

**CITY OF NORWALK
CHARTER REVISION COMMISSION
DECEMBER 21, 2022
VIA TELECONFERENCE**

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ATTENDANCE: Patsy Brescia, Chair; Carl Dickens; Tyler Fairbairn; Angela Wasunna; Benita Watson (6:35 p.m.)

STAFF: Steven Mednick, Attorney

OTHERS: Gregory Burnett and Thomas Livingston, Norwalk Common Council members

I. CALL TO ORDER

Ms. Brescia called the meeting to order at 6:34 p.m.

II. ROLL CALL

Ms. Brescia called the Roll as indicated above.

III. APPROVAL OF MINUTES: December 7, 2022

The following correction was made to article 10 – should be dealing with the budget and article 10.

**** MR. FAIRBAIRN MOVED TO APPROVE THE MINUTES AS AMENDED**
**** MS. WASUNNA SECONDED**
**** MOTION PASSED UNANIMOUSLY**

Ms. Watson joined the meeting at 6:35 p.m.

IV. INITIAL REVIEW OF REVISED OPERATING, CAPITAL, AND BOND PROVISIONS

VI. COMMENTS BY COMMISSION COUNSEL STEVEN MEDNICK

Mr. Mednick said he sent a draft of Article 10 to everyone and tried in this first iteration to lay out structurally what the order would be. He said he wants to be sure the document is a readable and usable document. He took the Committee through the document beginning with the budget process. He noted that all the players in the budget process are required to work together to utilize best practices in the field. He noted that best practices would be commonly accepted practices. The Common Council through the Ordinance Committee can establish best practices.

It was recommended removing the reference to the taxing districts in the Charter. Mr. Mednick suggested adding the Planning and Zoning Commission as an entity that is involved in the budget process. Mr. Burnett described the Board of Estimate and Taxations process in the budget. Mr. Mednick noted the budget procedures are publicized and released at the beginning of the budget season. Mr. Dickens said he was concerned about when different bodies make their own rules. He added there is a huge lack of communication in the City.

The Committee members discussed the budget calendar. Mr. Mednick said that Mr. Dachowitz suggested issuing the budget calendar no later than the first Common Council meeting in October.

The Committee members reviewed 10-2-A. Ms. Brescia asked for clarification between a taxing district and a service district. Mr. Burnett said taxing district seems to be a more common term. Ms. Brescia said the Charter should explain the difference. Mr. Mednick explained that this procedure is not a procedure the taxing districts utilize. Mr. Burnett said taxing districts define where an individual lives.

The Committee members held a discussion to clarify the terms of a taxing district and a service district. Mr. Mednick said the language related to the taxing district should come out of the Charter.

Mr. Mednick said he wants to be sure they use consistent terminology. The Committee members discussed the budgeting process for the Board of Education. Ms. Brescia said they need to determine if the Board of Education holds a public hearing on the budget.

Mr. Mednick discussed overtime and noted that a lot of people do not understand how it is generated. A lot of bargaining units have provisions that target over time. He noted that a collective bargaining agreement would trump the Charter. Mr. Burnett said they already cover overtime during budget discussions – it is already a custom and practice. He suggested going back to the CFO to determine if he feels it is necessary to have verbiage about overtime in the Charter. Mr. Mednick said he would follow up with the CFO.

Mr. Mednick said he will do a revision based on everyone's comments. He noted this is an important section in the document. His objective is to have this turned around in January. He will take out the references to the taxing districts and narrow down the language.

Mr. Mednick discussed the capital budget and said this is driven by current language in the Ordinance. He said he does not like to put numbers in the Charter.

General Fund Budget – Mr. Mednick said there were not a lot of changes here. He said that Mr. Dachowitz wants to make clear that the budget submission is by the Mayor and CFO. He said that Norwalk has a slightly different procedure and that in most communities, it is the Mayor's budget. Mr. Dickens said that he feels the viewpoint of the citizens is that it is already the Mayor's budget and should be clearly defined in the Charter. Ms. Brescia agreed and suggested discussing this matter further. Mr. Mednick said that currently, it is the CFO's budget.

Mr. Mednick said he will revise the language regarding pronouns and will take out any references to taxing districts.

Ms. Wasunna suggested the articles are heavy in legalese and said they need to think about adding very simple language. Mr. Dickens agreed. Mr. Mednick said he would be happy to make it as simple and direct as possible. He added that he would be happy to have Ms. Wasunna review and make recommendations to the document. He added that he is a big advocate of adding explanatory sections. He said this is a tremendous opportunity to clarify and clean up this document so it is readable. He said he will do his best to keep this document as simple as possible.

The Committee discussed the libraries. Ms. Brescia said that two libraries are City departments and one is run by the Third Taxing District and the other by the Sixth Taxing District.

Mr. Dickens said they are spending a lot of time on this document and asked when there should be a periodic check with the City to confirm they are doing what the Charter says. Mr. Mednick said the Common Council can check on the Mayor and the Corporation Counsel can indicate who is not in compliance with the Charter. Mr. Dickens said this town is unique in that not all voices are heard. Mr. Mednick said that the theory of most charters is that they should be holding everyone accountable in a checks and balance system. Ms. Brescia said that when they get through this system, they will see there are checks and balances for the budget.

The Committee members discussed section 10-8. Mr. Mednick said he will revise the title. He wants to make it clear that the Board of Estimate and Taxation is required to hold a public hearing.

Ms. Brescia said she wants to be sure to differentiate the capital budget process from the operating budget process.

Mr. Mednick asked everyone to look at section 10-12 and said he will clean up any repetition. He asked how they deal with budget transfers during the course of the fiscal year. Mr. Burnett described the process and said it falls under the function of the Board of Estimate and Taxation.

10-9-C – Mr. Mednick said he can do a catch all paragraph to eliminate the redundancy.

10-11 – Mr. Mednick said that is standard language and there are no changes.

10-12 – Mr. Mednick said he will clean up the language. There were no changes recommended by the CFO.

Capital Budget – Mr. Mednick asked the Committee members to go through that section. He also said he would like the members of the Common Council to go through that section and said he would be happy to talk to Mr. Burnett and Mr. Livingston to get their thoughts. He said he and Mr. Dachowitz did not have any changes. He asked Mr. Dachowitz to check the dates.

10-24 – Mr. Mednick said he can ask the Speaker of the House to give him language for borrowing. The language was drafted by the Bond Council and he said Mr. Dachowitz was comfortable with the language. Ms. Wasunna said the language was clear.

Mr. Mednick said he will continue to have dialogues with Mr. Burnett, Mr. Dachowitz and Mr. Livingston to try and streamline the language as much as possible.

Mr. Burnett told Mr. Mednick that he and Mr. Livingston have a conflict with the next meeting. Mr. Livingston said he will try to get his comments to Mr. Mednick ahead of time. Mr. Mednick said he will have a discussion with Mr. Burnett and Mr. Livingston ahead of the meeting so their comments and concerns are reflected.

VII. ADJOURNMENT

Ms. Brescia wished everyone a happy, and healthy holiday season.

There was no further business and the meeting was unanimously adjourned at 9:13 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Rosemarie Lombardi
Telesco Secretarial Services