

HOLMDEL CHARTER STUDY COMMISSION

MEETING MINUTES

THURSDAY, FEBRUARY 3, 2022

7:00 PM

CONDUCTED ON A VIRTUAL BASIS VIA ZOOM

Call to Order

Open Public Meetings Act Notice

I hereby announce that pursuant to Section 5 of the Open Public Meetings Act that adequate notice of this meeting has been provided in the notice, which was sent to the Asbury Park Press, the Two River Times, and posted on the bulletin board in Township Hall and filed in the Township Clerk's Office on December 28, 2021.

Roll Call

Chairman Kin Gee, Vice Chairman William D. Kastning, Commissioners Janet M. Berk, Gerald Buffalino and Special Council Kevin Starkey were present. Commissioner C. Zachary Gilstein was absent.

Pledge of Allegiance and Moment of Silence

Chairman Gee: Can you please stand for the pledge of allegiance and remain standing for a moment of silence to honor our troops both here and abroad that work tirelessly to protect us each and every day.

New Business

Chairman Gee: Before we go into the public hearing, is there any new business from any of the commissioners? Seeing none, I see we have quite a number of people that are participating tonight. For the benefit of anyone who's new to our meetings, the Charter Study Commission mandate is to study our current form of local government and to consider a new charter or improvements to the present charter. It is important to make the distinction that the mandate is to study and explore how we can improve our form of local government. It is not the mandate of this commission to make an analysis or review of the operations or policy of the current government. If for some reason you are not happy with a specific action or decision of the current or past township committee, this is not the venue to voice your comments about that unless you believe that our current form of local government is a direct cause or is a significant contributing factor. On the other hand, you might believe that the current government is working well, but you still want to change the form of government. An example might be that you believe that the mayor, as the official that represents Holmdel Township, should be directly elected by voters. Our current form of government does not allow for that. In broad terms, our plan is divided into three phases. The first phase is to study our current form of local government; second

phase we explore alternative forms of local government and the third and final phase is to deliberate and make decisions for any recommendations. So far, in our first phase, we have interviewed six former elected officials that have served on a township committee, which is the current form of government. Five of the six individuals are Republican and one is Democrat. Four of those six were former mayors and one was deputy mayor. Collectively, they served more than 50 years on a township committee, including 22 years as mayor. The format we conducted was to ask a series of questions about the various characteristics that define our form of local government. We have had good discussions with our guest speakers and we received valuable insight and information and we will provide a high-level recap at a future meeting. During those discussions, and because elections on the township committee form of government are on a partisan basis, we heard a lot about a local municipal committee called the county committee. We extended the invitation to the chair of the Holmdel Republican County Committee and the Holmdel Democratic County Committee to come before the commission so we can learn more about the county committee, its role and how it impacts candidates getting elected to serve on the township committee. Only Barbara Singer, Chairwoman of the Holmdel Democratic County Committee, accepted our invitation, and we spoke with her at the last meeting. In addition to the elected officials, we also invited and spoke with Holmdel Township Administrator Cherron Rountree. Tonight, we're holding our first public hearing, because we also want to hear from the public. If you look at the bottom of your screen, you will see an icon that looks like a hand. If you click on that we'll know that you wish to speak. When you are called, please state your name and address for the record.

Betty Rauscher, 36 Blue Hills Drive: Good evening, first I'd like to say thank you to the commission volunteers who are working on this study. I'm sure that what we're witnessing is only a portion of the energies being spent, and my thanks, also, to the guest speakers who have given their own time for our benefit. They have been providing good insight and food for thought. As a registered Republican, I appreciate the Commission's obvious efforts to provide the public with a balanced set of views. Several ideas being offered deserve some serious consideration. For instance, I am in favor of the idea of a directly elected mayor and I really like the idea of moving to non-partisan elections at the local level in Holmdel. I feel that today, local votes often simply follow along the party lines. That's not healthy for Holmdel. I wish that the first two ballot columns did not so much influence the results for local candidates. Non-partisan elections in Holmdel would encourage votes to be based on a local candidate's own merits, not a party name. Further, non-partisan local elections would attract a wider range of qualified local candidates. The Holmdel Township Committee voted in favor of forming this study commission. Subsequently, the Holmdel voters endorsed its formation. This gives us a unique opportunity to explore the bigger picture. At this point, we should encourage the Commission in their work, and if the Commission does propose recommendations for public question, the public will then have plenty of time for healthy debate. Thank you so much for this opportunity to speak.

Sheila Gilstein, 11 Chardonnay Drive: I believe that the mayor should be directly elected. I believe that non-partisan elections are the way to go; it's time to have fair equal elections. We need to bring back home rule for Holmdel. Holmdel is often being controlled by a county as for who can be a candidate. Many good candidates cannot run due to this county control, and because Republicans have the first line in the ballot, they are always controlling the election as much as possible. This should be remediated by a lottery for candidates, and that lottery should be what order they appear on the ballot. I believe that elections should be every two years, and be during a non-presidential year, so people don't just vote down the line, that they need to think who would be the best candidate. We need

representation from people, which are from our town, who really know the issues. I believe that we should change from five to seven members, because we need more representation. The two-party system with independence is no longer working for Holmdel. It is time to change and bring back home rule. Thank you.

Commissioner Kastning: I would just like to, for the sake of transparency, indicate that Sheila is the spouse of one of the commission members; not that it matters. She has the right to speak, but I think we need to make that point.

Lee Meyer, 3 Sheffield Place: First of all, I want to thank you all for what you are doing. I think this is tremendously important work, and I think it will be of great benefit to all the people of Holmdel. Thank you for taking the time to volunteer to do this; I do appreciate it. I also want to say, just concurring with some of the other people who spoke tonight, I deeply believe we should have a directly elected mayor. I think that it would remove any conflict of interest and I think it would also make the mayor directly accountable to the people of Holmdel. I also think we should consider making the mayor, if possible, a salaried position, one in which the person could be a full-time administrator who would be free to perform the duties of mayor and serve the community, and there would be no conflict of interest between any work that they may have to do on a personal basis and they could dedicate themselves full-time to the role. I also want to concur that I think that Holmdel has become somewhat overrun by divisive partisan politics, and I think it is not serving the community and I do agree that the election should be non-partisan. I think there is a conflict of interest, and I do believe that very often, what is best for people's political parties is not necessarily best for the community at large and I think we can remove that by making it a non-partisan election. One thing I want to add is the possibility to be considered that citizens of Holmdel, in the future government in whatever form it takes, have the right to petition for an initiative or a referendum, and if the requisite number of signatures is collected, that the government will be required to put forth to the public as a public referendum or an initiative on possible regulation or even laws relating to the community. Thank you very much.

James Yanello, 18 Ladwood Drive: I want to thank all of you for the work you've done. I'm really impressed with some of the comments everyone has made and I concur. I do believe residents should be able to petition if there's a big problem. We have different issues in different sides of the town and a lot of times various constituents get up, they complain and everyone goes "thank you for your comments." I mean that has frustrated people all around this town; people should be able to petition. I do believe the residents should be able to directly elect the mayor. I think that'll work out some years for some people and it won't work out other years for other people, but I do think overall residents should directly elect the mayor. But most importantly, I think we really need to be non-partisan and I've said this before at town meetings. It's time for Holmdel to run Holmdel; it's time for Holmdel to take over Holmdel from regional partisan politics. As most of you know, I'm a pretty devout Republican, and one would think a devout Republican in pretty Republican Holmdel would be all for the current form of government, which is substantially run by regional Republicans. I'm not. I'm not because I've seen some of the candidates they've put up and stuck behind with wicked conflicts of interest and wicked troubles. I've seen where independents, including some of my friends, have been put on the ballot time and time again. I've seen sign placements during the final days of elections by the regional party. What has been done to the signs is a total disgrace if not a crime. We are not debating immigration in Holmdel; we're not debating abortion; we're not debating second amendment; we want what's best for this town. So while I'm a devout Republican, I am not for whether it's a Democratic controlled party or a Republican

controlled party; I'm for what's best for Holmdel. This is long overdue; it's time we do this; and anyone standing against this really has a lot to convince this board and the rest of the public. Thank you.

Tom Wood, 20 Heather Hill Way: First of all, thank you very much to the members of the commission who are putting in an awful lot of volunteer time to think about the best for the future of our community and we really appreciate the time that you put in. I would say that I'm largely in agreement with the comments that have been made by the public thus far. I certainly think we should switch to a system that allows us to directly elect the mayor. The current situation is rife with the opportunity for backroom deals, whether that's actually what happens or not, it certainly has the appearance of the ability of having backroom deals on who becomes the mayor. I can't think of a major city or state or town, outside of New Jersey, where the leader is not directly elected by the people. It seems to me that fundamental aspect of democracy should be that we elect our leader, and the mayor is clearly not only an equal to his or her peers, he is the leader of the township and we should elect him. I really think we should definitely look seriously at making the elections in town nonpartisan, we have a tendency to allow outsiders to influence the election in ways that seem inappropriate to me, and I don't see any reason why we should cede the control of our own town to larger groups. I particularly like the idea of changing the system so that we're not electing leaders in every presidential and congressional year, I like the idea of switching the elections to off years, plenty of large offices hold elections in off years and that's partly to insulate the candidates who we're looking to elect from being tied to larger issues beyond the town. I just want to say, I like a lot of these ideas and thank you very much for the opportunity to speak.

Commissioner Buffalino: I just want to ask the participants my own question about directly electing the mayor. No one has said this, but do you feel the mayor should have more power, voting strength on the committee, if so directly elected.

Mr. Wood: I would.

Jane Zysk, 6 Lucarelli Drive: I do believe the mayor should be directly elected by the voters. I'd like to see much more representation of the people in town. I do not feel that good candidates are given the opportunity to appear prominently on the ballot and I do believe that elections should be nonpartisan so that the people of the town are represented by people who they wish to be represented by. Thank you.

Regina Criscione, 35 rambling Brook Drive: I do agree that we should have nonpartisan elections because both Republicans and Democrats will have to stick to the issues instead of the support that they're getting from their parties. The question about the mayor, I'm happy that Mr. Buffalino brought it up, because that's what I was thinking about. If we directly elect the mayor, I would assume he would have more power in a different type of government and that kind of concerns me, because if we get a mayor who is not a very good mayor, it might be a problem, so I would want us to have a directly elected mayor only if the power is spread out across the whole township committee. I do like another person's suggestion earlier of adding two more members to have seven members on the township committee instead of five. Thank you.

Francine Campus, 2 Country Squire Lane: I've been listening to all the comments, and first of all my appreciation to you all; I do appreciate your efforts. I do agree with the mayor being elected directly, and I know Mr. Buffalino had asked if he should have more power and I say "no." I think it should stay

the same with the equal power, because if, unfortunately, a mayor gets elected that is not a good mayor or he has viewpoints benefiting certain parts of town, we don't have leverage there to have other members have important input on it. I don't think he should be paid a salary. One reason could be higher taxes, but more importantly, I think we would limit who would be able to be mayor, because it would have to be somebody that would be willing to do a full-time position and I think we're going to limit who could be elected. I think it is a problem that we don't have non-partisan elections, and I've seen it myself where the county controls the placement on the ballot, which is wrong because we know a lot of people go into a booth and vote by party name and they go straight down or they look at the first two columns. My only question to the committee is, have you looked at different sized towns that are similar to the size of Holmdel and their form of government, because Holmdel is not that big of a town and what would work best for this size town that we're in?

Chairman Gee: Right now, at this stage we're in Phase One; we're trying to get input on the township committee form of government, and we're trying to fact gather, and in Phase Two we will be looking at alternate forms of government. I think we'll be putting the cart before the horse a little bit, but also, we need to really understand and gather what we think is best for Holmdel, and then I think we can proceed from there.

Ron Emma, 32 Ladwood Drive: I'd like to echo all the comments prior to this. Thank you for your time and efforts on this committee, it's well overdue, it's needed, and also, to the guest speakers who are also very informative. I got engaged in local issues because they're local and they affected us and my community. I've been a lifelong Republican; I got involved with Holmdel because of fire safety, open space at Cross Farm Park and at the risk of sounding like sour grapes, I decided to run, actually, for township committee, twice. I lost both times, but that's neither here nor there, but I just wanted to point out and, make no mistake, someone from outside of Holmdel is deciding who gets the most favorable position on the ballot. As somebody mentioned earlier, it's local issues; it's not abortion; it's road paving; it's snow plowing; it's open space; it's not anything to do with partisan politics on a county, state, or national level. So, I ran, and I didn't even get a sniff, a call, an interview, a peek into what I was all about from the local Holmdel Republican Committee. The party bosses made their decision and I ultimately ended up in one election on line seven, which is, in other words, political Siberia and then in the second election in column five. So for me the big takeaway as far as partisan elections, I am obviously for nonpartisan elections. Make no mistake, people in Holmdel are not deciding the position of the ballot or maybe who the best candidate is to run; it is being run by the county bosses and they have the say and that person almost always wins because of the position on the ballot. I also don't think we should have elections every year because everyone is probably sick and tired of all the lawn signs every year, so I would be against elections every year. I don't think the mayor should have more power; I think they should be elected directly, but I think it should be a collaboration between all township committee members. I also like the idea of the public referendum question; there's been some issues in the past on major issues, whether it be a recreational issue about fields; it might be a tax issue or PILOT, major, major economic issues that face the town that you'll see sometimes, potentially, a vocal minority will come out to the township meetings, and it seems like it is again an overwhelming support for one issue or the other. But if those issues were put on the ballot to the whole citizenry, I think the outcome would be much different because the vocal minorities tend to come out in force at these meetings, but if it was an issue big enough and we could put it on a ballot and people were concerned enough to get it on the ballot, then let everyone vote on it. So, I think putting a public referendum on the ballot is a

really, really good idea, but again the takeaway for me, partisan versus nonpartisan, it just doesn't make any sense that somebody that doesn't live in our community is deciding the position of the candidates, so I am totally for non-partisan elections. Thank you for your work, I do know how much time and effort it does take to do such a commission that you guys are doing, so thank you.

Mike Sockol, 6 Wild Hedge Lane: I have kind of a unique perspective in the fact that I've run in both partisan elections and nonpartisan elections, and there is a very distinct difference in those two types of elections. One of the advantages of a non-partisan election, and I guess in some ways you would say a requirement in a non-partisan election, is you have to appeal and reach out to different people across different political positions because what we're talking about with the school board races is it's less politically driven and more issue driven, and I think the same thing would happen if our township elections operate in the same fashion. I remember, almost 20 years ago, telling Larry Fink after Janet had won her election on the township committee that this was the right time to start talking about non-partisanship now that you guys are in control. So I am pleased to see that we're discussing it; I myself am a big supporter of it. I think that the issue about a mayor being elected directly it's important for the public to understand, and I hope I've interpreted the Faulkner Act correctly, that the role of the mayor would be radically different than the role the mayor has now. The mayor would play more as a veto power position than an active participant in all the discussions while the rest of the board would act more like a legislature. I'll need some clarity if that's actually true or not, but the one question I did have for the group, I had heard that based on the Faulkner rules there was only one type of government that was allowed to be non-partisan and that type of government did not allow for direct election of mayor. So I was kind of curious if that's true or whether or not we do have the flexibility of being both non-partisan and for those who wish to elect a mayor directly they could do so.

Chairman Gee: As I said earlier, we divided our work into three phases, so second phase is where we explore the different alternatives. Your question is about the Faulkner Act, so I don't want to jump the gun because we are going to have people who actually really knows this and understand this come in and give us some presentations. I would ask you to stay tuned because there are people smarter and know more about this that will come in and talk about this, but the short answer is, I believe that your impression is not correct so we'll just stay tuned and we will all get educated

Mr. Starkey: I agree we're going to have an extensive discussion, I think at the next several meetings, on Faulkner Act options, but just to state and answer that gentleman's question, the nonpartisan election format is available for all forms under the Faulkner Act, so it's not just limited to one particular form; it is available pretty much across the board.

Mr. Sockol: I appreciate that clarity and maybe a good time for a correction. I'm certain you will come up with the right solution with the rest of the commissioners around you. The one thing I did want to add to is, one of the problems about us not being a non-partisan environment is I think it has a chilling effect on a lot of people wanting to participate in committees and other activities where they don't wish to be identified with one party or another, but they're not going to get pointed to these positions unless they raise their hand and say they're one party or another party. So, I think that if we went to a nonpartisan form we'd find greater participation, especially since almost half of our populace really identifies themselves as independents. Thank you.

Chandana Rao, 5 Seven Oaks Drive: I wanted to just sort of echo the other points that earlier speakers had made, namely that I'm also in favor of directly electing the mayor. I do believe, to respond to Mr.

Buffalino's question, I think that the direct election is important. I also feel that it's not unreasonable to expect a directly elected mayor to have more power, but I feel that there was a concern that more power might be problematic depending on the mayor that we elect. But perhaps if we can put certain checks and balances in place that would counter any sort of power grab that may be made by the directly-elected mayor. I'm also a fan of a non-partisan local government. I think, as others have also specified, our interests are not fairly reflected by certain candidates. We have very particular local interests that are specific to Holmdel. I mean as a Holmdel resident I care about open space; this is why we moved here. I care about Bell Works and making it more robust and more accessible to Holmdel residents during the week, as well as things of that nature that are very specific to Holmdel. And so I feel that this hopefully will undercut any sort of influences that outside party bosses, for lack of a better phrase, have in our elections. Lastly, I'm not supportive of local elections every year. I think that if we elect folks to the town council, I feel at least two years is important for them to actually do substantive work and to show some substantial change, if you will, or substantial effort. If we're electing folks every year, then I think that we're not going to see real change, and I think the goal will be for reelections. Thank you.

Ralph Blumenthal, 41 Stony Brook Road: Thank you for this opportunity to chat with you folks about what's a very important issue for the future of Holmdel. I have comments on a number of different aspects and since I'm not a legal expert and I don't know what exact combination of these different features can be put together for a form of government, I'll just take them individually at this point in time. I'm a long-time Holmdel resident; I've been involved with township matters for many, many years and also, previously was a member of the board of ed and president of the board of ed, so all of my experience is really here in Holmdel. So I can primarily comment on what I've observed with the forms of government we have here and I'm much, much less familiar with what happens elsewhere. First, and most important, I believe, and I've had this opinion for easily 20 years, that it's very beneficial if we switch to a non-partisan form of government. As people have already mentioned, the fact that people who don't live in Holmdel can control who's on the ballot and that is totally inappropriate. Also, I found that the reason why some people are affiliated with one party or another has absolutely nothing to do with what goes on within Holmdel. National and State level issues are why people tend to be democratic or republican. That's not how you run a police department or snowplow or things like that, and again, as Mr. Sockol's comment of having run in the board of ed elections, as well as in the township, it's far more appropriate that people run on their own. They aren't labeled on the ballot and you have to stand on your own two feet. That doesn't mean there can't be groups or clicks supporting one or another candidate, but they won't be so labeled on the ballot, and so you have to identify yourself, your positions and when someone votes, they vote for you as an individual on that ballot. I was concerned when they moved the board of ed elections from April to November that it might get politicized, but I don't think it has. It's a separate piece of the ballot with all the names in random order and you've got to know which person stands for what thing so it's, I think, a far better approach for a local election. I've seen too often in the case of the township election, that a lot of people, when having gone door to door campaigning, haven't a clue who the local candidates are and what they stand for, and they pull one column lever. They vote based on their national affiliation and, hence, just because a particular person has a R or a D in front of their name on the ballot, they vote that way without really knowing what that person stands for and you can lose a lot of good people that way. So, I absolutely strongly feel that nonpartisan is the way to go. Another issue is the number of people on the township committee; we currently have five, we've had five for many years. I've had experience with five

member groups, seven, nine, for example. The board of ed is nine, planning board's nine, zoning board is seven, and I think for Holmdel, more than five, in particular, I think seven, would be very appropriate. We've seen how over the last few years, the fight between a two and a three, one or two people can stand up and make a much bigger scene and create issues. It's much harder if you have a slightly bigger group for one or two people to thwart the majority. On the other hand, you don't want the group to get so big, too big a group becomes unwieldy in other ways. So, I would suggest that it would be an appropriate step, as the town has gotten bigger over the decades, that a township committee of seven would be appropriate. Direct election of the mayor, and this, as much as anything, is I think a question of checks and balances. I believe the current setup, where no one person can dictate anything, is appropriate. The township committee, the mayor chairs the meetings and has a little bit more authority than the others, but the reality is it's a committee of five or seven that together has to come up with the policies, and then you have a professional manager dealing with the actual operations. I think that's a good balance. The question then is, should the public simply elect one person as the mayor and that person for say a three- or four-year term? Holmdel is not New York, but look what certain mayors have done in New York; it's been a disaster. You get one person in for two terms and that person has so much authority they can dictate how the schools are run, how the police department is run, and I think typically when you vote, you vote for who you think is going to be best, but a person may not end up being and acting like you voted for. They may be different and with a direct election of a mayor for three to four years, I think, would create the potential for more problems. Some people aren't happy with the mayor rotating around, but I believe it's worked here in large measure. There may have been a couple of instances where a mayor may have stepped out of bounds, but there were processes for balancing that and the committee pulling back. Whereas with a more authoritative mayor, with the direct election, that wouldn't be the case. The fact that it changes from year to year, I don't have a problem with that, I think it's worked. You have to have at least the majority of the township committee supporting you and working together with you, to become the mayor. Wards or districts, I think, some you know there are different sections of town, we have differences; however, compared to say any larger city, Holmdel is smaller than the wards in most cities as an entity. I'd be concerned that it would be divisive. The way it is now, people run to be on the township committee, to work for all of Holmdel, not just for a part of Holmdel. Yes, different parts of town may have different issues, such as flooding in one part of town, but I think that's getting the township committee's attention, and just recently they adopted a new stormwater study to look at the thing globally. So, I think that you could lose good candidates by restricting the voting to "you vote just in your own district", and I think running to represent all of Holmdel, as we have been, is an appropriate step. Last, in terms of the terms, I think the three-year staggered term has worked pretty good; that always means you've got somebody that's new, but you also have somebody who's been there for a couple of years with experience. The same has been true of the board of ed; they've done it with three-year staggered terms and the same holds true for planning and zoning; they have staggered terms. So every year there's a bit of turnover and change, or the potential for it, but that provides, I think, a good blend and a two-year term is pretty short. On the other hand, six years, as we have for the US Senate, is pretty long. So, whether it's three or four, just something in that time frame gets a person to get on board, to get their feet on the ground and become a good, productive member of the group, would be appropriate. Those are my separate thoughts on those separate topics; whether you can put them all together in one can of options for a vote next fall, I'm not sure what is all permitted under the Faulkner Act, and I look forward to following some of your upcoming meetings where you will explore what the different options are. Those are the comments I

made notes on; I don't know if there's any other items that you would want me to comment on, but I guess thank you very much for this opportunity to speak with you and comment on my opinions, my observations of what's been going on in Holmdel over the last 30 or 40 years.

Nancy Cagliostro, 214 Pebble Beach Court: First I want to say thank you to the committee, and anybody volunteering on the part of our town deserves kudos that you're contributing. Thank you. A couple of things briefly. Elections every year, I think elections are a distraction to the government of the town, candidates on the township committee would be busy canvassing for any new candidates, it's a disruption and it's costly and I don't really see a benefit to elections every year. As far as direct election of the mayor, I could see that, but with no additional power to that mayor. I think Mr. Blumenthal brought up some good points on that, and as far as a salary for a mayor. You all of you do things for free; I'd like to think the mayor would be still willing to do it for free; salary puts a different lean and tilt on the whole job of being mayor of the town. As far as members going to from five to seven, we're a township of only 17,000 plus or minus people, we're small; more than five I think you start splitting votes, I just don't see the benefit of any more than five and I think the way that we run it now, and this goes back to my point of no extra powers for the mayor, you've got five people having an influence on the town. As far as the elections, I think they should be nonpartisan. I think the fact of a party controlling the candidates as much as they do is wrong, but I also have to ask a question. I know the committee is looking at different forms of government because a lot of people are tired of the order of the candidates on the ballot. I don't know how changing our form of government helps that. I think that's a problem in and of itself that needs some solutions directly for how that gets done, the order of the candidates on the ballot, and I don't think changing government, electing directly mayors or anything helps that problem and that is a very big problem. I think that's it; I don't want to take up too much time. A lot of things have been said and I thank you

Chairman Gee: I actually would like to have a follow-up question for you and just wanted to clarify what exactly do you mean when you say order on the ballot, can you just clarify that for me please?

Ms. Cagliostro: The placement on the ballot of the names.

Chairman Gee: So, you're talking about the columns.

Ms. Cagliostro: Yes.

Chairman Gee: Okay, thank you.

Commissioner Berk: Mr. Starkey, could you kind of explain that? I know we're not talking about other forms, but if there's a question about how it would work differently, could you explain that?

Mr. Starkey: I think the question was whether we could change the way the ballot is set up, and the short answer to that is that under a partisan form, which Holmdel has now, the township has no authority to change what the ballot looks like. That's decided by State law and by the county clerk. You've all seen it, it's typical, it's Column A and Column B, one is Republican, one is Democrat and then any other candidates that are not the Republican or Democrat are out on the far ends of the ballot. If Holmdel or any municipality has nonpartisan elections then those candidates are on the same ballot, but they are not in Column A or Column B, or usually even C, D or E. They are off in their own section of the ballot and the candidates on those slates, they can bracket themselves so, in other words, I believe they can put themselves together but they cannot be on a partisan section of the ballot, so it's a separate

section where they're lined up. The Board of Ed elections will have that, where they're not under a specific Democrat/Republican banner;, they're off to the other side of the ballot. Does that answer the question you were asking?

Commissioner Berk: It would be like the Board of Ed where there wouldn't be separate columns. They would be basically underneath each other even though they will be grouped.

Chairman Gee: I appreciate Mr. Starkey's knowledge on this topic because he has been involved with a number of towns on partisan and nonpartisan, but again, we're probably putting the cart before the horse here. We will be, and I think that's part of Phase Two, talking with officials from those other towns about whatever the forms that we'll be looking at and we'll be looking at all the options.

John Krystofik, 10 Old Manor Road: First of all, I'd like to start out with thanking the commission for all of your work and it really takes a lot to volunteer for something like this. In listening to everyone else, I'm a novice here in Holmdel. I'm here eight years and the form of government is alien to what I've experienced in my life, but that being said, I'm learning a lot and listening to what previous speakers have said. There's certain things that I like. I like the concept of nonpartisan elections so that people are getting elected based on the quality of what they have to say and what they represent as opposed to whether they have a particular symbol next to their name. I like the direct election of the mayor. I like the ability to have petitions by the voters put on the ballot. I like the idea of seven members on the township committee. Somebody mentioned that we're a small town, and while that may be true, I've been on boards of directors of much smaller organizations where the number of people on the board was larger; we had 12-15 people on the board and it worked perfectly fine. I'm in favor of term limits. I'm also in favor of some form of checks and balances on the power of any particular individual. So, how you guys work that out and what you come up with I imagine it involves some further study on that. Also, the issue of positioning names on the ballot, that's a concern to me too because in one of the previous elections somebody that I wanted to vote for was off in Never Never Land, and unless I was diligent in really looking for that individual, it was hard to find. Again, I think positioning is important, the order is important; there's a lot of voters who are uninformed when they go into the election box and they just vote one way and that's it; they check all the boxes, so that's important to me as well. Going back to some of the earlier comments, some people said that we should be focused on local issues and I agree there's a lot of things that are local that are key, but how someone views certain national issues speaks to their character, and I look at that in terms of not only what they may say to me "well we're going to come and we're going to pave your road" and that sounds good, but it may be contrary to them saying "well I believe in following the law most times." So, I think some of the national issues are important in terms of developing a person's character. So, thanks again.

Chairman Gee: This has been very informative, so with that I want to thank everybody for attending, listening especially, those who raised their hand and provided input. This is our first public hearing and the main purpose is to get the input from folks like you and we heard quite a bit and we really do appreciate it. We will be transitioning, at some point; it won't be a clean break because sometimes scheduling folks are not the easiest, but we will probably continue a little bit with Phase One which is the study of the township committee. At the same time, I think we're at least ready to bring in some people who are very knowledgeable from the academia side to talk about, educate us on the public about the various forms. I know there's some impressions of how it works, but it really does depend on which form of government and within each there are options, whether it is partisan or nonpartisan,

directly elected or not directly elected and so on. Please stay tuned; we look forward to you joining us; I think the future meetings will be very informative.

Chairman Gee asked if there were any other business or comments from the commissioners; there were none.

Commissioner Kastning offered a motion to adjourn the meeting, seconded by Commissioner Berk. A voice vote confirmed all in favor.

Respectfully submitted,

Bonnie K. Thomas – Holmdel Charter Study Commission Secretary