

CHARTER REVISION COMMISSION

PUBLIC HEARING MINUTES

APRIL 27, 2011

On April 27, 2011 at 7:30 p.m. in the Council Chambers at the Trumbull Town Hall, the Trumbull Charter Revision Commission held a Public Hearing on the Commission's first draft report.

In attendance at the hearing: Commission Members: John P. Chiota, Esq., Chairman; William Holden; Vice Chairman; Gail J. Hanna, Secretary; James Cordone, Esq.; Russell Friedson; and Paul Timpanelli.

Non-commission members in attendance: Attorney Robert Maslan

The Chairman opened the public hearing at 7:38PM.

J. Chiota addressed the public introducing the commission members and the commission's attorney, Robert Maslan. J. Chiota explained to the public the procedure for submitting the first draft of the Charter clarifying the time frame per state statute and also the time table for submission of the draft report to the Town Council. The Minority Report was also submitted. J. Chiota also recognized changes/technical errors in the draft, i.e., pagination, chapter and section references and that these corrections will be made.

Public Comments:

Cindy Penkoff, 101 Columbine Drive, Trumbull.

Ms. Penkoff acknowledged the amount of time and effort the commission put into the revision of the Charter and that it is much clearer, precise and more to the point.

-Against the posting of meetings and agendas and supplemental materials within 48 hours. Not enough time for review. She suggests at least five (5) days.

-Department of Finance. Regarding installation of new officers and new contracts signed after new administration has been elected but not in office yet. She supports the premise and would like to see two (2) weeks prior to the election having no new contracts signed.

-Director of Economic and Community Development. This should be a contract position and not an employee position. Against this proposal and would like it to be with stipulated requirements.

-Director of Labor Relations. Questioned if this is a new position? J. Chiota confirmed that it is a new position.

-Veto procedure needs to be clarified in the budget process.

Jim Meisner, 62 Driftwood Lane, Trumbull.

-Commented the revisions makes “sweeping” changes, i.e. referenda, composition of the Town Council. This effects the minority representation.

-Against the four (4) year term for the First Selectman.

-The Charter revision should be a two-step process:

1. Need more minor changes that must be addressed such as the Board of Education composition.
2. More sweeping changes should be a second process. Otherwise, this puts the voters in an awkward position to vote.

Anthony Tucci, 42 Captains Walk, Trumbull.

-Against the four (4) year term.

-Against Board of Education increase from six (6) to seven (7) members and against nine (9) members of the Board. This should be kept to a lower amount of members.

-Need at-large addendum for the Town Council.

Cindy Katske, 129 Meadowview Drive, Trumbull.

-Commented the changes are extreme. The commission needs to submit comments regarding these changes.

-Against Board of Education seven (7) members.

-Against Board of Education nine (9) members in 2015.

-Against proposed referendum revisions.

-Specifically state the terms of office of the Town Council in the Charter.

-Against minority representation.

Nancy Gardiner, 34 Parkwood Road, Trumbull.

-Commented that better notification is needed for the Charter revision. There was not enough time to review the Charter revisions.

-Possibly a power-point document can be prepared which would reflect the major changes and also how they would affect your life.

Tony Silber, 43 Stag Lane, Trumbull. (Alternate member of the Planning and Zoning Commission and also a member of the Democratic Town Committee.)

-Commented that the proposed revisions of the Charter “is a radical overhaul of our system of government” and that Trumbull has worked exceptionally well for decades so these radical changes are not necessary.

-Against seven (7) at large for Town Council and a minority representation provision that allows for just two (2) members of a minority party.

-Against nine (9) members for the Board of Education.

-Against four (4) year term for top elected officials.

Tony Silber (cont'd.)

-In favor of Tim Herbst's changes to the Charter as part of his 2009 campaign platform to include:

1. Any bond initiative meets a certain threshold or percentage of total indebtedness and that it should go directly to the voters if it exceeds that threshold.
2. All town enterprises and special agency funds are subject to review by the Trumbull Board of Finance.
3. Every town department be subject to review by the Internal Auditor.

Mr. Silber feels these are all reasonable changes and that the Charter revisions are too radical.

Tony D'Aquila, 29 Valley View Road, Trumbull.

Mr. D'Aquila stated he was surprised and pleased of the changes to the Charter. Commented that the Board of Education has always been partisan when composed of six (6) members.

-Against voting for two (2) out of three (3) for Town Council to represent his district.

-In favor of 48 hours for most regular meetings but that public hearings need to allow for five (5) days notice and submission of material for the meeting should be five (5) days prior to the meetings.

-All appointments should clearly state their qualifications. Specifically, the Director of Public Works should have Engineering or Architectural Degree and preferably a Civil Engineering Degree.

-Terms of appointments should be clearly stated.

-Board of Finance should have two (2) public hearings in the Charter and one (1) of those during daylight hours in order for senior citizens to attend.

-Against eliminating Civil Service Board.

-All public meetings should allow for comments and questions from the public.

Richard Ennis, 33 Academy Road, Trumbull.

-Supports referendum recall.

-Commented the four (4) year term for the First Selectmen should stipulate so that in the event of a problem with the administration, the First Selectman should be subject to recall. Also, past practice of postponing payments to the pension fund possibly caused to be underfunded and that is the reason we need the acceptance of recall.

Richard White, 169 Church Hill Road, Trumbull.

-Opposed to the concept of tying in the annual budget to inflation.

-CPI is not a realistic measure for a municipal budget.

-Suggests using MCI (Municipal Cost Index) as an alternative.

Mr. White submitted citations to the commission.

Scott Wich, 47 Killian Avenue, Trumbull.

-Commented there was not enough time to read the Charter and only heard about the minority representation around town.

-Against Town Council revision as this could possibly cause nineteen (19) people on one side and two (2) people on another side and one at-large would cause checks and balances issues.

John Greene, 23 Topaz Lane, Trumbull.

- Commented there was not enough time to review the revisions of the Charter.
- Suggests another public hearing with the Charter Revision Commission.
- Comments of the changes should also be included.
- Against four (4) year term for the First Selectman.

Cindy Katske, 129 Meadowview Drive, Trumbull.

- The special budget referendum provision does not work time wise nor is it necessary.
- Commented on the goal of having 19-21 Town Council members from one political party.
- Noted typographical errors and inconsistencies, i.e. Definitions section.
- Chapter III. Executive Branch:
 - Section 2. Powers and duties. Subsections (i) through (n). Noted sweeping changes. Changes to the Charter should go to the voters. Subsections (i) through (k) and (n) refers to powers and duties while subsections (l) and (m) should be bullets.
 - Section 6. Department of Finance. E (a) new language regarding expense reimbursements – Why are these paid by the Treasurer? R. Friedson's indicated that these expenses are for personal expenses and it makes sense for an independent to look at the expense reimbursements.
 - Section 6. G (a) - Questioned the purpose of the purchasing policy revisions. J. Chiota noted the need for a uniform purchasing policy for the Town and that this would be too lengthy to put in the Charter.
 - Section 6. G. (f) rate appropriate needs clarifying.
 - Why qualification requirements for Director of Public Works and no other positions in the Town?
 - Why is it necessary for a Director of Economic Development; an Economic Development Commission; and also a Department of Economic and Community Development?
- Chapter II. Section 2. – Two (2) provisions are inconsistent regarding council members residing in the district they were elected during the term of his/her office.

Cindy Penkoff, 101 Columbine Drive, Trumbull.

- Against minority representation and change in the makeup.
- Need to clarify the thought process for the Board of Education.

Jim Meisner, 62 Driftwood Lane, Trumbull

- Against the proposal for the referenda low threshold and noted problems with funding the pension fund.
- Timing process difficult.

David Kayne, 51 Old Saw Mill Road, Trumbull.

- Against four (4) year term.
- Against referendum.
- Does not want the changes in the Charter to expand the power of the government.
- Would like to see re-districting. W. Holden indicated redistricting should be done following the state re-apportionment. District number requirements are not in the Charter.

Dorothy Stedman, Monroe.

- Referendum is very complicated.
- Revised Charter also complicated.

Kathleen McGannon, 59 Jackson Drive, Trumbull.

- Why is the revision of the Charter rushed?
J. Chiota indicated the Charter revision process is in accordance with the Statute.
- Chanel 17 should have taped the Public Hearing.

At the conclusion of the hearing, Motion was made by P. Timpanelli to submit the First Draft Report of the Charter to the Town Council on May 2, 2011, seconded by G. Hanna.
Vote: carried unanimously.

The Chairman closed the hearing at 9:12PM.

Respectfully submitted:

Marilou Mangiamele, Commission Clerk