

**CITY OF NORWALK
CHARTER REVISION COMMISSION
REGULAR MEETING
DECEMBER 17, 2024
BY ZOOM VIRTUAL MEETING AND COMMON COUNCIL CHAMBERS**

To allow public access, anyone may access a meeting by telephone and/or Zoom, or a recording in the City of Norwalk YouTube channel. Specific instructions and links can be found at norwalkct.gov/meetings.

Members of the public may call in to participate. Callers will not be able to see the meeting participants. All participants will be muted upon entering the meeting. To speak, dial *9 on the phone and you will be called on by the host of the meeting during the public comment section.

All speakers must state their name and address. Comments must be on a topic on the agenda, and are limited to three minutes. Anyone disrupting the orderly conduct of the meeting, including by using threatening, hateful, or sexually-explicit language, will be removed. Please find the information using the link above.

Members of the public who wish to provide "live comments" may also use the Zoom meeting platform. All participants will be muted upon entering the meeting. To speak, click the "raise your hand indicator" and you will be called by the host of the meeting during the public comment section.

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Members of the public who wish to provide public comment are encouraged to submit those via email in advance of the meeting. For these comments to be included into the record, they must be submitted by 12:00 p.m. the day of the meeting. Please email the City Clerk's office at cityclerk@norwalkct.gov with the subject line "Public Comment" to provide written public comment prior to the meeting.

ATTENDANCE: Tyler Fairbairn, Chair; Jo Bennett; Ed Camacho; John Levin;
Tanya Rhodes Small

STAFF: Esther Murillo, Assistant City Clerk; Thomas Livingston, Chief of Staff

OTHERS: Steven Mednick, Commission Counsel

City of Norwalk
Charter Revision Commission
Regular Meeting
December 17, 2024
By Zoom Virtual Meeting and Common Council Chambers
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I. CALL TO ORDER

Mr. Fairbairn called the meeting to order at 6:34 p.m.

II. ROLL CALL

Mr. Fairbairn called the Roll as indicated above.

III. ACCEPTANCE OF MINUTES

A. Regular Meeting: December 3, 2024

**** MR. CAMACHO MOVED TO ACCEPT THE MINUTES**

The following corrections were made to the minutes:

Page 4 – worried should be worked

Mr. Fairbairn will ask Ms. Murillo to explain the process for posting revised minutes.

Mr. Levin said Ms. Dunn submitted a written statement at the last meeting but were not presented as part of the minutes. Mr. Fairbairn explained that Ms. Dunn's comments were circulated to the members of the Commission and Mr. Mednick included them in his grid.

Ms. Bennett said it was important to have public comments very visible. Mr. Fairbairn said he will check with Mr. Mednick, but believes written comments go into his grid; however, he will have to be sure the document is linked to the Commission's webpage.

Mr. Levin asked if Ms. Dunn's letter was incorporated into Mr. Mednick's grid or was her letter summarized. He also asked if Ms. Dunn's letter could be shared with the members of the Commission. Mr. Fairbairn said he believed Ms. Dunn's letter was e-mailed to the members of the Commission, but will double check. Mr. Mednick said it should be posted on the website and added that a summary of her comments was added to his grid.

Mr. Levin said he had comments about the minutes, but did not have them available.

**** MR. LEVIN MOVED TO TABLE THE MINUTES OF DECEMBER 3, 2024 TO THE NEXT MEETING**

Ms. Bennett said she was not sure she was comfortable not including the previous comments about the minutes.

It was noted that Mr. Levin had a number of comments about the minutes, but did not have them available this evening and as a result could not share his comments.

**** MOTION TO APPROVE THE MINUTES WAS TABLED TO THE NEXT SCHEDULED MEETING TO ALLOW MR. LEVIN THE OPPORTUNITY TO SHARE HIS COMMENTS REGARDING THE MINUTES**

IV. PUBLIC PARTICIPATION

Public participation comments are not verbatim and represent a summarization of statements unless otherwise noted. Speakers are Norwalk residents unless otherwise noted.

Ms. Lisa Brinton, Independent Party Town Chair requested that the Charter Revision Commission provide a more visible and accessible portal for public comments. She said there have been discussions about capturing public comments and added that the minutes being paraphrased is insufficient. She added that permitting three minutes for public comment is insufficient. Ms. Brinton requested a better public portal.

Mr. Fairbairn responded to Ms. Brinton's comments and said he was aware of the issues with the portal; however, he said he takes issue that the City is requiring abbreviated or truncated minutes. He said there is no shortage of ways to get in touch with Commission members and will be happy to provide his e-mail address. He stressed there has been no directive from the City to the Commission to not provide information to the public.

V. OLD BUSINESS

Mr. Levin said he had a number of items under old business with respect to the website. He said there has been some confusion with the City creating a new Charter Revision website and said it lacks the public portal. He described the buttons on the website that need revisions. Mr. Mednick said he was just on the portal and all of the information is available. Mr. Levin said he described things that have been fixed.

Ms. Bennett said she wished someone would send a link to the Charter Revision website. Mr. Mednick said he Googled Norwalk Charter Revision Commission and it brought him to the official website. Mr. Levin said he tried to Google the page and the old Charter Revision Commission website came up.

Mr. Fairbairn explained he submitted a number of requests to Ms. Murillo and one of the challenges was that the new page linked with the old page because some of the information was still valid. He suggested Commission members explore the website and e-mail comments to him. He said he would be happy to put together suggestions for the website.

Mr. Levin said he sent his website fixes to Mr. Fairbairn and Ms. Murillo and they may have been addressed.

Mr. Fairbairn expressed his thanks to Ms. Murillo for all of her assistance to the Commission.

Mr. Levin said in earlier meetings he requested that Commission members be able to review public comments made during the previous Charter Revision. He requested that information again. Mr. Mednick said he will re-send his grid. Mr. Levin said the previous Charter Revision Commission had a portal where the public was invited to submit their comments and suggestions. He asked if the previous Charter Revision Commission had a chance to review comments that were submitted in the portal. Mr. Fairbairn said he believes they saw them, but they had 10 comments. He added that he will check to see what is there. Mr. Fairbairn said the idea that comments are being filtered by Mr. Mednick is not happening.

Mr. Camacho said the comments from the last Charter Revision Commission have no relevance to what they are doing now. Mr. Levin said he strongly disagreed. Mr. Camacho said the work of the prior Charter Revision Commission is the current Charter.

Mr. Fairbairn said he will look for comments. Mr. Levin said it is the same request as before. He is asking to see what was submitted to the last Charter Revision Commission.

Mr. Levin said he made an inquiry to Senator Duff regarding a referendum to increase compensation to the Common Council. He said Senator Duff provided a citation of the Statute and asked Mr. Levin if he was aware of other towns or cities where Common Council compensation could only be considered through the approval of a referendum. Mr. Fairbairn suggested discussing this matter further when they discuss Common Council compensation.

Mr. Levin said Senator Duff was willing to pursue this to the State Legislature and asked Mr. Mednick if he could share his knowledge with the Commission and Senator Duff regarding other towns that have been frustrated by the State Statute.

Mr. Mednick explained that the way most communities address compensation is to have a Charter with a base line compensation with a COLA (cost of living adjustment) attached to the compensation which would be approved by a vote. Mr. Mednick said he will call Senator Duff. Mr. Levin said the problem is there has been no base line and no COLA. He suggested putting the compensation into the normal budget process.

VI. NEW BUSINESS

A. Panels for CRC Meetings

Mr. Mednick reviewed the Preliminary Panels For 2024-2025 Charter Revision Commission meetings that were included in the meeting packet. He said the plan was to invite representatives from a number of large cities to the January 7th meeting and then discuss the information gained from the meeting at the January 21st meeting. Mr. Mednick explained he scheduled discussions at follow up meetings.

Mr. Mednick described the format for the panel meetings and said the speakers will go first and comments from the Commissioners will be limited to five to seven minutes. Mr. Fairbairn said he liked the format and agreed that the Commissioners need the next meeting in order to have a follow up discussion.

Mr. Clark asked about the discussion regarding appointing or voting for Board of Estimate and Taxation members. Mr. Mednick said he will include that discussion in the February 4th meeting.

Mr. Mednick said the topic was raised about minority party representation and if there would be any Independent Party speakers. He said in the State of Connecticut, the only big city with a minority party is Hartford and they have the Working Families party. He added there is the No Label Party, but they are located in smaller towns. He said they could discuss this topic at the end of their January 7th meeting.

Ms. Bennett said Norwalk has an Independent Party.

B. Items to address

Ms. Bennett said that more information about Mary Eldridge, who receives a pension from the City under Article 13-14, should be included in the minutes. She asked that specific information about Articles 13-14 be included in the minutes.

Mr. Levin said his suggestion to table the minutes of December 3, 2024 was due to his raising the question about including more details in the minutes. He said he will share his comments.

Mr. Fairbairn said if something important is not included in the minutes, it can be included when they review the minutes. Typos, etc. can be corrected at that time as well.

Mr. Camacho explained that the meetings are recorded and can be heard verbatim. Mr. Levin said the minutes omit so much information and they are not useful.

Ms. Bennett suggested making meeting information more accessible to the public.

VII. DISCUSSION

There was no further discussion.

VIII. ADJOURNMENT

**** MR. CAMACHO MOVED TO ADJOURN
** MOTION PASSED UNANIMOUSLY**

There was no further discussion, and the meeting was unanimously adjourned at 7:32 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Rosemarie Lombardi
Telesco Secretarial Services