

MINUTES OF THE REGULAR MEETING OF THE TOWN OF SUFFIELD  
CHARTER REVISION COMMISSION  
JANUARY 4, 2021  
7:00 P.M.  
VIA ZOOM TELECONFERENCE

**Members Present Via Teleconference:** Jerry Mahoney, Collin Seguin, Mark Winne, Chace Wessling, Jeff Greer, Beth Fanous, George Marion, Mark Winne, Terrence Plakias, Ed McAnaney, Mark O'Hara, Mike Haines, and James Mol.

Chairman Mahoney brought the meeting to order and began with the Pledge of Allegiance.

**Public Comment:** None. There were no members of the public at the meeting

**Approve 2021 Meeting Calendar:**

Discussion followed regarding potential future conflicts, but it was agreed that the schedule as it stands is workable and individual conflicts can be addressed as they arise. **George Marion** moved to approve the meeting calendar. **Colin Seguin** seconded. All approved.

**Discussion and approval of the minutes for the July 14, 2020 Special Meeting of the CRC, for the September 1, 2020 Regular Meeting of the CRC, and for the September 15, 2020 Regular Meeting of the CRC:**

**Mike Haines** moved to approve meeting minutes for July 14, 2020, September 1, 2020, and September 15, 2020. **Chace Wessling** seconded. **George Marion, Ed McAnaney** and **Mark O'Hara** abstained from voting because they were not present at these meetings. All voting members approved.

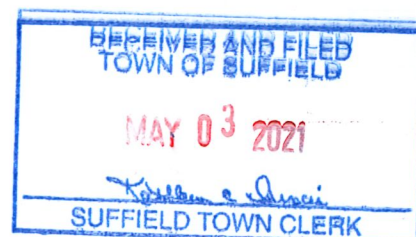
**Discussion and approval of the minutes for the September 29, 2020 Public Hearing of the CRC and the October 5, 2020 Regular Meeting of the CRC:**

**James Moll** moved to approve the minutes from September 29, 2020 Public Hearing and the October 5, 2020 Regular Meeting. **Jeff Greer** seconded. All approved.

**Remarks of former First Selectman and former Town Attorney Edward McAnaney and discussion of the same:**

**Mr. McAnaney** briefly summarized his background and experience as town attorney and former First Selectman. He said that the current town meeting form of government in Suffield has well served the town since its founding. The town meeting form of government allows for greater control by the residents of the town as the elected officials answer to town residents, whereas, the town manager system leaves decision making up to an unelected, and perhaps unaccountable body.

Mr. McAnaney said it has been his experience as town attorney and first selectman that there are experienced, proficient, and knowledgeable town employees who are available to assist the elected officials who may need it. He has observed other towns and how they run their business. He has found that the town manager system creates more upward pressure on the town budget. Our current system of government encourages and requires more town resident involvement, instead of passing decision making off to a town manager.



**Jerry Mahoney** asked Mr. McAnaney about the potential elimination of boards and commissions under a Town Manager style of government. **Mr. McAnaney** said we have not had a hard time getting residents to volunteer for these board and commission positions. Mr. McAnaney said that in his view resident participation is better than ceding authority to an unelected town manager. He said that while there can be hiccups, they tend to be of a political nature rather than operational.

**Beth Fanous** asked about a prior speaker's comment regarding that an increased salary for a town manager position as opposed to the current salary structure for first selectman opens the door for a more qualified candidate. **George Marion** noted that the town is only presented 2 candidates for the first selectman position and wondered whether we really getting the best people. **Mr. McAnaney** observed that the candidates for first selectmen generally have been well qualified and the town has been well served by them.

**Mr. McAnaney** said that in his view there are 2 potential types of town managers that present concerns for the Town. The first is a town manager who is using Suffield as a stepping stone, who uses the opportunity to implement projects to pad his/her resume. He felt that can be an expensive proposition for the town. Alternatively, you end up with a long term town manager, where over time the town manager tends to run everything. The town council caters to what they know will be in line with the town manager's wishes rather than providing independent oversight.

**James Moll** asked for Mr. McAnaney's thoughts on a longer term for the first selectman position. **Mr. McAnaney** suggested 2 years may be too short, but 4 years may be too long. He suggested a 3 year term.

**Mike Haines** asked how long it took Mr. McAnaney to get up to speed as First Selectman. **Mr. McAnaney** said it didn't take long because of his previous experience as town attorney. To the extent he had questions, he had the experienced staff and board of selectmen to help him.

**Colin Sequin** asked whether the length of time a town manager remained with a town was tied to the salary. Mr. McAnaney said that it varied. He noted that Granby's town administrator has been there for 20 years. Others may move on more quickly because of greater salary opportunities.

**Mr. Mahoney** said the WPCA was scheduled to present at the next meeting would be January 19, 2021.

**Mark Winne** suggested reaching out to Bob Skinner as a potential speaker.

**Mike Haines** motioned to adjourn. **Mark Winne** seconded.

All voted in favor.

The meeting was adjourned

Respectfully submitted,  
A. Chace Wessling  
Secretary