

CHARTER REVISION COMMISSION

Minutes of Public Hearing
Tuesday, June 3, 2014

Commissioners present:	Chairman Joseph Calsetta, Norman Boucher, Bill Hamel, Brian Levy, Sara LeMaster, Dave Ragon, Carl Schiessl, Dave Vaicunas, and Lucinda Van Gieson
Commissioners absent:	George Austin, Michael Forschino, Carl Philbrick, and Delby Spath

- 1) Chairman Calsetta welcomed everyone to tonight's Public Hearing and followed with Roll Call. He addressed the public by stating this was a Public Hearing inviting any and all comments and suggestions.
- 2) Public Input –

William Rousseau – 407 Elmwood – Mr. Rousseau asked the Commission to consider having all annual budget voting go to referendum rather than a town meeting.

Selectman Dennis Gagnolati – 25 Roberts Street – Selectman Gagnolati suggested combining the Fire Commission with the Police Commission, and combining the Board of Selectmen with the Board of Finance. He also asked the Commission to consider making a change to the Charter which would allow some decisions to be made by the Board of Selectmen rather than a Town Meeting where very few members of the public attend. Selectman Wawruck agreed there are a lot of meetings but added that State Statute says town meetings are required for a lot of routine decisions such as getting authorization for a Grant application submission.

Selectman Michael Russo – 116 Grove Street – Selectman Russo asked when was the last revision of the Town Charter. (Answer – 2003). He then asked the Commission to consider how practical the wording of the Charter is relative to efficiently governing the Town in 2014.

Douglas Glazier – 167 Taft Lane – Mr. Glazier asked if the Commission would consider setting a limit to the number of budget referendums that could be had before a default percentage increase is set, much like how East Windsor handles their budget voting. Selectman Gagnolati added the suggestion that the first two budget referendums be every two weeks and then go up to four weeks before a third vote is taken.

Selectman Steve Wawruck – Selectman Wawruck feels that the numerical thresholds in the Charter for new budget items are antiquated. He would like the existing \$10,000 threshold increased. He added to the idea of combining Boards by stating they should each have at least seven members.

William Rousseau – 407 Elmwood – Mr. Rousseau asked the Commission to consider requiring the Chairman and Vice Chairman of each Board to exchange roles every year.

Norman Boucher – Mr. Boucher would like “teeth” added to the existing Blight Ordinance. Chairman Calsetta stated that although the issue may need improvement, he does not feel it belongs in the Charter. A discussion followed with regard to the difference between Ordinances and Charters. Selectman Wawruck would like a Committee to be formed to review and determine which Ordinances are still relevant and/or need to be changed.

Bill Hamel – Mr. Hamel passed out a list of his Charter ideas.

- Change the existing form of government by expanding the Board of Selectmen to seven or nine, and eliminating the Board of Finance, leaving only one body of government to hold responsible.

- Change the term of the First Selectman to four years. Disqualify the loser from automatic entry on to the Board.
- Change Board of Selectmen to stagger the election years of its members
- Make the Town Clerk and Tax Collector positions civil service jobs so as to not limit the pool of people eligible for the positions to registered town residents only.
- Clarify 805C of the Charter and make it organic by reference to CGS
- Clarify the independence of the First Selectman relative to the entire Board of Selectmen
- Combine Boards and Commissions
- Correct the start date for Registrars of Voters – it is incorrect as it exists
- Revise 804B to read: The (Voting Machine Labels) ballots shall be provided by the Town Clerk. We no longer have voting machine labels.

Sara LeMaster – Ms. LeMaster believes the term “Selectmen” is dated and would like it changed to include women. Bill Hamel stated that Sec. 1209 – Gender Usage “Selectmen” - is in the State Statute. Ms. LeMaster also requested that notification of referendums be added to our website. Bill Hamel responded that State Statute only requires that Agendas be posted publicly. Requiring anything more caused Towns to take down their websites in the past.

Lucinda Van Gieson – Ms. Van Gieson asked if there will be a point in time where we have to consult State Statute when revising the Town Charter. Chairman Calsetta answered that Commissioner Schiessl will be handling this. Ms. Van Gieson then asked if Selectman Wawruck had a number in mind for 805C. He answered that State Statute says \$20,000 but he would like it to be more.

3) Commissioners Comments –

Chairman Calsetta suggested that the Commission follow the same Agenda format as the Board of Selectmen. He also set the next meeting date as June 17, 2014 at 6:30 p.m. He stated that there were a lot of good ideas and discussions at tonight’s meeting but no decisions can be made. He would like to follow the format of discussing all new ideas at the following meeting rather than at the meeting it is initiated. He asked that the Recording Secretary make a list of all ideas at each meeting to be discussed at the following meeting. He clarified that there will be two Public Inputs at each meeting. The first will be open and the second will be for the items that were discussed only.

Lucinda Van Gieson asked if anyone knew of a well written Charter in another town that we could model ours by. Commissioner Schiessl said no but that we could use links to other Charters as a resource tool for specific line items within the Charter.

4) Adjournment –

MOTION: To adjourn at 7:56 pm.

Bill Hamel

Motion Passed Unanimously

Seconded by Dave Vaicunas

Respectfully Submitted,

Sharon Pfaffenbichler
Recording Secretary

A recording of this meeting is available on CD in the Town Clerk’s Office.