

**CITY OF NORWALK
CHARTER REVISION COMMISSION
REGULAR MEETING
MARCH 9, 2016**

ATTENDANCE: William Fitzgerald, Chairman; Jerry Petrini, Vice Chairman;
Stephen Keogh, Yvonne Rodriguez, Michael Witherspoon, Glenn
Iannaccone

ABSENT: Mary Roman

STAFF: Mario Coppola, Corporation Counsel

OTHERS: Stuart Wells, Democratic Registrar, Lisa Thomson

ROLL CALL

The meeting was called to order at 6:40 p.m. by Mr. Fitzgerald.

ACCEPTANCE OF MINUTES

Mr. Keogh noted a few corrections to the minutes of the Regular Meeting of February 22, 2016.

On page 2, in the third to last paragraph change “Keheo” to “Keogh” and in the second to last paragraph change “Kehoe” to “Keogh”.

On page 3, first paragraph change “Fitzpatrick” to “Fitzgerald”.

**** MR. KEOGH MOVED TO ACCEPT THE AMENDED MINUTES OF
FEBRUARY 22, 2016.**

**** MS. RODRIGUEZ SECONDED.**

**** THE MOTION PASSED UNANIMOUSLY.**

Mr. Fitzgerald thanked the Commission for their service and Mr. Wells for his assistance.

OLD BUSINESS/NEW BUSINESS

Mr. Fitzgerald asked the members for their thoughts and opinions.

Ms. Rodriguez mentioned a comment made by Mr. Doug Hempstead at the public hearing and said she favored some staff help for the Common Council.

She said she favored a 4-year term for Mayor and keep Common Council members at 2 years.

Mr. Iannaccone asked what an election will look like 2 years after the Mayor is elected. Mr. Wells said the Council will stand for election and some of the Board of Education.

Mr. Keogh said even if the turnout is lower it will be better than having staggered terms and confusing the public. Mr. Wells said the turnout is about 35,000 voters for Presidential elections, 25,000 for a Governor and 15 to 16,000 for Mayor.

Mr. Fitzgerald pointed out this is the year to vote on Charter Revision since it is a Presidential year. He asked Mr. Wells how the ballot may look this year. Mr. Wells said all of the Charter Revision questions could fit on the front page. Mr. Fitzgerald asked Mr. Wells to do a mock ballot for the Commission for the next meeting.

Mr. Witherspoon said he supported a 4-year term for Mayor and Town Clerk and leave the Council at 2 years.

Mr. Fitzgerald asked Ms. Thomson to comment. She said on "twittersphere" people are asking if the Mayor's term is lengthened will it begin in 2017 or 2019. Mr. Fitzgerald said that is something to be brought up at the next public forum.

Ms. Thomson also inquired about public questions about Planning & Zoning. She said with Norwalk growing the Charter can be further revised as to what the government will look like in the future. Mr. Fitzgerald requested she make written submissions prior to the next public hearing.

A recess was called at 7:09 p.m. to move the meeting to Room A300.

The meeting went on the record again at 7:18 p.m.

Mr. Fitzgerald thanked Mr. Keogh for being a tremendous colleague and all his hard work and invited him to speak. Mr. Keogh shared draft edits he made to the Charter for discussion.

He first discussed 1-166 (Election of Officers) and said he changed Councilmen to Common Council Members. Mr. Petrini had suggested Council Representatives. Mr. Keogh's draft eliminated Treasurer, City Sheriff, town officers, Selectmen and Constables, while Mayor and Town Clerk were changed to 4 year terms.

There was a debate about whether or not the Charter Revision questions would fit on the front page. Mr. Coppola said everybody has to get the word out so the public knows and also have the people working the polls instruct voters on Election Day.

Mr. Keogh referred to 1-288 (Board of Estimate and Taxation) and added language to give the Mayor the provision to appoint one member to the Common Council one week after the newly-elected Common Council takes office. The "after taking office" in the present Charter refers to the Mayor and needs to be changed if the Mayor's term is bumped to 4 years.

The next Section was 1-214 (Officers and Employees). Mr. Coppola concluded more work should be done on this section to spell out the duties of City Sheriff and City Treasurer.

The next Section was 1-225 (Compensation Fixed by Counsel). Mr. Keogh said each member of the Common Council will receive the same amount of compensation. Mr. Petrini said in 1980 the Charter was changed to increase Councilmen's pay from \$300 to \$600. He said based on inflation 1980 dollars would be \$1,850 today. Mr. Petrini favored a formula of 1.5% of the Mayor's base salary which would be \$2,150.

Mr. Coppola suggested a fixed number. Mr. Fitzgerald said possibly \$2,400 because that is \$200 a month. The Commission computed that would cost the City an additional \$27,000 and concurred it was not a prohibitive cost.

Mr. Petrini did not favor a flat rate. Mr. Coppola said maybe 2% of the Mayor's salary which would be \$2,820. They agreed Common Council members salary be 2% of the Mayor's base salary exclusive of any benefits; and each Council member's salary shall be equal and no additional compensation be provided for service as an officer, committee chair or other position on the Common Council.

Mr. Fitzgerald left the meeting at 8:18 p.m.

Mr. Coppola suggested a power point presentation at the March 22 public hearing to disclose why the Commission is recommending its changes to the Charter. He said then open up the meeting to public comment.

Mr. Fitzgerald returned to the meeting at 8:22 p.m.

Mr. Coppola informed Mr. Fitzgerald about the idea of a power point presentation. Mr. Coppola suggested do the presentation, have public comments and then take a recess and discuss the other outstanding issues that will be passed on to the Council.

Mr. Keogh pointed out we do have to have Constables and he took a look at the State statute and the City cannot have more than seven. He wrote a draft that stated the Mayor will have 30 days from taking office to appoint 7 Constables, subject to the affirmative vote of the majority of the Common Council, to serve a term of 4 years and not more than 3 will belong to the same political party. If a vacancy occurs then the Mayor can appoint a replacement subject to a majority of the Common Council.

Mr. Coppola asked what happens when a Constable's term expires. Mr. Petrini wondered does the Constable keep serving until a replacement is appointed. Mr. Keogh said this provision is the most likely to be challenged in court.

There was a discussion about whether the Constable should remain an elected position or become an appointed position. Mr. Wells said if the Constables are appointed it would open it up to more people.

Mr. Petrini favored leaving the Constables the way they were. Mr. Fitzgerald asked Mr. Wells if that would effect the ballot. Mr. Wells said the Constables would wind up on the back.

Mr. Keogh discussed Section 1-174 (Vacancies). Mr. Keogh asked what happens if the Mayor resigns before his term is up. Mr. Coppola said he will research what other towns do.

Mr. Petrini discussed six points outside of what the Commission was charged with that were brought up at the Public Hearing. He has prepared a Memo that will include these points and possibly more suggestions from the next public hearing that will then be forwarded to the Common Council for review and possible further revision of the Charter. The items for discussion were:

- 1) Hire a City Planner
- 2) People using Norwalk Facilities (Calf Pasture and Dump) that did not have their cars registered in Norwalk
- 3) People who live outside the district pay higher rates for water
- 4) A Citizens Review Board for the police
- 5) Eliminate the Redevelopment Agency
- 6) Hire a City Manager

Mr. Fitzgerald asked if the Commission needed another meeting on Monday, March 14. The Commission agreed the meeting was not necessary.

**** MR. KEOGH MOVED TO DISPENSE WITH THE MEETING ON MONDAY MARCH 14, 2016.**

**** MR. WITHERSPOON SECONDED.**

**** THE MOTION PASSED UNANIMOUSLY.**

EXECUTIVE SESSION

There was no Executive Session.

NEXT MEETING DATE

The next meeting is the public hearing scheduled for March 22, 2016 at 6:30 p.m. in the Community Room.

ADJOURNMENT

**** MR. PETRINI MOVED TO ADJOURN.**

**** MR. KEOGH SECONDED.**

**** THE MOTION PASSED UNANIMOUSLY.**

The meeting was adjourned at 9:00 p.m.

Respectfully submitted

G. Venuto
Telesco Secretarial Services