



Town of Ridgefield

Form of Government Committee Approved Meeting Minutes Meeting of May 12, 2025

1. Call to Order

The Form of Government Committee meeting convened at 7:00PM on Monday, May 12, 2025 in the Town Hall Main Conference Room.

Members present: Laurie Christiansen, Michael Rettger, Jonathan Seem, Charles Robbins, Todd Zagorec, Rachel Sondheimer, Robert Hendrick, Steve Zemo, Dennis Tracey

Members absent: None

2. Public Comments

None

3. Minutes of the April 28, 2025 Meeting

Motion to approve the minutes of the April 28, 2025 meeting, as amended, by Mr. Rettger, seconded by Mr. Hendrick. All in favor. Ms. Sondheimer and Mr. Hendrick abstained, as having not been present at the prior meeting.

4. Potential Conflict of Interest Discussion

Motion by Mr. Hendrick that Mr. Rettger be authorized to participate in the discussion of any Town Meeting changes relating to the Board of Finance, pursuant to Section 11-9 (3) of the Town Charter. Seconded by Mr. Tracey. All in favor, Mr. Rettger abstaining.

5. Work Plan – Final Report

Members discussed their comments on the several sections of the committee's draft report that had been developed and circulated for review prior to the meeting. Mr. Seem questioned the inclusion of recommendations concerning shifts in legislative authority, as he did not feel this had been agreed to. Members noted that the draft was based on the "straw-poll" discussions of the prior meeting, but agreed that given the stage of work on the draft report, it was appropriate to consider and vote on formal motions for the substantive recommendations to be contained in the draft.

After discussion,

Motion by Mr. Zemo to include in the Committee's draft report the discussion of proposed shifts in town legislative authority between the Town Meeting and the Board of Selectpersons, as contained in the draft report under review at the May 12 meeting, subject to certain changes that were discussed. Seconded by Mr. Tracey. Vote 7-2 in favor, Mr. Seem and Mr. Robbins opposing.

The suggested changes to this section were to include an additional recommendation for transfer of authority regarding sale or leasing of town buildings and property, specific mention that the changes would require modifications to the Town Charter to take effect, clarification that the item regarding off-cycle requests for additional budget appropriations should distinguish between petitioned requests, which would go to Town Meeting vote if not approved by the BOS and the BOF, and those initiated by town departments, which would not, and adding more commentary on the rationale for the proposed changes.

After discussion,

Motion by Mr. Zemo to include in the Committee's draft report the discussion of proposed changes in the conduct of Town Meetings regarding voting procedures, as contained in the draft report under review at the May 12 meeting, subject to certain changes that were discussed regarding electronic voting methods. Seconded by Mr. Tracey. All in favor.

The suggested changes to this section were to specifically recommend the elimination of voice-only voting at Town Meeting, and requiring either show of hands and/or physical balloting, and adding a specific recommendation that the town actively investigate the use of electronic voting systems for use at Town Meetings.

After discussion,

Motion by Mr. Rettger to modify the proposed authorities shifted from the Town Meeting to the Board of Selectpersons, as previously approved at this meeting, so as to pertain only to acquisition of land and buildings for use by the town by purchase or lease, and to eliminate language relating to the sale or leasing to others of town property, from the previously discussed changes. Seconded by Mr. Hendrick. All in favor.

After discussion,

Motion by Ms. Sondheimer to include in the Committee's draft report the proposal to change the schedule of Town Meetings to occur regularly on a scheduled basis, either quarterly or every fourth month, as contained in the draft report under review at the May 12 meeting. Seconded by Mr. Seem. All in favor.

After discussion,

Motion by Mr. Rettger to include in the Committee's draft report the proposal for the town to establish the position of Town Administrator/Chief Operating Officer, as contained in the draft report under review at the May 12 meeting, subject to certain changes that were discussed. Seconded by Mr. Robbins. All in favor.

The suggested changes to this section were to include a specific recommendation that the town should retain the model of the First Selectperson as the elected chief executive of the town, clarify the suggested timing of creating and hiring the Town Administrator/Chief Operating Officer position, and add several points to the rationale discussion of this section.

The members reviewed the section drafted by Mr. Tracey regarding the Town Charter implications and effects of creating a Town Administrator/Chief Operating Officer position. It was agreed that this material should be merged into the prior section regarding this position, rather than be a separate, stand-alone section of the draft report.

6. Communication

Mr. Zagorec discussed the communication from Mr. Marconi's office regarding the availability of high school interns to assist the committee. Mr. Zagorec and Ms. Christiansen will follow up on several ideas suggested by members.

Members reviewed the timeline for completing the committee's draft report. Changes discussed at this meeting will be completed and circulated to members in advance of the May 19 meeting, where reactions and further modifications will be discussed. The committee will plan to vote on adoption of a final version of its draft report at the June 2 meeting, after which the draft will be circulated to the public for review prior to the scheduled public hearings in June.

Ms. Christiansen discussed her recommendations for development of a short presentation of the committee's report for the public hearing and for preparation and distribution of an information flyer to publicize and promote turnout at the hearings.

7. Adjournment

Motion to adjourn at 9:13 PM by Ms. Sondheimer, seconded by Mr. Seem. All in favor.

Submitted by
Michael Rettger