CITY OF NORWALK
CHARTER REVISION COMMISSION
PUBLIC HEARING
COMMON COUNCIL CHAMBERS AND VIA TELECONFERENCE
MAY 17, 2023

ATTENDANCE: Patsy Brescia, Chair; Richard McQuaid Vice Chair; Angela Wasunna; Benita Watford; Michael Witherspoon

OTHERS: Attorney Steven Mednick Counsel to the Commission

I. CALL TO ORDER

Ms. Brescia called the meeting to order at 6:31 p.m.

II. **ROLL CALL**

Ms. Brescia called the Roll as indicated above. A Quorum was present.

III. **SECOND PUBLIC HEARING IN ACCORDANCE WITH C.G.S. §7-191(a)**

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

Mr. David Westmoreland, Second Taxing District Commissioner thanked the Commissioners for this work. He said he briefly reviewed the report and there are large sections dealing with the taxing districts. He said he wanted to be sure the taxing districts were notified of any changes.

Mr. Mednick responded to Mr. Westmoreland and explained that the only changes he will see in the Charter is re-codified numbers and gender neutral language was added. No structural changes were done. He said this can be validated by looking at the annotations. Mr. Westmoreland suggested sending a letter to the taxing districts to let them know. Mr. Mednick added that the Chair was very concerned about being sure everyone understands what taxing districts are and what they do. He said he was happy to get information out to the appropriate parties at the taxing districts.

Mr. John Levin thanked the Commission for posting the current draft. He said he would try to read it. He said he would love to hear feedback from the Commission about how it is going. Ms. Brescia said the Commission is working on a statement. Mr. Mednick shared his screen showing the statement. Ms. Brescia said they created a table of contents and worked to bring all of the information in a logical order. They will be presenting their conclusion in the next month.

Ms. Brescia gave an overview of some of the major items the Commission has been addressing. Mr. Levin said that at the current rate, the next Charter Revision will take place in 2123. He said it would be delightful if the residents of 2023 could leave them something fabulous in the Charter for 2123. He added that he hoped there would be room for levity in one paragraph in the Charter. Ms. Brescia said the Commission suggested another charter revision in two years and a charter revision every five years.

Ms. Diane Keefe talked about having other parties on the major commissions in the City. She said having dissenting voices can lead to a good outcome. She said it was a good idea for the Mayor to have a four year term. Ms. Keefe expressed concern over the lack of turnout this evening. Ms. Brescia explained there is a requirement that boards and commissions have to have a balance between different parties. Ms. Keefe said it would be good to allow the Common Council and the public have a voice on who is on the Police Commission.

Ms. Lisa Rogers said she agreed with Ms. Keefe and said that people on the Police Commission should be elected and not appointed. She said she voted against a four year term for Mayor last time, but is now in favor. Ms. Rogers said that Planning and Zoning commissioners are appointed by the Mayor and asked if there was any consideration to have those positions elected. Ms. Brescia explained that the Commission did not focus on that. Ms. Rogers said it is disappointing to know that all of the people on Planning and Zoning were appointed by the Mayor without any input from the residents. Ms. Brescia said they are recommended by the Mayor and then voted on by the Common Council.

Ms. Diane Cece asked if the public hearing would be held open for written comments since the summary was not posted until tonight. She said this is not the first charter revision and she said she thought the intent of this charter revision was to do a lot of clean up. Now it seems to be more lengthy, expensive and comprehensive this go around. She said that if this was just an intent to clean up the Charter, it would be hard pressed to believe the change to the Mayor's term to four years is not substantial. Ms. Cece noted that it did not pass four years ago and said she is opposed to changing the term. She said there is no consideration to changing any of the appointed boards and commissions to being elected positions. The one there is most concern with is Planning and Zoning especially since they were recently combined. She said this is something that should go before the people. Ms. Cece said this has evolved into something that was not expected. She thought it was only going to be language changes.

Ms. Cece asked when the public hearing will be closed for written comments. Mr. Mednick said the Commission meets next Wednesday and they will accept any comments from residents at that time.

Ms. Brescia explained that the idea to modernize and bring the Charter up to 2023 was one of the many directives; however, there were other issues such as the budget areas. She said the four-year term for Mayor was brought up from people who were in favor of it.

There were no other comments.

IV. <u>COMMISSION DELIBERATION: CONSOLIDATED CALENDAR DRAFT REPORT: AVAILABLE ON THE WEBSITE; AND, HARD COPIES, IF REQUESTED FROM THE TOWN CLERK</u>

Mr. Mednick explained that there will be more opportunities to speak. This public hearing is open through next week and then the Common Council will have a public hearing. The plan is to have a final meeting of the Commission on May 24th and then get the document to the Common Council on June 2nd . A public hearing will take place on July 10th and Common Council action will take place on July 17th .

Ms. Brescia asked Mr. Mednick to run through the Sunset Provisions on page 175.

Ms. Watford left the meeting at 7:23 p.m.

Mr. Mednick reviewed the sections under the Historical Provisions, including the Historical Counsel District. He explained that he will be cleaning up the language and after the redistricting, it will no longer be valid. He reviewed the Norwalk Harbor. A lot of this has been absorbed by the Harbor Management Commission. Mr. McQuaid said the Harbor Master and Deputy Harbor Master are appointed by the State. Mr. Mednick will look at that and will have an answer next week.

Mr. Mednick will check on the section on streets, sidewalks and building lines. He will also check on section on Mary Eldridge – Pension.

Mr. Mednick discussed the Fire and Police Benevolent funds and said he believes both have been rolled int the Pension fund. If he can confirm that they do not exist, he will remove them from the Charter. He reviewed the historical provisions for personnel and said the general feeling is that all of these provisions are not being followed. He recommends that the Common Council adopt an Ordinance. Once the Ordinance is adopted those provisions can fade from the Charter.

Ms. Brescia requested a brief discussion on why the sections are being sunset. Mr. Mednick said he will do that. In addition, he is going through all of the definitions to be sure everything is being dealt with uniformly throughout the document. He wants to make sure they are not over codifying the current government.

In response to a comment about the length of the Charter, Mr. Mednick said it is about the same length of other city Charters and is smaller than the current Charter.

Ms. Brescia will let the Library Board know they will have an opportunity to comment at next week's meeting. Mr. Mednick suggested that Ms. Brescia ask them how they want to be dealt with in the Charter.

Mr. Mednick will send the document to the Commissioners next week for a final review before they vote on it and then send it to the Common Council. The summary document will be converted to a transmittal letter. He said there are not a lot of substantial changes, except for the four-year term for Mayor. Mr. Brescia asked Mr. Mednick to articulate in the letter why they made certain decisions. There seems to be a lot of confusion. He said the letter will articulate the due diligence that was conducted by the Commission.

V. <u>ADJOURNMENT</u>

****	MR. MCQUAID MOVED TO ADJOURN**
****	MR. WITHERSPOON SECONDED**
****	MOTION PASSED UNANIMOUSLY**

There was no further business, and the meeting was unanimously adjourned at 7:28 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Rosemarie Lombardi
Telesco Secretarial Services