

**Town of Hooksett
Charter Subcommittee Meeting Minutes
Wednesday, March 8, 2023**

1
2 The Hooksett Town Charter Subcommittee met on Wednesday, March 8, 2023, at 5:00 in the Hooksett
3 Municipal Building.

4
5 **CALL TO ORDER**

6 Councilor Sullivan called the meeting to order at 5:00 pm.

7
8 **PROOF OF POSTING**

9 Councilor Sullivan provided proof of posting.

10

11 **In Attendance:** Councilor James Sullivan, Councilor David Boutin, and Councilor John Durand
12 Staff Support: André Garron and Wendy Baker

13

14 ***D. Boutin motioned to appoint Councilor Durand as Chair of the Charter Subcommittee.***
15 ***seconded by J. Sullivan.***

16

17 ***Vote in favor 3-0***

18

19 Chair Durand – I like the chart that was put together showing comparable communities and in looking at
20 the information, I would still like to go down to 5 members with a minimum of 3 to have a meeting.

21

22 D. Boutin – pointed out that on the list, all of the City and Town Councils were at 7 or 9 members.

23

24 Chair Durand – The majority on the chart have 5 members.

25

26 D. Boutin – Those are Board of Selectmen, but the City and Town Councils are 7 and 9 and some are
27 even larger.

28

29 Chair Durand – What is the different between a Selectman and a Councilman? I think it's just a title.

30

31 A. Garron – I don't believe there is a difference, the statute uses the term Selectmen and Council has
32 the same powers and authorities as Selectmen.

33

34 D. Boutin – It's a form of government and we are a Council form of government not a Selectboard.

35

36 J. Sullivan – Suggests we get more information regarding what a Council form of government versus a
37 Selectboard form of government is. I was thinking 7 members for two reasons, the School Board
38 recently went from 5 to 7 and the number of Subcommittees that we have currently might make it hard
39 to have members sit on them.

40

41 D. Boutin – I would like to draw everyone's attention to the voting district map where 2,000-2,200
42 people is the amount in each district, which is a manageable number and if you reduce the Council to 7
43 then you will increase each district size to about 3,000. I would have a concern about that and would
44 be inclined to keep the Council size at 9 because it works well.

45

46 Chair Durand – I do not believe it works well. Meetings go on forever because there are 9 personalities
47 in the room. I feel we should eliminate the districts, they were brought in for one reason and I believe
48 that doesn't exist anymore.

49
50 D. Boutin – Why would you get rid of districts?
51
52 Chair Durand – because they don't serve any purpose. People can call you from any district and they
53 were only created for one reason.
54
55 D. Boutin – What was that reason?
56
57 Chair Durand – When condos were built in one area of town, people thought that specific area could
58 run the town. Now we have the same people on the Council year after year and we need new blood.
59 This year all three seats are running unopposed.
60
61 J. Sullivan – I am inclined to eliminate districts too or have fewer. I have heard there is a benefit to
62 lessen the paperwork of the Town Clerk and the Supervisors of the Checklist.
63
64 Chair Durand – I have no problem going to 7 because you made a valid point about the other
65 attendance on Committees and Subcommittees and maybe we look at does every committee still need
66 to exist.
67
68 D. Boutin – How are you going to explain to the voters that you think reducing the number of Councilors
69 from 9 to 7 is going to make this town government better?
70
71 Chair Durand – To get more interest in more people running and the stipend could be raised.
72
73 D. Boutin – You need to justify it to the voters.
74
75 J. Sullivan – So far we talked about three possible changes to the Charter, #1 Do we need Districts?
76 There is an impact on the Supervisors of the Checklist and the Town Clerk and need a clarification from
77 them what the benefits would be to not have them. Confusion of the Voters. #2 Reducing the number
78 of Councilors for various reasons. #3 Whether to increase stipends or not as well as do we want to
79 change the start time of the term to earlier versus July.
80
81 D. Boutin – I would ask both of you to look at the list, the majority of them do not have wards or
82 districts. I personally would not have a problem eliminating districts but would have a concern with
83 reducing the number of the Council, the 9 members are very representative of the Town. Each
84 Councilor has a reasonable number of constituents. However, I personally don't have a problem with
85 the districts.
86
87 Chair Durand – I would be satisfied with 5 members and no districts.
88
89 D. Boutin - If you go to 5 then you have over 4,000 people in the district.
90
91 Chair Durand - Those numbers don't mean a thing. I'm not worried that I represent 2,300 people, I
92 could represent 14,000 and it doesn't matter who calls which Councilor.
93
94 J. Sullivan – It looks like we now have some agreement on eliminating districts. This would help out the
95 Supervisors of the Checklist.
96
97 Chair Durand – and it would allow new people the opportunity to get into a seat.
98
99 D. Boutin – I don't mind getting rid of the districts but I want to keep the number of Councilors because
100 that gives better representation of the people that live in town.

101
102 J. Sullivan - Before we move it to the Council, we would want to get public input. I would be inclined to
103 get feedback from the Supervisors of the Checklist
104
105 D. Boutin – In all the elections I’ve attended I’ve never heard any election official complain about the
106 districts. I would support eliminating the districts and keeping the number of Councilors at 9, that way
107 the people are fairly represented. I think 9 works, I have never seen a problem with 9 working in this
108 Council.
109
110 Chair Durand - Goffstown has 18,000 people and 5 Selectmen. They don’t have 9 and they have a
111 bigger population.
112
113 J. Sullivan - Tonight should just be some general thoughts before we agree to anything and want to get
114 public input before we make any decisions.
115
116 Chair Durand - I would like information on what other towns offer for stipends.
117
118 A. Garron – Part of the reason we are here is to help the Council get more information you need to
119 make the decision. Our understanding is that this subcommittee was put together to look at reducing
120 this council from what it is now to a lesser amount.
121
122 D. Boutin – No, that is not what this committee was put together for. Where is that charge cited.
123
124 A. Garron – That was at a previous Town Council meeting. My thought was the subcommittee would
125 examine all the parameters on what you are looking to do and based on that information, make a
126 decision.
127
128 D. Boutin - We need the town election people to come in and discuss it with us in two weeks and have
129 the Town Administrator send an invitation to them.
130
131 It was decided to have the next meeting on April 12th at 5:00pm and invite the Town Clerk and
132 Supervisors of the Checklist.
133
134 J. Sullivan – We want to get their input on districts or no districts and how it would impact them.
135 Quorum numbers need to be looked at too and potentially change it to a majority instead of a super
136 majority.
137
138 D. Boutin – I would like to request that the Town Administrator supply us with a copy of the minutes of
139 the motion of the set-up of this subcommittee, so we can all understand what we were charged to do.
140
141 J. Sullivan - And we would like more information on the difference between a Council and Selectmen
142 form of government as well as the difference between a Town Manager and Town Administrator. Also
143 provide more information on the stipends.
144
145 A. Garron – the charge of the subcommittee made on October 12, 2022 is as follows: to establish town
146 subcommittee to review the possible charter change on reduction of town council membership, district
147 changes and other.
148
149 **ADJOURNMENT**
150
151 ***D. Boutin motioned to adjourn the meeting at 5:43 pm. Seconded by Chair Durand.***
152

153 **All in favor 3-0**
154
155 Respectfully submitted,
156
157 *Wendy Baker*
158
159 Wendy Baker
160 Executive Assistant