



The Town of Barnstable

Comprehensive Financial Advisory Committee (CFAC)

367 Main Street, Village of Hyannis, MA 02601

v. 508.862.4654 • f. 508.862.4717

www.town.barnstable.ma.us

CFAC Committee:

Chairman:

John Curtis, Chair

Members:

Bill Brower
Laura Cronin
Ralph Krau
Tom Michael
Jim Sproul
Stanley Hodgkinson

Staff Liaison:

Mark Milne

Councilor Liaison:

Richard Barry

March 12, 2009

Town of Barnstable Charter Commission:

Richard W. Clark, Chair
Sue Rohrback, Vice Chair
Bob Jones
Sheila Geiler
Lucien Poyant, Jr.
John Alden
Deb Shiflett-Fitton
Royden Richardson
J. Gregory Milne

Dear Chairman and Committee Members,

As a follow up to our last meeting, and subsequent letter with accompanied requested documentation, CFAC is requesting reconsideration of inclusion into the new Charter, by the Commission.

This request is made to ensure that the citizens of Barnstable are afforded effective and responsible financial oversight. Inclusion in the Charter document secures that oversight for its citizenry, and cannot be disbanded or neglected, unless voted out by their vote.

There may be many people in Town who do not understand the importance of this request, or how it differs from where we are today. Our hope is to take this opportunity to educate the voters, highlight the changes we are requesting, and let the public decide how to support it.

History of CFAC:

- A Financial Oversight Committee was written out of the last accepted Town Charter Amendment in 1989; and the financial advisory process was moved to the Administrative Code of the Town. It was to be made up appointed residents and a member of the Town Council.
- It took three years after that for the then sitting Council to form what is now the Comprehensive Finance Advisory Committee (CFAC).
- Since then, over the past 17 years, there have been many challenges CFAC has had to overcome to be included in the budget discussions, or receive adequate direction from the Council or Town Manager. Many members resigned, and posts were vacant for long periods of time. This was due to the lack of support and commitment to provide direction, have their recommendations be heard, and/or receive timely information to allow the committee to execute its task effectively.

Comprehensive Financial Advisory Committee

- Today, we have seven members with two vacancies. We are made up of retired and working residents, from a broad spectrum of businesses with strong business experience.
- Over recent years, CFAC has accomplished many tasks, has seen relationships with the Council and Town Manager improve, and have had some of their recommendations incorporated into the budget.
- Presently, Town Manager's Staff have been very supportive, providing assistance, getting us access to information and participation in the CFAC meetings. However, for whatever reason, Town Council has not.

CFAC Today:

You might ask "if we are improving today, why do we need to change?"

- Today, this advisory committee could be disbanded, and exclude residents from participating in the review and oversight of the Towns budget process. With a \$149m budget (\$126m General Fund), and no elected Chief Executive, the citizens lose their voice to hold Town leaders accountable for spending.
- CFAC has no participation in reviewing for recommendation, the Enterprise Funds budgets (Airport, Golf Course, Water, etc.). These funds expend approximately \$24m/yr without financial oversight from any advisory committee.
- In our previous letter to you, Dated 2/12/09, we outlined 4 Main points we recommended that CFAC responsibilities should be changed going forward:
 - Be an Oversight committee in the development and recommendations to the Town Manager and Town Council of the Long Range Planning.
 - Be an oversight committee in the development and recommendation to the Town Manager and Town Council regarding Capital Improvement Plan.
 - Be an advisory role for the Town Departments and School Dept. budgets, with the CFAC recommendations included with the Town Manager's report to the Town Council.
 - Be included in the list of Town Council's appointed committees, within the Charter, so it cannot be dismantled without Charter Review, and residents vote.
- And 6 specific areas within the Charter we recommend to be included.
 - Section 6-1 Annual Budget Policy – *CFAC should be a participant in the meetings and review process related to the Town and School Budgets, before they are drafted to the Town Council. (Including Enterprise Funds).*
 - Section 6-2 Submission of the Budget - *The Budget Message should include the report of CFAC; and all financial recommendations of CFAC will be disclosed and discussed by the Town Manager in the Budget Message.*
 - Section 6-4 Supplementary Budgets and Appropriations – *Any supplementary budgets and appropriations must be reviewed and approved by CFAC.*
 - Section 6-5 Capital Improvement Plan – *The Capital Improvement Plan will be jointly developed by the Town Manager and CFAC, with all capital budget recommendations disclosed and discussed by the Town Manager in the CIP Budget Message.*
 - Section 6-6 Long Term Financial Forecast – *CFAC recommended the Long Term Financial Forecast to be shortened from ten to five. CFAC recognizes this has been proposed in the New Charter.*
 - Section 10-7 Time of Taking Effect - (k-(3) – The Town Council shall appoint: **Note: This section lists all of the boards and commissions.** *At the time of the last Charter review was voted in, CFAC was not in existence. Three years after the Charter, CFAC was created and appointed by the Town Council. This section is where CFAC is looking to be included so that it remains in force and is not subject to disbanding until it can go through the Town Charter review, and be voted on by the residents.*

CFAC Tomorrow:

- With the proposed Town Council President in your present document, nothing changes with the budget accountability or oversight. There are no checks and balances to hold the Town Council or Town Manager accountable. We need the grass roots representation of the citizens in this process. Inclusion in the Charter solidifies this, and let's the voters decide whether they want to exclude this process.
- As we mentioned earlier, in the last accepted Charter in 1989, the financial oversight (made up of Selectmen and residents) was written out, but with the understanding that it would be replaced, would not change its core nature or responsibility, and would be a working partnership with the Town Council, Town Manager, and residents. In the past 17 years it has not been that, and the citizens of Barnstable are the one's who suffered. We tried it through the Administrative Code; it isn't effective. Let's put it back in the Charter.
- These changes would be minor tweaks to your present document, but creates a major difference to the Town of Barnstable residents. It gives them the assurance that someone is representing them in overseeing the spending of their tax revenues.

In our last meeting, your Commission requested examples of Towns in Massachusetts with a City form of government, like Barnstable, to review how they handle their financial oversight process. We previously provided you a list of the other 10 Towns in the Commonwealth that fit this profile. We have since updated this list with a little more detail, indicating their Executive and Legislative structure, what they have for financial oversight, and how it is administered (*see attachment*).

As I am sure you've discovered through your own research, which is also clear on our list, there is no consistency or set pattern to follow. There is no State regulation governing how the individual Towns handle their financial oversight. It is left up to the Towns to make the best decision to provide effective financial oversight for its citizenry. We have this opportunity today, to make it better, and more effective, by including CFAC in the Town's Charter, not in the Administrative Code.

I want to thank you again for your time, and I, and the other CFAC members, are available to answer any questions you may have. Residents can learn more about CFAC by going to the CFAC link on the Town website at www.town.barnstable.ma.us.

Respectfully Yours,

Laura Cronin
For the Comprehensive Finance Advisory Committee

Attachment: (1.) Updated Cities Examples

cc. CFAC members