

TOWN COUNCIL CHAMBERS  
CHARTER REVISION COMMISSION  
SPECIAL MEETING

April 26, 2022

PRESENT Chair Don Bell, Deb Arrieta (via Teams), Richard Bates, Shelby Brown, Tom Rup, Travis Simpson, Eric Thompson, Angel Santiago (via Teams) and Marcia Leclerc

ABSENT

ALSO Rich Gentile, Asst. Corporation Counsel  
PRESENT

CALL TO ORDER

The Special Meeting was called to order at 7:17 pm by Commission Chair Don Bell to take action on the draft Charter Commission Report and a vote to submit the report and the proposed Charter amendments to the East Hartford Town Clerk as required by Connecticut General Statute 7-191 (b).

Introductory Remarks By Chair Bell & Overview Of The Process

Chair Bell provided the Commission with the opportunity to speak in response to public comments that were provided during the Public Hearing.

Commissioner Leclerc expressed appreciation to the individuals who provided perspective during the public hearing. The Commissioner spoke in support of a Strong Mayor and feels that the Commission spent a significant amount of time discussing the pros and cons of a Strong Mayor or a Town Manager.

Commissioner Brown concurred with Commissioner Leclerc in that the Commission performed a thorough analysis of evaluating the merits of each form of governance, and feels confident that the Commission has landed in a responsible and adjudicated manner. The Commissioner stated that while the comments proposed at this evening's public hearing have merit The Commissioner stands in support of the content as voted on at the previous workshop on April 21 to put forward to the Town Council, as there was not an opportunity to thoroughly discuss and consider any proposed changes in advance of this meeting. The report as provided at the most recent workshop represents the hard work and thorough consideration of the Commission.

Commissioner Arrieta also feels that the Commission should present the April 21<sup>st</sup> version of the report without voting on additional changes as the Town Council will have an opportunity to review the report and provide feedback.

Commissioner Simpson thanked the public for their feedback and thoughts throughout the process and feels that the Charter serves as the appropriate place to evaluate form

of governance. If at any time the town of East Hartford feels that the form of governance is not working, there is an opportunity to appoint a future Charter Revision Commission to evaluate the process; The Commissioner also thanked Council Chairman Kehoe for his diligence and proposed edits as provided during the Public Hearing and feels that given the Council has an opportunity to evaluate the report, any additional recommendations or edits can be proposed at that point.

Commissioner Bates thanked the public for their support throughout the Commission's work and proposed that the suggested changes provided by Councillor Kehoe be evaluated by the Council and to let the process take its course accordingly. Commissioner Bates also thanked his fellow commissioners for providing the opportunity to better educate himself on the Charter.

Commissioner Thompson expressed his appreciation for the Commission for their thorough discussion and efforts to achieve common ground provide improvement to the Charter. The Commissioner is grateful for the opportunity to serve East Hartford through this Commission, and is excited to see the report moving forward.

The Chair stated on behalf of the Commission sincere gratitude towards the public for their voices and time to provide ideas and inspiration to be as thoughtful as possible in putting forth a fully representative record of perspectives in the Commission's report. The following motion envisions the completed report as voted on at the April 21 meeting, inclusive of grammatical changes made and shared with the Commission and to the public on April 22<sup>nd</sup>.

MOTION        By Tom Rup  
                      seconded by Marcia Leclerc

that pursuant to Connecticut General Statutes Section 7-191(b) the Charter Revision Commission submit its draft report, including proposed Charter amendments, to the East Hartford Town Clerk with instructions to transmit such report to the East Hartford Town Council.

Motion carried 9/0.

Commissioner Brown reiterated confidence in the report to be presented and acknowledged the significance of the report's recommendation for the institution of a Chief Administrative Officer. The Commissioner feels that the position is an opportunity for whomever is in the Mayor's role to strengthen their ability to do good things for East Hartford.

Commissioner Leclerc concurred with Commissioner Brown on the significance of the work involved in reviewing Charter the guiding document for the Town of East Hartford. The Commissioner feels that the town has done well with a Strong Mayor form of government and feels that a Chief Administrative Officer will be able to support future Mayors with a set of skills to run the town in a supportive nature. The Commissioner then provided a summary of the proposed language changes the passing of referendums on the ballot and feels that the amendments will provide the town with more flexibility to act as needs arise, specifically with regards to Bonding. The Commissioner

thanked the Chair specifically for his service and dedication in leading the Commission's efforts.

Commissioner Rup expressed his appreciation to the Commission and feels that the Commission's report stands as a fine example of democracy in action.

Commissioner Simpson concurred with Commissioner Rup's assessment of the discussions and enjoyed the healthy debate throughout the process. The Commissioner feels that the report sets an example of how bipartisan efforts can work effectively.

Commissioner Bates expressed his appreciation for the time and efforts of the Commission to provide a strong report and feels that the Commission should be proud of the cooperative bipartisan work put forward to the Council.

The Chair stated that the Commission has reached an important milestone by providing a report with recommendations that will make the town government more efficient, should the recommendations be approved by the community. The Chair expressed his appreciation to the Commission for their civility, thoughtfulness, and bipartisan dedication to this process. The Chair acknowledged that while challenging, the process has been an educational and meaningful one, which reaffirms the Chair's steadfast belief in the value of public service.

## Discussion Of Next Steps In Charter Revision Process

The Chair stated that the report will now be sent to the Town Clerk who will then send it to the Town Council. The Council will then hold a Public Hearing and should they have any recommendations, the Council will provide them to the Commission for review. An additional meeting of the Commission would then occur to accept or reject the recommendations provided by the Town Council.

ADJOURNMENT

**MOTION** By Eric Thompson  
seconded by Marcia Leclerc  
to **adjourn** (8:00 pm).

Motion carried 9/0.