. Ms. Labrie wanted to clarify that they were meeting on the 9th at 7:00. Chairwoman Wolf confirmed the 9th at 7:00. Vice Chair Gleason and Ms. Radke stated that the 23rd was better. There was consensus that earlier was better than later.

Ms. Camarota wanted to know if it had been sent to the attorney yet. Chairwoman Wolf stated that on the 26th they might decide when it gets sent to the attorney. To her, they would put their public hearing tentatively in September. She didn't know if the 6th was too ambitious or not. Vice Chair Gleason stated that her issue with September 6th was that it was the Wednesday after Labor Day, and she was worried about attendance. Ms. Camarota wanted to know if she meant the Commission's attendance and Vice Chair Gleason responded no, the public. Ms. Radke wanted to know if the 27th was too late. She wanted to know if at the same time of their final draft, before the public hearing, they could send it to the lawyer. They are looking at it and then their having their public hearing and if there are any changes they could send it back. Chairwoman Wolf stated that her only concern was if he says they are totally in the wrong direction you need to revise. Ms. Radke thought the earlier they send it to him the better. They need to send it way before the 23rd. Mr. Brock thought they need to have it almost final before they have the public hearing. Vice Chair Gleason stated that it wouldn't be the 27th, it would be the 20th. September 20th would be the 3rd Wednesday in September. Ms. Camarota thought that sounded too far away. Vice Chair Gleason didn't think that was too late. She was worried that if they try to do it earlier than that they're going to run into; she's worried about attendance issues. She's also worried about putting too much pressure on this Committee to do a draft. She wants them to be proud of what they create. Ms. Camarota stated that she was only thinking of the Secretary of State and wanted to know when that deadline was. Chairwoman Wolf responded October 15th. They do have more time than it seems. She leans towards a public hearing on the 6th if they can do it. Mr. Brock stated that he would rather have the meetings on the calendar and if they decide not to use it, they don't use it. Chairwoman Wolf suggested putting September 6th and 20th on the calendar for now. Mr. McLaughlin suggested the 13th too; they could cut and pick the middle one. Chairwoman Wolf stated that the Council has a meeting on the 13th. This is just tentative. Mr. Lord stated that he wouldn't be there on the 20th. Vice Chair Gleason agreed that they should put both of them on the calendar, because if for some reason they run into a glitch.

Mr. McLaughlin wanted to clarify that the public meeting was only for them to hear the report and make comments, but all they have to do is hear their comments; they don't have to change the report. Chairwoman Wolf stated that it did leave room for them if they want to change a report to discuss it, tweak it; they have that next meeting and they can finalize it. She liked the idea of leaving a big buffer before October 15th.

Vice Chair Gleason wanted to know if they had a public hearing on September 6th and people come and they have really good insight and they substantively change their report as a result of that public hearing, do they need to schedule a 3rd public hearing because they've done that. Mr. Sawyer stated that the short answer was the statute doesn't say, but it would be nice to give the public a chance to respond. The statute doesn't say that they have to. Chairwoman Wolf stated that they would be taking public input to modify it in theory. When they have a budget hearing if they change something because people gave them feedback they don't have another hearing. Mr. Kerr thought it would depend on the timeline and the amount of change. If it's a minor change and they're up against the deadline he would say 'they've taken their input and they've done the best they can.' If they have the time and it's a big change, and they schedule another meeting and say 'it was a big change, what do you think?'

Mr. Kerr wanted to clarify 7/26 was the subcommittee draft reports, 8/9 was revisions to that and wanted to know the purpose of 8/23 and if it was more revisions. Chairwoman Wolf stated that it was a just in case, working on the draft. Mr. Brock stated discussions, revisions, draft. Chairwoman Wolf stated that August 9th and August 23rd were working on draft Charter, draft report, whatever needs to be done. Ms. Labrie stated that it would have already gone to the attorney by then. Vice Chair Gleason stated in theory. Chairwoman Wolf stated that they were going to figure out on the 26th or the 9th exactly when they want the attorney to look at it. She would prefer a little sooner after they have a solid draft. Mr. Kerr wanted to know if they needed to consider any attorney vacation time or the firm's vacation time or a time when they are not available or was that not an issue. Chairwoman Wolf thought that was a good question and wanted to know if attorneys took vacations. Vice Chair Gleason thought they'd be okay. She thought it was a safe bet that a lot of people take vacation July 4th week.

Chairwoman Wolf thought they should take the public comment, because they need to talk about subcommittees.

Michael Strand, 10 Cooper Lane, appreciated the opportunity to say a few words. He apologized that he couldn't be there on time, but they had the public over whether to issue Saint-Gobain an air emissions permit. Regardless of outcome, they gave it their best to prevent that from happening, which is the only path for them not operating anymore.

Mr. Strand stated that he was going to say a couple of contradictory things and approach this more theoretically than practically, because from his experience watching the Commission so far, it was really interesting to him the work that they are doing. In terms of the nuances of how they handle CIP items or operating, he's out of his league, so he was really impressed that they have dug in that deeply to look at intended and unintended consequences. For him, this was a bigger picture issue. It was a problem of political and civic apathy. His concern was he didn't know that it gets solved with any of the three potentially proposed forms of budget voting. While he didn't know that the budget ballot solves that problem, he thought it was preferable to the inherent risks of minority factions

monopolizing budgetary decisions and low turnout or contrived low turnout at Town Meetings, which has been seen before. He thought the numbers of informed participation would likely be similar on the ballot forum regardless of gross numbers voted. On one hand, it's irrefutably more democratic, because there's more people; educated or not, they're voting. He thought there was a case to be made for that. He wanted to caveat this. His position as a sitting Town Councilor coming to them to speak was inherently compromised a little bit or potentially. In his case, he thought less because he's in a one year term. He probably won't be sitting on that stage whether it's a Budget Town Meeting or not. Whether he doesn't run again or lose, there are more outcomes where he's not there than he is. He thought when they get to speculating whether voters are informed when they put it on the ballot or not. They have to ask themselves as elected officials or Charter members, also elected officials, if it is their job to know or control or pretend to know the minds of voters. He thought that answer was probably no. It's their job to give them the chance to be informed and do their homework. The Durham model, which they've discussed, the budget rests solely with the Town Council; it seems less democratic on paper, but then the Town Council also has teeth. Those reactionary referendum recall elections might actually drive turnout more, which was something to consider. He fundamentally believes the voters deserve the opportunity to function as a final check and approve the wishes and revisions of the Council. There revisions of the Council make to the budget; the draft that is presented by the Town Manager. If they get back to that he thought it was pretty important. The only safe way to go ballot form at the same time, was they end up having to defer capital reserve authority to the Town Council in the case of emergencies to prevent defaults. In some ways they sort of end up back at square one. He thought it was interesting. His advisement to the Commission is not really relevant to their decision; that's theirs to make based on the will of the voters who put them on the Commission. He won't presume to offer an opinion, but just wanted to offer some discursive points that could be worth including in their report. His advice would be that regardless of what they decide, please include ancillary recommendations or comments regarding how to drive better turnout. They need exponentially better participation for any form of budget voting to work. Whether that occurs via Town Meeting, Town Council Elections, aka a referendum or deliberative sessions versus SB2. He wished them the best of luck in deciding and maybe using this as an opportunity or silver lining opportunity to get people paying attention a little bit more. If nothing else he thought there was a lot of value in that.

Mr. Jennings wanted to know if the public hearing was open again and Chairwoman Wolf responded no. Mr. Jennings wanted to know if they could make a comment and Chairwoman Wolf responded no. Mr. Jennings stated that they could talk afterwards.

Chairwoman Wolf stated that they were going to move forward with two subcommittees; a Charter Subcommittee and a Draft Report Subcommittee. She asked for volunteers to be on the Charter Subcommittee. Mr. Lord wanted to know if she could repeat for him what the proposal was for the two subcommittees. Chairwoman Wolf stated that the Charter subcommittee would take a deeper look into at the Charter. Her thoughts were some of the things were fairly standard; the deliberative session process was fairly standard and it's pretty much defined by RSA. The meeting happens the 2nd Wednesday of March. Some of the things are going to be very standard, boiler plate. She thought what they had outstanding was the definition of a default budget; do they go with the standard RSA or in Londonderry's case they defined it for their own Charter. The big thing

that most people have circled around is the ballot items such as should they try to offer some definition of how many ballot items, some kind of framework within the Charter to define that. They've talked about as few as 10 up to every item on the ballot. The 2nd subcommittee would be the draft report. Starting just to draft out a framework of what the report would be. Mr. Lord stated that he was trying to formulate some thought in his head so he missed that. He would like to be on the Charter Subcommittee. Chairwoman Wolf stated that they would have Vice Chair Gleason, Mr. Lord, Ms. Radke, and Mr. McLaughlin on the Charter subcommittee and asked Vice Chair Gleason to lead that and she agreed to do that. Chairwoman Wolf asked for volunteers for the Draft Report Subcommittee. Ms. Camarota thought that was the rest of them. Mr. Brock pointed out that it can't be everybody else. Ms. Radke stated that somebody has to be out and she would assume the Chair. You can't have five. Mr. Brock stated then the Draft Report Subcommittee would be Mr. Brock, Mr. Kerr, Ms. Camarota, and Ms. Labrie. Ms. Camarota stated that if the Chair wanted to be on it, she would step out. Chairwoman Wolf stated that it was totally up to Ms. Camarota if she wanted to participate in it or not. Ms. Camarota stated that she would be a backup, so if somebody can't make it on that 2nd committee she'll jump in. Chairwoman Wolf thought in the beginning their load was going to be a little bit lighter, because it's a start. The Draft Report Subcommittee will be Mr. Kerr, Mr. Brock, Ms. Labrie and Chairwoman Wolf.

Vice Chair Gleason asked Mr. Sawyer if she could get a copy of the Charter in editable format and he responded that he could.

Chairwoman Wolf stated that she would start the draft report and share it with the subcommittee because that's what she does all the time and she finds it easy to do.

Mr. Lord admitted that fact that he missed the conversation about the subcommittees, so he wanted to chat about something he challenged all of them to think about. They've had some good questions from everybody here to say exactly what the problem is that they're trying to solve. He didn't think that was patriarchal; he thought it was reasonable to say 'what's broken. What is it that they are actually trying to fix?' He thought it was a reasonable question, because he thought things were running pretty well. They've heard that from everybody here. He thought that was worth leaning into and trying to figure out what it is that led them there and what it is that the voters have asked them to do. Where it crystalizes for him what the mission is, is the question one of challenging the format of the Town Meeting. He talked about numerator, denominator, the scheduling and the weirdness of that, the possibility to stack, all of those things wrapped into one question about Town Meeting and the inherent flaws in Town Meeting or is it that they're trying to figure out as he hears some of the other discussion, better oversight over the Town Council. If it's oversight over the Town Council, then it seems to him that drives a little different point of view to say 'would you rather have that in the Town Meeting or would you rather have that at the ballot box.' Or, were they trying to fix Town Meeting, which is the way he's sort of come at this. Admittedly, his onboard into this has been to say 'this Town Meeting seems really smoke-filled roomish.' It's susceptible to that. But it's not been to him, 'boy, the Town Council is flawed and they need to figure out how to put greater oversight into the Town Council.' He's just sharing some thoughts as he's trying to formulate in his mind. If folks say what they're really talking about here is ways to get better oversight over the Town Council, because there are things that they're not aware enough that are going on in the Town; he'd love to surface those, so they can think about

that also as part of the mission. Mr. McLaughlin stated that in the talks he's had with people in Town that is not the reason for this. Nobody is disappointed at all with the Town Council, the process; it's just to get more voters to approve the budget. Vice Chair Gleason stated that it was also beyond the scope of what they were tasked with doing. They were tasked with doing whether or not to bring an SB2 voting process to the voters or not. How they do it, the nuances of it, are why she thought they were forming subcommittees. The 'yay' or 'nay' on what their count is on whether or not to do it; that is what drives the work that their doing. If they get lost in the weeds, they're never going to get this done. Mr. McLaughlin thought that in the report it will have some history, how they got there. That will be for the voters. If in their discussion when the report comes up if somebody says 'we're here to oversee the Town Council', he thought the nine of them would have to approve that being in the report and he's not sure it would make the final cut. Mr. Lord didn't think he agreed with either one of those. He thought at the end of the day, what they were challenged with is a situation of forms of government between a representative form of government where they elect people to do the job and democratic forms of government where they have the people decide. At the end of the day, they are wrestling with inherent challenges of both of those structures. On the one hand, they've got a democratic form where they can do it at the ballot or you can do it at Town Meeting. On the other hand, they have a representative form of government. Mr. McLaughlin stated that they had a representative form of government. They have seven Town Councilors and they will still have seven Town Councilors. All they were doing was deciding how the citizens of Bedford approve the budget. Do they approve it at Town Meeting with 50 people or on the ballot with a couple of thousand people? Vice Chair Gleason wanted to re-read the question that was on the ballot, because she thought it was important to keep this mind. They have an extremely narrow scope. 'Shall a Charter Commission be established for the sole purpose of establishing official ballot voting under the current form of government.' That is it. They do not have authority from the voters to operate outside of that very limited scope. Mr. Lord thought that was all fine and good. There is still an inherent question to say what they were trying to achieve. The question of what they were trying to achieve, unless they were just doing this mechanically, there needs to be a philosophy of what they are trying to do. To him, it's important to query what aim they want within the Charter. Otherwise, they're just being mechanical. That's not very interesting to him. He thought at the end of the day what's most interesting is saying 'how do you want to govern yourself within the boundaries of the Charter.' He's glad he asked the question, because he thought that's clarifying for him to help him think about what his role is here as to what the problem is that's trying to be solved. If it's actually, and they're on the same page, of saying what they're really trying to do is enhance the 'd' part of the participatoriness of government, then that's a good way to advance the conversation to say what they are trying to achieve.

Vice Chair Gleason thought they needed to take an informal vote by the show of hands before the subcommittees start working, because if the answer is no by vote, then they're going in a totally different direction. If the answer is yes by majority vote that they should promote SB2, then she thought that should be what's driving the subcommittee's work at the end of the day. Whether or not there's going to be minority reports and whatnot, she really thought they needed to take an informal vote. Chairwoman Wolf wanted to answer Mr. Lord's question from her perspective. She's looking at the Bedford voting data and it goes back to 2016, 30 people showed up for Town Meeting; 30, 41, 39 and then they had a little bit of an uptick. That's the perspective she's coming from; it's just more

participation. Those are all the people that showed. That doesn't mean who voted yes and no. On the 57, she thought the split was somewhere around 30 yes's and that's a very small number of people to be voting on the appropriations. When you're in something like this, everybody approaches it for different reasons. That is a major driver in reason for her and also the timing. You have to be available, so she feels like it's exclusionary. You can only be there at 7:00 on Wednesday night after and if you're travelling there's no remote option, if you're ill there's no remote option, if you're at work. That's her own perspective of why she feels like this is important.

Chairwoman Wolf wanted to know if they wanted to do a straw poll. Mr. McLaughlin wanted to know if they needed a motion to vote. Mr. Brock thought it was just consensus; they're not establishing anything. They are providing guidance to the subcommittee. Mr. McLaughlin stated that they need to know which way to go. Chairwoman Wolf thought it made sense; it gives them context. Ms. Camarota stated that if there is a motion, she recommends they avoid the term SB2, not to limit themselves. Ms. Radke asked that Ms. Camarota repeat what she said. Ms. Camarota stated that they should avoid the terminology SB2. Ms. Radke wanted to clarify to call it official ballot and Ms. Camarota responded yes. Chairwoman Wolf stated that the question that was on the March ballot was, 'Shall a Charter Commission be established for the sole purpose of establishing official ballot voting under the current form of government.' What is interesting is when she did the op-ed in the beginning, she had said they were looking to recommend or not. She ran it by Mr. Brock and he pointed out, that was not actually their charter. Their charter is to be established for the sole purpose of establishing official ballot voting. She thought the question more was do you support, after learning the research, official ballot voting for the Town of Bedford or not. Mr. Lord wanted to know if Chairwoman Wolf equated official ballot voting as a proper noun that's tantamount with SB2 even though it's not stated as SB2; was that a term of art of official ballot voting. Chairwoman Wolf thought it was something that people use as a short hand, but it's not a legal and the question did say official ballot voting. From her understanding, when they talked to NHMA and the lawyer, there will be some nuance that the Charter has to take a look at to define that. She thought that they should at this using the definition that was on the ballot. Taking the temperature of the Commission, she wanted to know who was in support of establishing official ballot voting under the current form of government. Mr. Kerr wanted to know if they really wanted to do that before they start working on the report. He understands the purpose. Mr. Brock wanted to know how the Charter Subcommittee could begin to craft something without knowing what the sense of the Commission is. Mr. Kerr thought if there was dissent, it would come out on the 26th when they have the first drafts. Vice Chair Gleason wanted to know how they were going to get to a draft without consensus on the direction of the subcommittee. Mr. Kerr stated that they have a subcommittee and the consensus of the subcommittee will be in that draft. If the people that are not on that subcommittee have problems with it, they will see that on that day. Mr. Brock stated that then they would have the four person subcommittee making the recommendation. Chairwoman Wolf stated that the four person subcommittee should be doing the work of the whole Commission. Mr. McLaughlin stated that they were looking for direction from the nine of them to give the subcommittee marching orders. Mr. Kerr thought it was more along the lines of if they don't have enough people to pass, a consensus here of making a change, then there's no point in doing anything. He wanted to know what they were voting to say. Vice Chair Gleason thought he was absolutely right. If the will of the committee is not to do official ballot voting, then there is no need to go

through the process of forming subcommittees and doing all of this work. Mr. Kerr stated that if you flip that around, the devil is in the details. They might be all okay with the concept, but when it comes down to what is actually written in the report, he may not or may not agree with it depending on how it's written. Vice Chair Gleason responded absolutely, but she didn't think they could get to step two until they know if the will of the committee to do this and then they get into the weeds on the details and they figure out what makes sense and what doesn't make sense. If they don't have a will of the committee, she thought they were wasting time. Mr. Kerr stated that if anyone was strongly opposed to making any changes this would be the time to stand up say they don't believe in even investigating a possible change. Ms. Radke suggested taking a vote to establish the two committees and then once it all gets together perhaps take another vote. To agree to go ahead with the two committees, which she supports although she has issues with the whole thing, she is supportive of coming together with a committee and coming up with some options or coming up with some thoughts. Once it's all said and done, she may support or she may not, depending on what comes out of those subcommittees. Vice Chair Gleason wanted to know if they were assuming in forming the subcommittees that the subcommittees were tasked with drafting language that is supportive of official ballot voting, because if they're not making that assumption, she didn't want to put hours and hours of work into drafting to have the subcommittee just lock at an impasse and be like 'we don't even like official ballot voting.' Mr. Kerr thought that was a very valid question, but as they were saying, the charter of the Charter Commission from the ballot is to look at official ballot voting and that's what they should be doing. He didn't think there should be a vote now to say let's not do it. Let's do it, because that's their task; that's the task that's been given to them, to go down this path.

Chairwoman Wolf stated let's put the report aside, because she thought saying two subcommittees was mud in the water. Really, what is the purpose of the subcommittee, what is the work the subcommittee is going to do? Mr. Lord thought the task of the subcommittee is to crystalize the conversation so they can reconvene as a board and be able to actual crystalize the questions on the table. He agrees with Mr. Brock's point, otherwise they would probably need to be more deliberate in the way they allocate from nine down to four to vote and stack the committee; that would be silly. At the end of the day, he thought the subcommittee was actually supposed to crystalize the issue. He would say in a separate point, from hearing the discussion, there's some views that have been expressed. In the quick straw vote, he said no. Not because he thought that what they should do is leave the status quo, but because he's not in favor of SB2, which is why he asked the question about the term of art. He's not in favor of just adopting SB2 and statutorily inserting it. He thought there was a lot of opportunity for fine-tuning that's been expressed here that he thought was important. If that fine-tuning is not done and if people say what they ought to do is just adopt it whole hog, he'll vote against and say the status quo is probably better, just to state one person's still formulating opinion. If done right and they have the ability to find the right blend of balance of those sorts of things he thought there was plenty of opportunity for improvement. To him the question is not so much if it's SB2 or not, it's really about SB2 in its current form or SB2 something else, ballot voting, with some intentional modification around that. To him that would be a more crystalizing question. He didn't think there's anybody who says let's not be here and let's not contemplate some change. If there is he thought that's a good point. People should say 'I'm actually in favor of Town Meeting, leave it alone, status quo, if it ain't broke, don't fix it.' That's a good question to start with. Then you have a more nuance question, which

is to say modified or whole hog and then they have a debate around implementation of what those changes might look like. Vice Chair Gleason asked if anyone sitting there was wholeheartedly Town Meeting only. Chairwoman Wolf stated that if they are looking at what the question was, the point of this subcommittee is looking at how they modify the Charter for official ballot voting. That's is the purpose of the subcommittee. Based on what they've heard from all of us, that is the work of the subcommittee. Mr. Lord thought that was true too; he thought that was right. Otherwise, you'd have a Charter Commission that reversed it. Chairwoman Wolf stated that unless everybody was like 'no way, we're not going to do this.' Mr. Lord stated which could be an outcome, but he didn't think that's the way the thought process was thus far.

Chairwoman Wolf stated that they have two subcommittees that are going to go forward and do work, come back on July 26th. If they're going to circulate reports, those reports need to be shared with the entire committee through her and they would send them out on July 20th; no later than the 21st. They would also become public for everybody to take a look at, at the same time. Mr. Kerr wanted to know the times for the meetings. Chairwoman Wolf thought it sounded like everybody wanted to go with 7:00 PM.

c. Other New Business

5. APPROVAL OF MINUTES

a. Regular Meeting – May 31, 2023

MOTION by Mr. Brock to approve the minutes of the May 31, 2023 Meeting.

Ms. Camarota stated that on page 4, it says 5K population for Durham and then there was only 7K when you take the student population out. She thought it should be 15K.

MOTION by Mr. Brock to approve the amended minutes of the May 31, 2023 Meeting. Seconded by Ms. Camarota. Vote taken – Motion Passed–8-0-1 (Radke abstained).

6. ADJOURNMENT

MOTION by Mr. Brock to adjourn at 8:08 PM. Seconded by Ms. Camarota. Vote taken – Motion Passed – 9-0.

Respectfully submitted,

Dawn Boufford

Dawn Boufford

From: Terry Wolf <[REDACTED]>
Sent: Friday, July 21, 2023 1:44 PM
To: Dawn Boufford
Subject: Fwd: FW: Put the Budget on the Ballot

[External]

----- Forwarded message -----

From: Rick Sawyer <rsawyer@bedfordnh.org>

Date: Fri, Jun 16, 2023, 1:24 PM

Subject: FW: Put the Budget on the Ballot

To: Bryan Lord <[REDACTED]>, Jeff Kerr <[REDACTED]>, Kelleigh Gleason <[REDACTED]>, Linda Camarota <[REDACTED]>, Lori Radke <[REDACTED]>, Matthew McLaughlin <[REDACTED]>, Paul Brock <[REDACTED]>, Susan Labrie <[REDACTED]>, Terry Wolf <[REDACTED]>

Below please see the first message submitted to the Charter Commission email address.

Rick

-----Original Message-----

From: jay nash <[REDACTED]>

Sent: Friday, June 16, 2023 9:25 AM

To: Charter Commission 2023 <chartercommission2023@bedfordnh.org>

Cc: Lisa Nash <[REDACTED]>

Subject: Put the Budget on the Ballot

[External]

Folks,

Thank you all for the time and effort you have put into the Charter Commission.

Short version

I am writing you in full-throated support for;

1. The Commission recommending, in no uncertain terms, that the Town of Bedford adopt official ballot voting to approve its Town Budget 2. The Commission, regardless of its recommendation, allowing the Bedford voter to make the final decision regarding putting the budget on the ballot.

Thank you,
Jay Nash

Longer version

There are at least two-thousand-plus reasons for you to both recommend and put the decision to "Put the Budget on the Ballot" before the voters in March 2024.

That said, here are a few more reasons to do just that;

1. Thousands of voters show up the day before to vote on everything else, and bigger budget dollars to boot. Having a nearly \$40 million dollar municipal budget swing on the whims of 29 (51% of the 57 registered voter - including council members - who attended the 2023 budgetary town meeting) who can turn out in the evening borders on the absurd in modern America.

More people are needed to vote on municipal chicken raising ordinances, and do, than to approve our town budget.

Bedford should be finding ways to engage more voters, enable more voters, and bring this budgetary approval to more voters.

More voters show up on Tuesday for the ballot.

Put the Budget on the Ballot.

2. The current method of budget approval is outdated, insular, exclusive, and anti-democratic in every sense. Discussion and approval of the town budget, in the same meeting, both concentrates budgetary powers and limits the audience for this important fiscal approval by compressing the time and place for information and action into mere minutes - at night, after thousands have already been to the polls.

But adopting SB2 style balloting the budget is presented to the voter 30 days before an approval vote, plenty of time for all parties to educate Bedford residents on why a budget should pass or not pass.

3. Bedford has proved over two decades that ballot voting on a large budget is effective, representative, and engages the broader community.

See the Bedford School Budget process.

Despite "the sky is falling" predictions over 20 years ago regarding moving the school budget process to the SB2 ballot, the school budget process has proven effective in managing education budgets and outputs by any number of measures and engages demonstrably/objectively more residents/voters.

I ask the commission to formally recommend that Bedford adopt official ballot voting for town budget approval, and to do so by changing the charter with the least number of words possible.

Further, I ask that you put the decision to the voters (in the same vein that I'm asking for the budget to be on the ballot) regardless of your individual opinions.

Thanks again if you made it this far.

Jay Nash

The Right to Know Law (RSA 91-A) provides that Town email communications regarding the business of the Town of Bedford are governmental records which may be available to the public upon request. Therefore, this email communication may be subject to public disclosure.

Dawn Boufford

From: [REDACTED]
Sent: Friday, July 21, 2023 1:44 PM
To: Dawn Boufford
Subject: Fwd: FW: charter commission comments

[External]

----- Forwarded message -----

From: Rick Sawyer <rsawyer@bedfordnh.org>
Date: Mon, Jun 19, 2023, 4:49 PM
Subject: FW: charter commission comments
To: Rick Sawyer <rsawyer@bedfordnh.org>

From: Linda Gould [REDACTED]
Sent: Monday, June 19, 2023 2:21 PM
To: Charter Commission 2023 <chartercommission2023@bedfordnh.org>
Subject: charter commission comments

[External]

Dear Charter Commission member:

I thank you for the work you are doing.

I would like to say that I urge you to go ahead and have the issue put on the ballot so that the citizens of Bedford can vote on it.

Thank you.

Sincerely,

Rep. Linda Gould [REDACTED]

--

This email has been checked for viruses by Avast antivirus software.

www.avast.com

The Right to Know Law (RSA 91-A) provides that Town email communications regarding the business of the Town of Bedford are governmental records which may be available to the public upon request. Therefore, this email communication may be subject to public disclosure.

Dawn Boufford

From: Terry Wolf [REDACTED]
Sent: Friday, July 21, 2023 1:43 PM
To: Dawn Boufford
Subject: Fwd: FW: Budgeting by Ballot

[External]

----- Forwarded message -----

From: Rick Sawyer <rsawyer@bedfordnh.org>
Date: Wed, Jun 21, 2023, 3:08 PM
Subject: FW: Budgeting by Ballot
To: Bryan Lord <[REDACTED]>, Jeff Kerr <[REDACTED]>, Kelleigh Gleason <[REDACTED]>, Linda Camarota <[REDACTED]>, Lori Radke <[REDACTED]>, Matthew McLaughlin <[REDACTED]>, Paul Brock <[REDACTED]>, Susan Labrie <[REDACTED]>, Terry Wolf <[REDACTED]>

From: Phil Greazzo <pgreazzo@bedfordnh.org>
Sent: Wednesday, June 21, 2023 3:07 PM
To: Charter Commission 2023 <chartercommission2023@bedfordnh.org>
Cc: Rick Sawyer <rsawyer@bedfordnh.org>; Councilors <Councilors2@bedfordnh.org>
Subject: Budgeting by Ballot

Dear Charter Commissioner's,

Unfortunately I am unable to attend tonight but, would like my statement read and entered into the record.

The effort to end the budgetary town meeting is something that, I believe, should be vehemently opposed. Having dealt with budgeting as a New Hampshire State Representative, a Manchester Alderman, and Bedford Town Councilor, the process that I have witnessed that works the best, is our current practice here in town.

Of all the budgets and budget processes I have worked on, it is the most democratic and inclusive process that I have been a part of. Changing it to a ballot method in order to facilitate lazy participation is a huge mistake.

Let's use this proceeding as if it were a budget being prepared for the ballot. Here is how the process would work. Those that are speaking at the hearing would speak, for or against, until they are blue in the face and your legs go numb from sitting there so long. *Provided there is a line out the door waiting to speak. No matter how the "hearing" goes, something is adopted for a future ballot to be voted on. Let's say the members sitting in your seats are dead set on recommending an outrageous budget that everyone was against. That budget WILL go to ballot and be voted yes or no. It will not be amendable by anyone who votes. If it does not pass, a less offensive default budget is adopted. Nothing can be done by "the people" in order to override it and appropriate money where the taxpayers believe the money should go, or how they would like their money spent. Game over, better luck next year, or elect a different group of people in hopes of them doing as requested by the people who show up at the next budget hearing. However, they don't have to either and this process turns into a forgone conclusion each year and future budgets are now completely out of the control of the townspeople. All because the argument is that not enough people show up to the budgetary town meeting.

Well, more people show up to the budgetary town meeting than the number of those who show up at the budget hearings during the drafting process. Also, just because the whole town doesn't show up for the budgetary town meeting doesn't negate the fact that they could do so anytime they believe it is urgent for them to do so. A room full of community members concerned with the town's financial decisions is much better than leaving it solely up to only seven people. Forcing the town to only vote yes or no on such an important issue that they currently have direct input on, is not a better option.

The argument that the current vote on our budget is not representative of the voters, simply because less people vote at the budgetary town meeting than those who vote on the ballot, is not a legitimate one. Every voter is eligible to attend the budgetary town meeting, propose ANY alteration and vote anyway they so chose. Making it "convenient" does not make it better. In actuality, going to ballot only puts all budgeting solely in the hand of seven people and takes away the ability of an engaged community to determine its own financial future. It is less democratic, less inclusive, less representative of the people, and way more representative of a very small group of just seven people. A very small group who can choose to ignore any and all input to achieve whatever financial path that benefits their agenda and not necessarily yours. All because some are either too lazy, too unwilling, or too disinterested in the vigilance it takes to keep government spending in check.

Respectfully,

Phil Greazzo

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