



**FROM THE DESK OF MICHAEL HANLON  
MEMBER OF COPC, PF1ST, TMM PCT 15 &  
LEADER OF THE DRIVE TO PUT THE CHARTER  
ON THE BALLOT.**

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Now that the dust has settled from the May 15th town election, it is time to reflect on what could have been done differently. The outcome of the election could be considered a “win”, since the original, and only, goal of the Plymouth Charter Transition Committee (PCTC) was to get the charter commission question on the ballot. We did that. This was truly a team effort, a grass roots effort, by many dedicated and hard-working volunteers. The charter commission ballot question passed overwhelmingly by a vote of 3878 in favor (78.2%) to 1084 opposed (21.8%). That election result, by any standard, is an overwhelming mandate for change.

However, it does not feel like a “win” for the obvious reason that six out of the nine elected Charter Commissioners have expressed their desire to keep the representative town meeting form of government. They call themselves “Citizens for a Better Plymouth”. They want to “chart a new course for Plymouth”. They want to “modernize it for the 21st century”. All of this is just so much smoke and mirrors. Their real goal is to preserve the representative town meeting form of government, which they have been a part of for many, many years. And, they would be at risk of losing their power in local government if it was changed to any other form but the current one.

By state law PCTC was not allowed to propose, support, or campaign for candidates for the Charter Commission. Over the past two years we asked ourselves many times, “who was the opposition?”. We never had a good answer to that question, because there did not seem to be any organized opposition. If opposition developed over time, we expected that it would be in opposition to the ballot question, and would urge voters to vote “NO” on election day. It was surprising then, when the so-called Citizens for a Better Plymouth came out from hiding and identified themselves by name in the OCM and in a last minute postcard a week before the election. Their brilliant and effective strategy was not to oppose the ballot question, but to support candidates that would do little or nothing to change the form of government.

All of this flies in the face of the 7200 registered voters that signed the petitions, and the 3878 registered voters that overwhelmingly supported the charter commission ballot question on election day. What was further disappointing, and is indicative of the total lack of interest by the voting public in their town government, was the turn-out of an abysmal 11.9% of the registered voters on election day. Notwithstanding the low voter turnout, I would argue that there is a significant mandate for change in Plymouth just based on the number of voters that willingly signed the petitions, and the 4 to 1 margin of victory of the ballot question.

The first goal of the newly elected Charter Commission should be to listen to the citizens of Plymouth regarding what they want from their town government. The Commission is required by state law to hold public hearings so that the voters can be heard on the issue. The real question is – will the voters speak at all? Will they come out to the public hearings, if in fact they even know about them, and express their desire for change? I fear not, because the only people who pay attention to these things are the political class of individuals in Plymouth who typically follow town politics.

This will be your opportunity to express your point of view directly to the Charter Commissioners and the public listening on PACTV. If you are dissatisfied with the current town government, and think that we can do better, I hope that you will take the time to speak to the Charter Commission about your concerns. I suggest that you check the town web-site to determine the Charter Commission meeting schedule and agenda. There is still a glimmer of hope that real change can happen. Please don't miss this opportunity to be heard.

Mike Hanlon