

**CITY OF NORWALK
CHARTER REVISION COMMISSION
COMMON COUNCIL CHAMBERS
AND VIA ZOOM
APRIL 10, 2023**

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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 read into the record, they should be submitted at least three hours in advance of the meeting start time. Please email Zulma Roundtree at zroundtree@norwalkct.gov to provide written public comment prior to the meeting.

ATTENDANCE: Patsy Brescia, Chair; Carl Dickens; Tyler Fairbairn;
Benita Watford Raleigh;

OTHERS: Steven Mednick, Commission Counsel

I. CALL TO ORDER

Ms. Brescia called the meeting to order at 6:33 p.m.

II. ROLL CALL

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

III. APPROVAL OF MINUTES:

Regular Meeting: March 29, 2023

No action was taken on the approval of the minutes this evening.

IV. DISCUSSION AND ACTION ITEMS: ARTICLES I – III, VI AND IX

Ms. Brescia said she submitted an article that provided an update on the Charter Revision Commission to *The Hour* and *Nancy on Norwalk*, but she has not yet seen it in *The Hour*.

Mr. Fairbairn said he watched the last meeting and noted that the April 5th date was not scheduled initially. That date was moved due to the holidays and school breaks. He said that he heard the Charter Revision Commission was moving beyond its original charge. He said that it was never the intention to strictly clean the language. He encouraged people to send their comments or attend the April 19th hearing. The Commission can't take Facebook or Nancy on Norwalk comments as formal comments. He urged people to use the official channel. Ms. Brescia said the Commission was asked to look at other issues and bring the Charter up to date.

A. §3-3.C, §6-3, §6-4 and §6-5 - Sheriff, Treasurer, Selectmen and Constables

Mr. Mednick shared his screen. Mr. Dickens noted that there was no outcry about the Selectman positions coming out of the Charter. In testimony at the last meeting no one knew why they ran for the position of Constable or what they were supposed to do. One person ran because they knew it was a position that needed to be filled.

Mr. Witherspoon noted that Mr. Cooke said he has work all the time; however Ms. Eglebaum said she has no work. There needs to be a greater understanding of that position.

Ms. Brescia said she had not heard from the present Treasurer; however, Mr. Burgess spoke with her after the Board of Education presentation and said he hoped they would maintain the position. She spoke with Ms. O'Toole Giandurco who felt it would be best to eliminate the position of Selectman. Ms. Brescia said the Constables do not get any training and have to carry their own insurance. She added that serving papers may be done in a hostile environment. She suggested eliminating the Treasurer and Selectman positions and keeping the Sheriff and Constable. She said they can address these positions in the next charter revision in three years.

Mr. Mednick said they have to recognize these positions are up for reelection at the same time the charter will be on the ballot. He asked if somebody in the City should assume responsibility for training the Constables and Sheriffs and suggested adding that to the provision if these positions are retained.

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Mr. Dickens said that newly elected Councilmembers should be trained as well. He added that is something to consider for all positions. Mr. Fairbairn suggested making these positions appointments. Ms. Watford Raleigh said these positions need to have training and once they are trained, they can parcel out the workload.

Ms. Brescia said there are a couple of questions they need answered before they can vote.

Ms. Brescia asked for the following vote:

MOVE TO CHECK ON ITEMS AND VOTE AT THE NEXT MEETING

Mr. Mednick asked for clarification and said that at some point, they have to vote on substance. Ms. Brescia said there are a couple of questions that need to be answered. In reading some of the information from the Common Council members, she said she thought there was a reference to them using a City Sheriff. She also heard that the Treasurer has no responsibility under the Charter. Two of the three Selectmen felt that position should be eliminated, and several Constables are in favor of maintaining their positions. Mr. Mednick offered suggestions on wording.

**** MS. BRESCIA ASKED ALL IN FAVOR TO REPEAL THE TREASURER AND SELECTMAN POSITIONS AND RETAIN THE SHERIFF AND CONSTABLE POSITIONS AND HAVE A TRAINING COMPONENT EFFECTIVE THE 2025 ELECTION CYCLE. THIS CAN BE CONDITIONED ON RECEIVING MORE INFORMATION**

**** UNANIMOUS**

C. Background Document #5 re – Term of Office and Term Commencement Date

The Commissioners discussed the terms of office and it was noted that when they had this discussion they proposed doing four years for everybody. Mr. Fairbairn suggested two years for the Common Council. It was also noted that serving on the Common Council is a tremendous amount of work for net to no pay. Four years is a long time to serve for someone who may not be as committed as they were at the beginning of their term. Ms. Brescia agreed and said it was important to move to a four year term for the Mayor. She said it would be wise to do four years for the Mayor and two years for the Common Council members and then consider four years for Common Council members during the next Charter Revision.

**** MR. DICKENS MOVED TO SUPPORT MOVING THE MAYOR TO A FOUR-YEAR TERM AND THE TERM FOR THE COMMON COUNCIL WILL REMAIN AT TWO YEARS EFFECTIVE WITH THE 2025 ELECTION**

**** MS. WATFORD RALEIGH SECONDED**
**** MOTION PASSED UNANIMOUSLY**

The Commissioners discussed the commencement date for the term of office for an elected official. Mr. Mednick suggested considering having a transition office where the newly elected official could obtain information. This way when they start their term, they will be up to date. This gives them a place to operate. He also suggested that during this period between the election and the commencement of the term, the incumbent Mayor may not make any staffing, board, commission or committee changes through the end of their term.

The Board discussed moving from the first business day in December following the election to the first business day in January following the election.

**** MR. DICKENS MOVED THAT THE COMMENCEMENT DATE WILL BE THE FIRST BUSINESS DAY IN JANUARY FOLLOWING THE ELECTION;**

A TRANSITION OFFICE WILL BE MADE AVAILABLE FOR THE NEWLY ELECTED MAYOR AND COMMON COUNCIL MEMBERS WITH COOPERATION FROM THE OUTGOING MAYOR AND LEADERSHIP OF THE COMMON COUNCIL;

THE MAYOR WILL NOT MAKE ANY STAFFING, BOARD, COMMISSION OR COMMITTEE CHANGES THROUGH THE END OF THEIR TERM

**** MS. WATFORD RALEIGH SECONDED**
**** MOTION PASSED UNANIMOUSLY**

B. §3-6. B (1) - Mayoral Succession and Temporary Disability

Mr. Mednick said he believed it was already agreed that the successor to the Mayor would be the President of the Common Council.

Mr. Mednick reviewed the temporary disability process. He said that the person acting as Mayor, can vote to break a tie vote, but can not vote as a member of the Common Council.

The temporary disability would have to be one that renders the Mayor unable to perform their duties of office. Mr. Mednick said he will look at the language and make revisions.

V. DISCUSSION: ARTICLES IV AND V – THE COUNCIL AND MAYOR

VI. COUNSEL PREVIEW: ARTICLES VII AND VIII – BOARDS AND COMMISSIONS; AND, DEPARTMENTS AND DEPARTMENT HEADS

Mr. Mednick said the members of the Board of Education raised an issue regarding compliance and cooperation at the last meeting, because they thought the provision was directed at them. He said this is a repetitive provision. He suggested deleting 9-4.

Ms. Brescia said the members of the Board of Education asked about the term department and how they are defined as a department. Mr. Mednick said they are department. He suggested placing it at the beginning of the Charter in 2-5. The Commissioners agreed to move the language under compliance and cooperations.

Mr. Mednick discussed 9-5 – Reporting requirements. He said the Superintendent of Norwalk Public Schools expressed concern about this provision at the last meeting. He said the reason he recommended this language was to be sure the Board of Education did not commit the City to funds for multiple years. Any multi-year agreement has to go to the City. He said he will come up with language.

Mr. Mednick said the Superintendent of Norwalk Public Schools talked about coming up with an alternate schedule for their contracts. It seems they were searching for an exemption. He said he suggested to their attorney that if there s a remedy, they could bring it to the Common Council.

Mr. Mednick said the Superintendent also raised a greater role in the capital budget process. He said he reminded her that the capital budget process is a general government process and not a Board of Education process. They are not a participant in the City wide decision making.

Mr. Mednick said he will draft the language and when it is ready will send it to the Board of Education's attorney for review.

VII. NEXT STEPS: REVIEW OF MEETING SCHEDULE

A meeting was scheduled for Saturday, April 15th at 8:30 a.m. at City Hall, where the Commission will go over articles 4-5.

Mr. Mednick said he will continue to edit the document until the final Common Council action in August.

The meeting on April 19th will start with public comment. Ms. Brescia said that meeting will not be a public hearing. She said she is frustrated because they can't get any coverage in the local paper.

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VIII. ADJOURNMENT

**** MR. DICKENS MOVED TO ADJOURN**
**** MS. WATFORD RALEIGH SECONDED**
**** MOTION PASSED UNANIMOUSLY**

There was no further business, and the meeting was unanimously adjourned at 8:26 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Rosemarie Lombardi
Telesco Secretarial Services