

Robert J. Bell

TOWN COUNCIL CHAMBERS
CHARTER REVISION COMMISSION
WORKSHOP

2022 APR 18 AM 8:46

TOWN CLERK
EAST HARTFORD

April 14, 2022

PRESENT Chair Don Bell, Deb Arrieta, Richard Bates, Shelby Brown, Tom Rup
Travis Simpson

ABSENT Angel Santiago, Eric Thompson and Marcia Leclerc

ALSO Rich Gentile, Asst. Corporation Counsel
PRESENT

CALL TO ORDER
Chair Bell called the meeting to order at 6:40 p.m.

APPROVAL OF MINUTES

MOTION By Tom Rup
Seconded by Richard Bates
To **approve** the April 7, 2022 Workshop Minutes.

Motion Carried 6/0

OPPORTUNITY FOR CITIZENS TO SPEAK

None came forward.

OLD BUSINESS

None

NEW BUSINESS

Commissioner Arrieta provided an email of questions regarding the Charter that Corporation Counsel provided answers to in advance of this meeting and requested that this correspondence be included in this evening's minutes. The questions and response are as follows:

Boards & Commissions

Question: There are no other references to the names of all the boards and commissions in town except as listed in 5.15 Planning and Zoning Commission and 5.23 Board of Zoning Appeals. Is there a reason that these two are specifically listed within the Charter?

Response: These references come from statutory changes in the 1960's that allowed combined planning and zoning commissions. The Town effectuated this decision through the Charter. The ZBA provision flows from this change. No need to make any edits on this.

Sections 3.5 / 6.4 / 6.6

Question: All three of these sections have references to publicizing in "newspaper." Shouldn't we consider expanding the scope to include both print and virtual media? This still would cover state statute, but would benefit us for looking into the future and aren't we doing it already?

Response: As I mentioned the other evening, there is no reason to add another notice requirement. While the Town does strive to have all notices on its web page and social media, adding another notice requirement could lead to a situation where notice is deficient because, for some reason, the notice never made it to the website.

Section 9.7 Amendment of Charter

Question: Should language be added to indicate that a review of the charter should be done within so many years? Also, not to be done on the year of a municipal election and should take place after January 1 of said year.

Response: I do not think this is appropriate since Charter Revision must start with a vote of the Council to establish the Commission. A discretionary matter. Adding a requirement would run afoul of the statutory scheme as it would force the Council to establish a Commission.

Section 9.9 Effective Date

Should this section be updated to reflect the revision dates of when each of the charter revisions have passed?

Response: This is not appropriate. The fact of the matter is, the effective date remains April 2, 1968. That is the date when the Town moved from a "Special Act" community to a "Home Rule" community. The revisions do not impact the effective date.

Presentation of Working Draft Report for Discussion

The Chair expressed his gratitude to the Commissioners for their continued efforts to complete the working draft. The Chair provided the Commission with revisions to the working draft report for review based on recent recommendations. To acknowledge further representation of the Commission, the Chair included residential addresses of Commissioners. The Commission then reviewed the Chair's narrative of the Commission's work over the last nine months where minor technical edits to the report were made. The Commission determined that stronger language defining the value of more qualified executive professional support to the Mayor. The Chair acknowledged that one of the most thorough and debated discussions during the Commission's meetings was in regards to the decision to remain with a Strong Mayor form of government vs. that of a Town Manager. The consensus of the Commission was that there was value in having East Hartford residents elect a strong mayor as chief executive, but to more thoroughly show the line of debate on the issue, the Chair included in the report that the Commission's vote to remain with the strong mayor form of government was 5-4.

The Chair also proposed amending the suggested "Chief Operating Officer" title to read as "Chief Administrative Officer" in the draft report. Based on the Commission's research, the Chair feels that to properly define the role based on similar job descriptions across Connecticut and also attract the best talent, the name change will help to clarify the duties and align of the position to match the intentions of the Commission with regards to service and prior experience. The Commission unanimously agreed that the Chief Administrative Officer position should not be a political position and be rooted more in professional qualifications.

As the Commission reviewed the working draft, the Chair advised that the intended goal of the meeting this evening would be to thoroughly review the full draft report in advance of the next meeting on the 21st to develop a more complete consensus of language and proposed changes. In lieu of three members of the Commission being absent for this evening's meeting, the Commission agreed that a number of motions that will affirm such changes to the working draft report be proposed as voted on by a larger representation of the Commissioners.

The Commission discussed the question of whether the proposed Chief Administrative Officer position be a required appointment in the Mayor's office vs. at the choice of the Mayor. The Commission debated that the language requiring appointments of department Directors is consistent with that of the appointment of Chief Administrative Officer. Currently the Commission is not at a consensus on this issue, with an informal vote at 5-4 currently in favor of the position being required.

Based on the previous meeting, the Chair shared the revised narrative regarding the proposed a change in the Mayor's Term of Office. A preliminary vote in support of a four-year term for the Mayor was 7-1 in favor, but after deliberation, the Commission majority agreed at the April 7th meeting that the Mayor's election term remain biannual, consistent with that of the Town Council and in what the Commission deemed as the best interest of the public with regards to voter participation and accountability of the position.

The Chair discussed language regarding the definition of the proposed Department of Information Technology and responsibilities of the Director of the department. The majority of the wording was leveraged from a job description as composed by the East Hartford Board of Education when hiring their Director of IT previously as well as guidance of Corporation Counsel.

The Commission agreed to the Chair's proposed language regarding a more clarified line of succession should a Mayoral vacancy occur.

The Commission then reviewed an updated version of proposed revisions based on conversation at the previous meeting. Included in the document were changes regarding the title of Chief Administrative Officer. The Chair also proposed a change to Section 5.25 (proposed as 5.26) of the Charter, currently entitled as "Salaries" to the broader term "Compensation" as amended language provides more inclusions, such as health and retirement benefits, as well as vacation time.

Review of Future Meetings and Next Steps

The Commission reviewed the list of all outstanding items that will require a vote in advance of a final vote on the proposed revisions as a whole. A Public Hearing is scheduled for April 21. During a workshop that will occur after the public hearing, motions on outstanding items will be voted on.

MOTION By Rich Bates
Seconded by Travis Simpson

To authorize the Chair to utilize his discretion to provide formal notice of a public hearing to be held on April 26, 2022 at 6:30 p.m. in Town Council Chambers regarding completion the Charter Revision Commission's draft report.

Motion carried 6/0.

ADJOURNMENT

MOTION By Tom Rup
Seconded by Deb Arrieta
To **adjourn** (9:35 p.m.)

Motion Carried 6/0

Attest



Jason Marshall
Town Council Clerk