

**PUBLIC HEARING
AND SPECIAL MEETING OF THE CHARTER REVISION
COMMISSION
OCTOBER 29, 2024
HYBRID, COMMON COUNCIL CHAMBERS AND VIA ZOOM**

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 www.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. 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 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 Esther Murillo at emurillo@norwalkct.gov with the subject line "Public Comment" to provide written public comment prior to the meeting.

ATTENDANCE: Tyler Fairbairn, Chair; Douglas Hempstead, Vice Chair; Jo Bennett; Ed Camacho; James Clark; Carl Dickens; John Levin; Richard McQuaid, Town Clerk; Tanya Small-Rhodes

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

OTHER: Steve Mednick, Commission Counsel

I. CALL TO ORDER

Mr. Fairbairn called the meeting to order at 6:33 p.m.

II. ROLL CALL

Mr. Fairbairn called the Roll as indicated above.

III. APPROVAL OF MINUTES

**** MR. MCQUAID MOVED TO ACCEPT THE MINUTES AS PRESENTED
** MOTION PASSED UNANIMOUSLY**

IV. PUBLIC HEARING: STATUTORY PUBLIC HEARING REGARDING CHARTER REVISION ISSUES

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

Mr. Fairbairn reviewed the public hearing format and noted that speakers had three minutes to speak. He explained that another statutory public hearing will be held later in the process. He added that people are always welcome to submit comments through the Charter Revision Commission's web page.

Ms. Lisa Brinton urged including checks and balances in the Charter and increasing the number of Common Council members.

Mr. Fred Wilms urged consideration of minority representation, special elections for vacancies and expanding the size of the Common Council.

Ms. Elsa Peterson Obachowski spoke about the taxing district boundaries and said she believes the First Taxing District was open to discussion. She recommended that all taxing districts discuss the issue to come to a consensus.

Mr. Tanner Thompson spoke about the importance of having diverse representation and encouraged a stronger representation of parties.

Mr. Fairbairn explained that speakers who did not have enough time to speak, could follow up through the website.

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Ms. Diane Cece addressed the public hearing format and suggested looking at the three minute rule. She added that public hearings should not be held earlier than 7:00 p.m. The City needs to do a better job of posting public hearing notices. She suggested including an executive summary. Ms. Cece recommended increasing the number of Common Council members from 15 to at least 20 and adding an information technology committee and an energy and environmental committee.

Ms. Diane Lauricella explained she began a list of what she would like to see the Charter Revision Commission take up. The list included expanding the number of Common Council members, considering a four-year term with term limits for Common Council members. She said the time has come for gender equality on boards and committees. Public participation should be offered at all board and committee meetings and electing Board of Estimate and Taxation members should be explored.

Mr. Dickens asked if the Charter Revision Commission can take up term limits. Mr. Mednick explained there is no statutory authorization to limit terms for local officials.

Mr. Dickens agreed that the three-minute limit is not enough. Mr. Fairbairn explained that people could submit their correspondence on the website.

**** MR. HEMPSTEAD MOVED TO SUSPEND THE THREE (3) MINUTE PUBLIC HEARING RULE TO ALLOW PREVIOUS SPEAKERS TO COMPLETE THEIR COMMENTS**

**** MOTION PASSED UNANIMOUSLY**

Mr. Tanner Thompson explained why additional minority representatives were needed in Norwalk.

Due to issues with the audio, Mr. Fairbairn asked speakers to follow up with an e-mail.

Ms. Lisa Brinton said that anything that would improve representation would go a long way for the City and people would feel their voices were being heard.

Mr. Fred Wilms said physical guardrails kept the State solvent. Anything where more voices, with different perspectives are heard, leads to better outcomes.

Mr. Mednick said they are limited to the methodology as to how to elect people. Mr. Fairbairn said they will continue to let the public know what the Commission can and can not do.

Mr. Levin asked if there were any municipalities that were able to have term limits. Mr. Mednick said he was aware of a couple of towns, but they are not enforceable and do not have the authority to include term limits in the Charter.

Mr. McQuaid explained that the Common Council chose to find someone from the outside who is an expert on working on the Charter and feels the Commission should follow his lead. He encouraged this group to follow the lead of the person hired by the Common Council.

Mr. Tyson Canevari expressed concern over the leaf blower issue. Mr. Fairbairn explained that the leaf blower issue is an ordinance and is separate from the Charter.

Mr. Canevari said there should be more interactive with committee/Common Council members during meetings and open to more dialogue.

V. ADJOURN PUBLIC HEARING

There were no further comments, and the public hearing was unanimously adjourned at 7:20 p.m.

VI. CALL SPECIAL MEETING TO ORDER

Mr. Fairbairn called the special meeting to order at 7:20 p.m.

VII. ROLL CALL

Mr. Fairbairn called the Roll as indicated above.

VIII. If time permits. MEETING WITH ELECTED AND APPOINTED OFFICIALS:

(A) Mayor, Members of the Council, Board of Education, Board of Estimate and Other Boards and Commissions; and,

(B) Other Elected Officials and Former Elected Officials or Representatives of the City

This discussion did not take place this evening.

IX. COMMISSION DISCUSSION AND SCHEDULE ISSUES

The Commissioners discussed scheduling upcoming meetings. The next meeting will take place on November 13, 2024 at 6:30 p.m. This will be an opportunity for a first round table

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discussion. Mr. Mednick said he holds round table discussions with experts. He added he will have a better idea after hearing from the Mayor and Common Council members what their priorities are.

Mr. Hempstead requested historical background information on minority representation on the Common Council. Mr. Camacho asked for information about when representation changes were made to the Board of Education.

Mr. Levin asked if public comments could be added to the next meeting agenda. Mr. Mednick said he will have to check the notice. He added they can include public comments at any meeting, but it has to be on the agenda.

Mr. Dickens said he would like to see the meetings moved to some of the neighborhoods, so people do not have to go to City Hall. It was suggested asking taxing districts to host a meeting as long as they are handicap accessible.

X. ADJOURNMENT

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

There was no further discussion, and the meeting was unanimously adjourned at 7:45 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Rosemarie Lombardi
Telesco Secretarial Services