

CHARTER REVISION COMMISSION 2020
MINUTES
JUNE 3, 2020

A meeting of the Charter Revision Commission 2020 was held on Wednesday, June 3, 2020 remotely via Zoom teleconference. The meeting was called to order by Chair Kate Donahue at 7:03 p.m.

Members Present: In attendance were Commissioners Kate Donahue, Tom Tesoro, Susan Gilson, Nancy Gardiner, J.C. Cinelli, and Martin McCann. In addition to the Commission members were Town Attorney Dan Schopick and Chief Administrative Officer and Commission Clerk Cindy Katske.

All present recited the Pledge of Allegiance.

Public Comment: Jean Rabinow, representing the League of Women Voters, had provided written input that she summarized for the Commission. They would like to have seven voting districts with three delegates each. One of the League's members and former Registrar of Voters, Laurel Anderson, made some very specific suggestions for changes she would like to see to clarify election procedures. Those suggestions are in the written input. Speaking for herself, and not for the League of Women Voters, Ms. Rabinow would like to see the Board of Education returned to a six-member board, evenly split.

Prior Minutes: Moved by Nancy Gardiner, seconded by J.C. Cinelli to approve the minutes of the May 27, 2020 meeting. The motion carried unanimously.

Request for Extension: The Chair reported that the Town Council approved the Commission's request for an extension to submit a draft report to June 29, 2020. The Town Council Legislation and Administration Committee will take up the Commission's recommendations on Monday, July 6, and the full Council will take up the matter on Thursday, July 9. As many Commission members as possible should be on those calls. The Commission's public hearing is on June 24, and the goal is to submit the draft report to the Council by the end of business on June 29.

Charter Review: The Commission reviewed the following topics.

1. Commissions on Aging and Youth: Cindy Katske sent the draft language on the Commission on Aging to Michele Jakob, the Senior Center Director, and Marcy Kelly, the Chair of the Senior Citizens Commission, and they both thought it was great. Ms. Katske also sent the draft language on the Commission on Youth to Dmitri Paris, the Superintendent of Parks and Recreation, and he also thought it was fine. Ms. Katske looked at the structure of these Commissions and thought that perhaps the language about Chair, Vice-Chair and Secretary may be unnecessary and may be deleted if the Commission decides to do so.

2. Chapter VIII, Section 9, regarding referendum on projects over \$15 million. The Commission reviewed language proposed by Town Attorney Dan Schopick. Proposed changes include indexing the \$15 million amount, what is included in the amount, voting procedure, form of the question, and required number of voter turnout. Discussion ensued regarding indexing, timing of the referendum, and holding a public hearing before the referendum. Nancy Gardiner will draft some language on indexing and send to Attorney Schopick. Attorney Schopick will work on the timing issues.

3. Term limits: The Commission discussed information provided by J.C. Cinelli from the National League of Cities stating that very few municipalities have term limits. No action was taken.

4. Chapter VII, Section 3, Board of Education: The Commission voted on concepts but has not approved specific language. Attorney Schopick will draft language for the next meeting.

Draft Report: The Commission reviewed the following provisions of the draft report.

1. Chapter I, Section 4B, regarding definition of days. No change needed.

2. Chapter II, Section 1, regarding a minor change in wording. No change needed.

3. Chapter II, Section 2, first paragraph, regarding composition and election of Town Council: The Commission discussed whether the language regarding seven districts with three members from each district follows the recommendations of the Redistricting Committee, which is currently still working on its recommendations. The Commission will seek additional input from the chair of the Redistricting Committee at the next meeting. Nancy Gardiner will draft language regarding the reasoning for recommending this change to insert in the draft report.

[Susan Gilson left the meeting at 8:15 p.m.]

4. Chapter II, Section 5A, regarding posting notice of Town Council meetings. No change needed.

5. Chapter II, Section 5B, regarding posting of documents on the town website. No change needed other than changing “website” to one word.

6. Chapter II, Section 6, regarding adoption of legislation. No change needed.

7. Chapter II, Section 7, regarding emergency legislation. Moved by Nancy Gardiner, seconded by Tom Tesoro to delete “and Appointments” from the section title. The motion carried unanimously. No other changes needed.

8. Chapter II, Section 8, regarding publication of adopted legislation. No change needed.

9. Chapter II, Section 1, regarding the term of the First Selectman. Tom Tesoro will draft language explaining the reason for this change for the next meeting.
10. Chapter III, Section 3, regarding absence or disability of the First Selectman. Tom Tesoro will draft language for the next meeting.
11. Chapter III, Section 6D, regarding the term of the Treasurer. Tom Tesoro will draft language for the next meeting.
12. Chapter III, Section 6G, regarding purchasing. Martin McCann will draft language for the next meeting.
13. Chapter III, Section 7, regarding the term of the Town Clerk. Tom Tesoro will draft language for the next meeting.
14. Chapter III, Section 15, regarding bonds. Attorney Schopick will draft language for the next meeting.
15. Chapter IV, Sections 2A and 3A, regarding adoption of the annual budget. No change needed.
16. Chapter VII, Section 1A, regarding Board of Finance alternates. Tom Tesoro will draft language for the next meeting.
17. Chapter VII, Section 3, regarding the Board of Education. Attorney Schopick will draft language for the next meeting.
18. Chapter III, Section 8A, regarding the Police Commission. Cindy Katske will draft language for the next meeting.
19. Chapter VII, Section 11E, regarding Parks and Recreation Commission acceptance of gifts. No change needed.
20. Chapter VII, Section 17, regarding the Ethics Commission. Martin McCann will draft language for the next meeting.
21. Chapter VII, Section 23, regarding removal of board and commission members. Cindy Katske will draft language for the next meeting.
22. Chapter VII, Section 24, regarding posting requirements for boards and commissions. Cindy Katske will draft language for the next meeting.
23. Chapter VII, Section 7B(i), regarding posting notice of adoption of emergency legislation. No change needed.

24. Chapter VIII, Section 7H, regarding posting of notice of referendum language. No change needed.

25. Chapter VIII, Section 8B(i), regarding posting notice of annual budget adoption. No change needed.

Cindy Katske brought up a typo in the Charter in Chapter V, Section 2E. A cross-reference not renumbered from the last Charter revision needs to be changed from (d) to (iv). According to Attorney Schopick, this typo can be fixed without the Commission voting on it. Another change in Chapter IV, Section 2(D), which refers to the 2019 budget year, can also be changed without a vote. No action was taken.

Cindy Katske also brought up the issue of wherever “days” are referenced in the Charter, and whether each instance should be examined to determine whether business days or calendar days are more appropriate. Kate Donahue and Cindy Katske will identify the instances that should be looked at for the next meeting.

Attorney Schopick stated that the Commission should look at the Police Commission language again, and Cindy Katske will provide it for the next meeting.

The remaining meeting schedule was discussed. The draft report should be completed and posted on Monday, June 22, 2020.

Moved by J.C. Cinelli, seconded by Tom Tesoro to adjourn at 8:36 p.m. The motion was approved by unanimous consent.

Respectfully submitted,

Cindy Katske, Clerk



League of Women Voters of the Bridgeport Area (Trumbull Branch)
Charter Revision Suggestions and Questions

Submitted by

Laurel Anderson
Jean Rabinow
Diane Fried
Sujata Gadkar-Wilcox

Overall comment: there are no references in the Charter to elections other than referenda or initiative. Might it not be a good thing to at least have a section under Chapter VIII (Elections) that refers back to the state statute on voting process, procedure and dates and compliance thereto? Chapter VIII Section 3 (page 70) speaks to when an election will be held but nothing else about how.

Overall comment: there is nothing in the Charter that specifies the number of voting districts in town, nor the number of districts that will be represented on the Town Council, nor the number of Town Council representatives per district. It is the strong feeling of all the Trumbull members of the League of Women Voters of the Bridgeport Area that the Charter should specify seven (7) districts with three (3) Town Council representatives each.

Chapter VIII Section 10 (page 90) Registrar of Voters

The last sentence says Deputy Registrars MAY be appointed. This is a statutory requirement and not optional (see below). Should this section refer to the **Assistant** Registrar positions (Currently held by Sandy and Barbara), which are optional under statute? The Charter should give the Registrars the right to appoint and therefore fund the Assistant Registrars in the budget, and could specify the number of Assistant Registrar positions available to each Registrar, since the statute says “up to four.”

The relevant portion of the state statute is:

Sec. 9-192. Deputy registrar. Registrar vacancy. Assistant registrars. Special assistant registrars. Each registrar of voters immediately after his election shall appoint a deputy registrar of voters to hold office during his pleasure and may, at any time, fill any vacancy in said office. He shall file with the town clerk a certificate of each such appointment and the town clerk shall record the certificate with the records of town meetings. Each deputy registrar of voters shall assist his principal when required, discharge his duties in his absence or inability to act and, in case of the death, removal or resignation of such principal, shall become registrar of voters and appoint a deputy, and shall file with the town clerk a certificate of such appointment, which shall be recorded with the records of town meetings. If a vacancy exists in the office of registrar of voters in consequence of a refusal or failure to accept the office or a failure of the registrar to appoint a deputy registrar, the town committee of the same political party as the registrar of voters who so

refused, failed to accept or failed to appoint, or other appointing authority specified in local party rules shall fill such vacancy by the appointment of some suitable person, who shall belong to the same political party as the registrar of voters who so refused, failed to accept or failed to appoint. Each registrar of voters in any town may, as needed, appoint and employ not more than four assistant registrars of voters for each voting district therein, who shall serve at the pleasure of the registrar of voters and assist such registrar in the performance of his duties, and, for purposes of any admission session held pursuant to section 9-19b or subsection (a) of section 9-19c, as many special assistants as are necessary to carry out the duties of such session. Such registrar shall file with the town clerk a certificate of each such appointment, which shall be recorded with the records of the town, and shall appoint such other assistants as are necessary for the performance of duties required by sections 9-12 to 9-45, inclusive, on election day and the six days preceding. Unless otherwise provided by subsection (b) of section 9-19b, in the absence of either registrar of voters, his deputy or any of his assistants, except special assistants, shall have all the powers conferred, and may perform any of the duties imposed, upon such registrar by any of the provisions of the statutes. Each deputy, assistant or special assistant registrar shall be an elector of the municipality in which he is appointed. Each deputy registrar shall also, at the time of his appointment and during the six months immediately preceding his appointment, be an enrolled member of the same party as the registrar who makes such appointment.

Chapter VIII Electoral Process (Page 71)

Section 4 -Before every municipal election in recent years there have been questions to the Town Clerk about how many candidates each Party can nominate for certain positions. This issue has gone to the Town Attorney just about every year, and depending on who is in power and who the attorney is the answers can vary. The Charter's wording should be formalized so there is no ambiguity.

Chapter VIII Electoral Process (Page 80,81,82)

Section 7 Referendum- D ii & -iii & iv - throughout this section the Charter refers to paper ballots or voting machine ballot labels. Perhaps the Charter Commission should amend the wording to say "voting equipment and ballots as directed by the Secretary of the State."

Chapter VIII Electoral Process (Page 83)

Section 7F- There is no mention in this section about a time limit in which the Registrar must report the referendum results, but it does require that the Board of Finance make recommendations within 5 days of the vote. The Commission might want to require results be reported within 5 days.

Chapter VIII Electoral Process

Section 7H requires election notices in newspapers, as required by state statute 9-225 (State Elections) "... warning shall be given by publication in a newspaper having a general circulation ...". Nothing in the state statute prohibits Trumbull from adding requirements, such a posting on the Town website, or in social media or some equivalent location(s), which might make it easier for voters, many of whom no longer subscribe to any newspaper at all.