

**Cumberland County Charter Commission**  
**2/25/09**

Meeting in Feeney Conference Room, Cumberland County Courthouse

Members Present:

Claude Morgan (co-chair), Lisa Villa (co/vice-chair), John Eder, Steve Gorden, David Lunt, Richard Feeney

Members Absent: Meredith Burgess, Kathleen Babeu, Neil Jamieson

Others present: Elizabeth Trice, staff, Peter Crichton

**Minutes**

Feeney, Eder move to accept minutes from 1/8/09, passed unanimously  
Lunt, Gorden move to accept minutes from 1/15/09, passed unanimously

**Public Notices**

Morgan: statutes require 10 day public notice for public hearings. We are encouraging as much public attendance as possible. We can meet under public meeting laws that requires only 7 days. At public meeting the public has a right to be at the meeting but not necessarily a right to speak. We have met the statutory requirement for the first public hearing.

Meeting notifications must go out for any public meetings with three or more commission members. For these small workshops, subcommittee meetings, and meetings with public, notices could be less stringent, for example, a mailing list to press outlets, placement on website etc, and not necessarily require formal notices in Press Herald, which is the paper of general circulation.

We are not required to videotape, but all notes and materials are part of the public record. The county will also make sure that all meeting notices are emailed to all other local publications.

**Oaths of Office**

Feeney: Some charter commission members received documents to take oath of office, others have not. He has submitted names, and requested that documents are sent out. Oaths must be administered by Dedimus Justice.

**FOIA Requirements**

Morgan wants to see that members have met the FOIA requirements by next month. He will send out link to online reading and certification. Members should send copy of certification to Elizabeth Trice and also keep a copy for self.

**Nomination and Election of Commission Secretary**

Secretary is required by statute, is "holder of keys", handle any FOIA requests, also do work as treasurer (which is not required by statute).

Feeney, Morgan nominate Steve Gorden, he accepts

Lunt, Eder move to cease nomination, unanimous approval.

### **Public Comment I (no public present)**

- Elizabeth will work with subcommittee to create online submission form /public comment page
- Request to make charter commission easy to find from county home page
- Request to make charter commission website easy to find via google.
- Request to get cumberlandcountychartercommission.com

### **Meeting Times and Schedule**

Lunt- doesn't want to meet on first Wednesdays or first Tuesdays

Gorden- Many meetings occur the first week of the month.

Babeu sent written request for meetings starting after 4:45 pm.

Villa- agrees with meetings starting at or after 4:45. Wednesdays are best, Tuesdays and Mondays don't work.

Morgan- evening hours are better for public and also for his schedule.

Most towns councils meet Mondays or Tuesdays.

Wednesdays may be difficult for Neil Jamieson.

Agreement set up Doodle survey for Wednesday or Thursday evenings either 5-7 or 6-8, any week but the first week of the month, starting with March 18, 19, 25, or 26.

If new time can be found, March 5 date will be used for subcommittee.

Feeney, Villa make motion to table meeting schedule to next meeting. Passed unanimous.

### **Outreach Subcommittee**

John Eder: John met with Claude, also Peter Crichton and Elizabeth.

Sees three distinct processes: meetings with voters, meetings with elected officials, and full group meetings moving around the county.

Also envisions commission members meeting with editors of local newspapers to tell them what we're doing and what input we are soliciting from voters and elected officials.

Believes that conversation with elected officials and voters are two different conversations, and would like to have district commissioners to do outreach with selectmen in town separately from large group meeting in different locations throughout county, and separate effort to meet with voters directly.

John is planning to update town meeting schedule so that members can make pitch at towns meetings- could be table at back of hall with email sign up list.

Meetings with voters would be charette style to educate about what the county currently does and solicit information about their thoughts for the future. Outreach subcommittee would do this and report back to the full commission.

Possibility of working through Sheriff Dion's connections to schools, and reaching out to older students who may be able to vote on the charter.

Meetings would be May and June, and continue again in September.

Steve Gorden: concerned that we will begin public conversations without clear and consistent message.

John: We talked today about a simple fact sheet that could explain what the county is and frame the question for soliciting input.

David Lunt: agrees that there needs to be a consistent “cheat sheet” or outline to speak with selectmen or public.

Elizabeth: Can draft of language be done by subcommittee, or approved by email, or needs to come back to full group?

Gorden: Group needs mission. Then strategy, then break into groups and move forward. Wants to involve public, but not before we have a framework. It will take at least an hour of concentrated work by the group. I envision that the charter creates the framework, and does not have the content. Including content increases the involvement of interest groups. Content should be determined by the set political process with the commissioners.

Villa: The previous charter commission did a lot of work. Why did it fail?

Crichton: The 2003 vote was whether to establish a charter. The vote in 1984 was a very long time ago. There was a lot of attention from the Press Herald in 2003 focusing on what county government could do if it got bigger. People are not interested in bigger government, they are interested in better. The framing of what you are trying to accomplish is important. My opinion is to have a better County Government that meets the needs of the 21<sup>st</sup> century.

Feeney: the 2003 vote language was confusing, referring to “New Charter”, and many people voted for people to be on the commission without voting for the commission itself.

Morgan: Let’s throw possibilities on the table.  
There are some elected positions that could be made professional.

Gorden: Can charter let County Commissioners make that decisions?  
It would be good if a charter commission wasn’t necessary again; how much authority can we delegate to County Commissioners?

Eder: it will build good faith to take even our beginning questions to public. We will hear a broad spectrum of ideas. I think we can expect to be ready to speak to voters by May.

Lunt: Some people say that they don’t like the county, but can’t say what they don’t like. Would feel comfortable if we have some good questions to get them going.

Eder: we may need a longer workshop to develop language, mission, strategy.

Other methods of Outreach:  
Legislative county caucus  
meet with commissioners  
sub-regional coalitions  
COG  
High school classes

create way for schools in general to participate- create lesson plan that teachers could use, presentation during public input part of selectmen's meeting  
record spot on local cable and distribute to be played over and over again.

Meeting with editorial board.

Connect to peer leaders, including town clerks

Weekly release to local papers with questions so they know we're working on it. Ask "Should there be more commissioners? Why did previous charter fail?"

Eder: suggests workshop on mission, "what we are and what we're doing" and also continue to shape proposal for outreach.

The "hook": "Once in a lifetime opportunity to shape government"

Materials for website: election results

Morgan: subcommittees may be premature, can wait until mission has been crafted.

Eder: Thinks subcommittees are valuable, especially steering committee. Anyone could come to subcommittee meetings.

Gorden: Can meetings be conducted online?

Morgan: If we're having substantive conversations online, we are denying the public the ability to observe.

Trice: It may be possible to have an online forum that where all conversations would be visible to public.

Question: can we do video conferencing?

Questions for legal counsel:

Can we create a charter that empowers County Commissioners broadly, empowers them to perform the structural change that the Charter Commission is currently attempting?

Can we empower the County Commissioners to amend the charter?

How far can we conduct conversations online, and how?

Does county have control over all revenues?

Gorden cannot attend 3/5/09, the other commission members present can.

Adjourned 5:58

Next meeting 3/5/09