

Charter Commission Minority Report

Minority Report: A committee report written by at least two members of a committee to officially state a position counter to the committee's majority.

The Charter Commission, by a 6-3 vote will present to the voters in March 2011, a Warrant Article to establish "Ballot" voting. This followed a 3-2 vote by Town Council to place the issue on last years ballot.

With that vote, comes a major change in how voters will decide all warrant articles. Supporting this recommendation will do away with the Town Meeting voting process in place for the last 300 years.

All warrants and the budget will be on the ballot for the second Tuesday in March, and there will no longer be the traditional Town Meeting held on Saturday.

As part of this change, a "deliberative session" will be established, like the School District presently has. A quorum option was restricted from consideration by the majority.

Will more voters become involved?

Will more people now have a say instead of the few hundred that show up on Saturday?

Will it be better?

Those are questions voters need to consider.

Before we make this change, we must consider what we are changing and why. We shouldn't change just because we don't want to participate on Saturday and vote on everything Tuesday. Our obligation to ourselves as well as the rest of the community doesn't end with just casting a vote. We should know what we are voting on, and even be part of forming that article if possible, even join in the debate at Town Meeting if we question something.

Saturday Town Meeting is a part of our history, and has guided us to the great town we are today.

Confusion with SB2, What is Ballot Voting

Even some commissioners are confused with the changes proposed. Londonderry is not changing to a SB2 voting town, the majority is proposing a change to our existing charter. "Will the voters change to official ballot voting."

A clearer and less misleading statement is "Will the voters change the form of government from town meeting to a deliberative session with final voting on a selection of two budgets default or proposed in the ballot booth."

The ability for Deliberative Sessions to disenfranchise voters

New Hampshire Assistant Secretary of State Kevin Scanlin spoke to the commission in public session about the "Pro's and the Down Side" of Deliberative session.

While all registered voters can vote in the voting booth Mr. Scanlin indicated, "Participation Decreases, Active Minority Groups form, warrants, budgets and special petition articles are modified when towns change to SB2 (ballot voting.)" He elaborated on the confusion caused by the ability to change the wording of the articles to have only two words in them. An example used was a question on the ballot could be changed to "To see" from a understandable description of what was to be presented to the voters.

Further, it is known that the minority groups at deliberative session also have the ability to change the wording or alter agreements bargained in good faith with the unions. A single change to these contracts would render them useless and eliminate the ability to present them to the voters for ratification.

Active minority groups take away the selection intended to be presented to voters, crafted by Town Staff and Elected officials in the thousands of hours leading up to deliberative session. Voters will disengage from deliberative session since "all the voting is done Tuesday" in the voting booth.

The Two budget selections vs. Unlimited Choice

Ballot voting has the advantage of presenting the budget to the voters in the privacy of the voting booth. The unfortunate result of selecting this method of voting is, the budget is limited to two selections. Council (or Deliberative Session Recommended) or Default. It can be expected that if the delta is small, the voters will feel "cheated" and unable to provide input or changes in the voting booth as they can in Town Meeting. It can also be expected if the delta is large (over the default number) the default will be selected. If the number is low (under the default number) and services will be dramatically affected the higher default number will likely be selected.

Official Ballot voting in this case eliminates the ability to modify the budget as is done on the floor of town meeting today. Participation increases but the voter is only given two choices.

Public Review of Quorum options eliminated by the Charter Commission

The Charter Commission by majority vote eliminated and disallowed any further discussion of the option of a quorum in the process of constructing the official ballot changes. This was even voted on to restrict reconsideration of the issue in that meeting or future meetings.

The intent of the Charter Commission was to look at all options and possibilities as they related to ballot voting. What would be included in official ballot voting, and how it would be implemented? To disallow analysis, conversation review and possible

consideration of quorum options artificially restricted the open environment intended for the best possible solutions.

While the Majority of the Commissioners will argue that a quorum is illegal, our own local school district has had a charter form of government in operation for over a decade. The school district charter has been presented to the Attorney General, Secretary of State and Department of Revenue on three separate occasions for review. The quorum has been affirmed by the responsible government entities.

How Many Will Show to Form the Ballot

Arguments were made that 200 attending town meeting was not sufficient to determine the direction of the Town of Londonderry. Then shouldn't the argument be made that unless over 200 people show up for the deliberative session those changes should not be moved to the ballot? Another reason given for the change was absentee ballot voting. With a deliberative session in place those same individuals will not have input on what moves forward, still reducing their ability to participate in the process.

Respectfully submitted by the Charter Commissioners Minority.:

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