

**CITY OF NORWALK
CHARTER COMMISSION
REGULAR MEETING
OCTOBER 12, 2022**

ATTENDANCE: Patsy Brescia, Chair; Richard McQuaid, Vice Chair;
Carl Dickens, Tyler Fairbairn, Benita Watford, Michael Witherspoon

STAFF: Atty. Steven Mednick, consultant

OTHERS: Angela Wasunna, Mayor Harry Rilling, Diane Cece, Diana Lauricella,
Barbara Smyth, Jenn McMurrer, Rick Bonenfant; Jordan Schantz,
Assistant City Clerk/Legislative Assistant

This hybrid meeting was held via Zoom and in person.

I. CALL TO ORDER

Ms. Brescia called the meeting to order at 6:02 p.m.

II. ROLL CALL

A quorum was present.

III. APPROVAL OF MINUTES:

• September 21, 2022

**** MR. DICKENS MOVED TO APPROVE THE MINUTES OF THE SEPTEMBER 21, 2022 MEETING.**

**** MR. WITHERSPOON SECONDED.**

**** THE MOTION TO APPROVE THE MINUTES OF THE SEPTEMBER 21, 2022 MEETING AS SUBMITTED PASSED UNANIMOUSLY.**

IV. PUBLIC HEARING

Ms. Brescia said that in the Norwalk Hour, it was incorrectly stated that they would be reporting out in 2022, but that will not be possible. Therefore, a second public hearing will be scheduled.

Mr. John Levin of 249 Chestnut Hill Road came forward. Mr. Levin said that this was a very important City Commission and requested that they consider creating alternates. He added that he would like to volunteer as an alternate as well.

Ms. Brescia said that they had been appointed by the City Council. Mr. Levin said that the Commission could appoint alternates. Ms. Brescia thanked Mr. Levin.

A call for those who might be on line and wished to speak was made. There was no response. Ms. Brescia said that they would continue on to the next item on the agenda and return to the public hearing in order to give time for other members of the public to join the meeting.

V. DISCUSSION OF SCHEDULE AND NEXT STEPS

Ms. Brescia asked Atty. Mednick if he had any comments.

Atty. Mednick said that the control of the Commission is controlled by statute and there is no provision for alternates.

Atty. Mednick said that he originally requested having a meeting every other week. One suggestion would be having the meetings on the first and third Wednesdays. He also requested that the Mayor and Corporation Counsel attend a meeting so they can express their concerns. He added that it might be beneficial would be

He suggested meeting with Evergreen Solutions after the next scheduled meeting to hear their suggestions.

The Chair has indicated that there would be another public hearing, so that would happen after meeting with the elected officials and Evergreen.

The general consensus of the Committee was that the first and third Wednesday would be acceptable.

Atty. Mednick explained that he would not be available on the 19th, but would be available on the 26th.

**** MR. DICKENS MOVED TO SCHEDULE THE REGULAR MEETINGS FOR THE CHARTER COMMISSION ON THE FIRST AND THIRD WEDNESDAYS STARTING IN NOVEMBER.**

**** MS. WATFORD SECONDED.**

**** THE MOTION PASSED UNANIMOUSLY.**

The discussion then moved to scheduling the time for the meetings.

**** MR. MCQUAID MOVED TO HAVE THE MEETING START AT 6:00 P.M.**

**** MR. DICKENS SECONDED.**

**** THE MOTION PASSED UNANIMOUSLY.**

**** MR. MCQUAID MOVED TO SCHEDULE THE NEXT MEETING FOR OCTOBER 26TH.**

**** MR. WITHERSPOON SECONDED.**

**** THE MOTION PASSED UNANIMOUSLY.**

Atty. Mednick then explained that he had reorganized the text of the current Charter and re-arranged the text into a more comprehensive order. He then gave a brief overview of the order that he was providing as a potential framework for the Committee. They are:

- Article I – Construction of the Charter for the City of Norwalk
- Article II – Incorporation and General Powers
- Article III – Elections, Electors, Elected Officials, Terms of Office and Other provisions.
- Article IV – The Common Council (Ordinances, Resolutions, & Orders)
- Article V – The Mayor
- Article VI – Other Elected Officials
- Article VII – Boards and Commissions (General requirements, Boards Required by Charter. i.e. Board of Estimate & Taxation, etc.)
- Article VIII – Departments and Department Heads.
- Article IX – Department and Board of Education
- Article X – Budget, Public Funds and Finance
- Article XI – Historical Provisions
- Article XII – Taxing Districts

He noted that there were a great number of annotations that would be involved since it is important to indicate where the information was located in the current charter and where they are found in the new structure.

Atty. Mednick encouraged the Committee to allow public input throughout the process.

Mr. Dickens suggested that they consider changing the phrase “Councilmen” to a more gender neutral terms.

Ms. Brescia said that she thought it would be important for the Commissioners to be provided with a map of the taxing districts and the wards. Atty. Mednick said that in Connecticut, the districts change every 10 years. Mr. McQuaid said that the Taxing Districts do not have anything to do with the legislation. There are three maps, one of the Taxing Districts, one of the voting districts and a municipal ward one. Discussion followed.

Public Hearing CONT'D

The public hearing was re-opened to allow any member of the public who wished to address the Committee to speak.

Ms. Diane Cece said that she had joined the meeting at 6:10 p.m.. She had posted a comment regarding allowing public comment, which was discussed. She asked if they should direct their emails to a specific person. She was told to send them to Mr. Jordan Schantz, Assistant City Clerk/Legislative Assistant.

Ms. Cece asked if there would be reconsideration of the 2016 attempt to adjust the Charter. Atty. Mednick said that if there was something that a person felt was relevant, he will track it and provide the Commissioners with those comments. He said that someone needs to introduce the documents from 2016 into the record.

Ms. Brescia said that they had scheduled the meetings for the first and third Wednesdays of the month.

Ms. Diane Lauricella greeted the Commissioners. She thanked the Commissioners for their work and said she liked to work with attorneys. She said that she would endorse Ms. Cece's comments because she had been a member of a group that reviewed the Charter. She encouraged the Commissioners to review the minutes and notes from the previous Charter Revision. She said that in Wilton, they had a listening session. She said that she thought the one thing that had been approved was the gender neutrality, but that had not been codified.

Ms. Lauricella said that she thought they should reorganize the agencies, particularly in terms of the environmental agencies. She added that the terms of office need to be reconsidered and suggested that they have more than 15 members of the Council in the Districts and the at large roles. She said that they had not taken into consideration having the Planning and Zoning Commissioners being elected rather than appointed.

Ms. Lauricella said that when Mayor Moccia was in office, as president of the League of Women Voters, she had campaigned for having the Public Comment in all the Committees and have it codified.

Ms. Lauricella said that if the City must go back to telecommunication meetings, they should codify that they have the video be activated. She said that not seeing people's faces is very sad and not very transparent.

**** MR. MCQUAID MOVED TO CLOSE PUBLIC COMMENT AT THIS TIME.**

**** MR. DICKENS SECONDED.**

**** THE MOTION PASSED UNANIMOUSLY.**

ADJOURNMENT

**** MR. MCQUAID MOVED TO ADJOURN.**
**** MR. DICKENS SECONDED.**
**** THE MOTION PASSED UNANIMOUSLY.**

The meeting adjourned at 6:47 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

S. L. Soltes
Telesco Secretarial Services