

# *Town of York ~ Charter Commission*

## **Public Hearing Minutes ~ August 2, 2010**

**Present:** Kinley Gregg, Helen Rollins Lord, Torbert MacDonald, David Marshall,  
Larry McKenna, Leon Moulton, Mike Quinn, Peter Smith

**Absent:** Wendy Starkey

- Chairman Dave Marshall called the hearing to order at 7:05 p.m.
- The chairman opened the hearing with the following comments:
  - ~ This hearing is being held in accordance to state law and our current charter.
  - ~ A “charter” is basically the “constitution” of a town.
  - ~ Our current charter is slightly over 20 years old.
  - ~ Our previous form of governance was a “town meeting” form.
  - ~ There are many possible outcomes of this commission’s activity ranging from minor “tweaking” of the existing charter to recommending an entirely new form of governance.
  - ~ As local examples of the variety of small town governance, Kittery and South Berwick both currently have a town council and town manager.
- The hearing was opened for public comment which included the following:
  - ~ I don’t believe that any change is needed.
  - ~ Please keep the Budget Committee as-is.
  - ~ The “process” is the most important issue.
  - ~ While considering the current charter, invite current and prior department heads and board members to comment (e.g. School Committee, Parks & Rec.).
  - ~ I like the town meeting format, but it has obvious problems....in particular, it’s difficult to get many people to speak up....you tend to hear from the same folks again and again.
  - ~ We need to facilitate meetings in a way that draws people out....we need to experience the “wisdom of the crowd.”
  - ~ Perhaps we should promote “focus groups” to learn new ideas.
  - ~ The current charter works/our government works...we just need more and better public participation.
  - ~ I like “citizen’s petitions” as a way to get ideas considered.
  - ~ As for the Budget Committee – the selectmen are way too busy....they don’t need more work.....keep the Budget Committee.

- After initial public comment, a description of a recent independent citizens focus group session provided the following:
  - ~ Representatives of influence groups such as church groups, civic clubs, etc. were invited to attend.
  - ~ All interested citizens of York were also invited.
  - ~ Everyone was asked to submit questions or topics.
  - ~ Attendees were split into small groups to address selected questions/topics.
  - ~ Resultant suggestions/ideas were forwarded to whichever town authorities could best address them.
- Further suggestions were proposed regarding the use of current-day communication technology (such as FaceBook or Twitter) to improve public participation in our commission's efforts.
- Chairman Dave Marshall reminded attendees of the following schedule:
  - ~ Second Public Hearing – Monday, August 16<sup>th</sup> at 7:00pm in the YPL Town Meeting Room (not televised)
  - ~ Next regular meeting – Thursday, August 26<sup>th</sup> at 7:00pm in the YPL Town Meeting Room (televised)
- Chairman Dave Marshall continued the public hearing to reconvene on Monday, August 16<sup>th</sup> at 7:00pm and ended the meeting at 8:10pm.

Respectfully submitted,  
Peter Smith, Secretary