

*Robert J. Bates*

MAYOR'S OFFICE  
CHARTER REVISION COMMISSION  
WORKSHOP

2021 NOV -3 AM 8:50

TOWN CLERK  
EAST HARTFORD

OCTOBER 26, 2021

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

CALL TO ORDER

Chair Bell called the workshop to order at 6:08 p.m.

APPROVAL OF MINUTES

September 28, 2021 Workshop

MOTION By Travis Simpson  
seconded by Tom Rup  
to **approve** the workshop minutes for September 28, 2021.  
Motion carried 9/0.

October 12, 2021 Workshop

MOTION By Marcia Leclerc  
seconded by Eric Thompson  
to **approve** the workshop minutes for October 12, 2021.  
Motion carried 9/0.

October 22, 2021 Workshop

MOTION By Rich Bates  
seconded by Deb Arrieta  
to **approve** the workshop minutes for October 22, 2021.  
Motion carried 9/0.

OPPORTUNITY FOR RESIDENTS TO SPEAK

None

## OLD BUSINESS

### Should the Town have a Professional Person in Charge of Overseeing All Town Government Operations?

A discussion among the Commissioners followed on various pros and cons of a professional person in charge of overseeing all town governments operations (COO/CAO). Concerns were:

- the chain of command when it comes to which directors/departments report directly to the Mayor and which directors/departments report directly to the COO/CAO
- Police and Fire, Corporation Counsel and Finance should report directly to the Mayor and the rest of the departments should funnel through the CAO/COO to the Mayor
- The consideration of keeping the cost of government as streamlined as possible remembering that East Hartford is a community of limited financial resources
- Creation of a new position entitled "CFO/COO" (Chief Financial Officer/Chief Operating Officer) which person could definitely assist in restructuring the Finance Department

### Appointing Structure:

At the October 22<sup>nd</sup> workshop, the votes were split on those who wanted the Mayor to appoint a CAO/COO – as is currently the case – and those who wanted the Town Council to approve the appointment of a CAO/COO.

Discussion followed on if the Mayor should be able to hire a CAO/COO as they see fit or should the Mayor appoint the CAO/COO and have the Town Council ratify that hire. Likewise, would the termination of the CAO/COO require action by the Town Council.

Chair Bell will ask Corporation Counsel to provide the Commission with options for the termination of a CAO/COO if hired via a contract vs if that person would only be terminated for cause.

## NEW BUSINESS

### Whether the Town Charter Should Continue to List All Town Departments or Provide Some Flexibility to Consolidate or Transfer Functions of Town Departments Without a Charter Revision

A discussion followed on how flexible the Charter should be when it comes to revising/changing departments.

Chair Bell will ask Corporation Counsel to provide the Commission with language that would provide flexibility for departments at the director level.

### Whether the Town Directors Should Serve at the Pleasure of The Mayor or Have Some Job Security Protections

Commissioner Leclerc shared her experiences as Mayor when she hired several different Directors. Human Resources would advertise the job description and review/rate the applications. HR would interview the candidates and come up with a top 3 list. The Mayor would then meet with the top 3 and make a selection from that list. The biggest drawback she encountered was that most people are reluctant to accept a position that is for possibly just 2 years – the current term of the Mayor. Two years of employment does not give anyone a sense of job security. Even 4 years would still be enough to give someone pause before accepting a director's position with the town. Another downside to working as a director under the current charter is a compensation package for the directors, which would include salary, sick time, vacation time, medical insurance, etc.

Chair Bell will ask Corporation Counsel to provide the Commission with information on what would be required to enter into employment contracts with directors.

### Removal of Budget By Referendum

It was the consensus of the Commission to keep the budget by referendum provision in the Charter.

### Term of Office for Mayor – 2 or 4 Years and Staggering Terms for the Town Council

Deb – Mayor, 4-yr term; Town Council, 4-yr term maybe, but concerned on staggering.

Marcia – how does this effect the Registrars term of office?

Travis – if the Commission changes the form of government to a Town Manager – where the Town Manager reports directly to the Town Council – then 4-year terms for both Mayor and Town Council. If the Commission decides to opt for a CAO/COO then keep the Mayor with a 2-year term, but give the Town Council a 4-yr staggered term.

Don – Mayor, 4-yr term; take Selectmen and Constables off the ballot and make them appointed positions similar to Boards and Commissions appointees. Town Council and Board of Education on the ballot every 4 years.

Tom – agrees with Don – 4 year terms unstaggered for Mayor and Council subject to legal review.

Rich – likes the 4 year term for Mayor and Council and BOE on same cycle. Agrees with the appointment of Selectmen and Constables instead of voting them in.

Marcia – thinks the Commission should do a bit more research on this subject. She also suggested that the Commission should think about a way for terminating the Mayor if the individual is not working out.

Eric – supports a 4-year term for the Mayor, but wants to maintain the 2-year term for the Council.

Shelby – supports a 4-year term for the Mayor, but wants to maintain the 2-year term for the Council.

Personnel Appeals Board: Clarify Powers

Chair Bell will ask Corporation Counsel to ensure that the language in the Charter matches the language in State Statutes and town Ordinances, as well as the Personnel Merit System.

The next meeting will be Tuesday November 9<sup>th</sup> with a public hearing and workshop to follow.

ADJOURNMENT

The Commission **adjourned** at 8:05 p.m.