

**Town of Ferrisburgh
Special Meeting/Hearing
April 17, 2017**

In attendance: Select Board – Loretta Lawrence, Chair; Jim Benoit, Rick Ebel, Steve Gutowski, Michael Muir

Visitors: Diane Nadon and Gloria Warden

Loretta Lawrence, Chair, called the meeting to order at 6:32 pm.

Loretta started the meeting by stating the purpose of this 2nd warned hearing was to discuss the proposed Municipal Charter. She stated that the selectboard is required to hold two, warned hearings, and a warned town-wide vote by Australian ballot.

The process of adopting a charter starts at the town level with the voters approving the charter. If approved by the Ferrisburgh voters, the charter will then be presented to the Vermont Legislature to be approved. After being approved by the legislative body, it is then recorded at the State level.

Each town is governed by Vermont State Statues. Municipal charters allow towns to deviate from the statues so they fit the needs of each individual town. Ferrisburgh does not have a municipal charter. The State of Vermont does not have any recording of a municipal charter in the records. However, Ferrisburgh does have a land charter which gives the geographic boundaries. The municipal charter that is being proposed is very specific. It establishes a municipal charter and also addresses two positions in the town – Town Clerk and the Town Treasurer. Appointed persons in these positions would be treated as employees, subject to reviews, personnel policies, set hours of work, and subject to federal employment and other laws.

Public Comments

Diane Nadon asked the board what was the reasoning for pursuing a town charter. Loretta Lawrence stated that this past year, in particular, has been very difficult in regard to the office of Town Treasurer. The former treasurer was not showing up for work on a regular basis. The bills were getting behind. Deposits were not being made on a regular basis. Bank accounts were not being reconciled. The treasurer's performance was less than adequate. Penalties were coming from the IRS, Social Security Administration, and Vermont Dept. for taxes for lack of filings by the former Treasurer. These penalties are still showing up since March, 2017. The board could only set the treasurer's pay. The board could not set the treasurer's hours. The treasurer was only held accountable by the voters. The board felt helpless in regard to having any accountability from the former treasurer. The former treasurer did not answer to the selectboard. Loretta stated that this was the main reason to pursue the proposed charter. Jim Benoit also stated that our outside, professional auditor, recommended pursuing a town charter. Rick Ebel stated that the board felt that a charter would protect the town in the future. Rick also stated that appointees would not need to be town residents and the charter would also allow for a greater pool of applicants.

Diane also asked about the financial impact of having a town charter. Loretta stated that the only impact would involve benefits to appointed officials. The new budget has incorporated these costs for next year. Plus, the new town treasurer will be 20 hours/week as of July 1, 2017 and will not be eligible for the benefit package, which will be a savings to the town.

The board reminded everyone that the town-wide vote will be held on Thursday, May 11, 2017, from 7:00 am – 7:00 pm, by Australian ballot, here at the Town Hall.

Meeting adjourned at 6:55 pm.

Respectfully submitted,
Rick Ebel, Board Clerk