

COMMON COUNCIL SPECIAL MEETING JUNE 20, 2023
NORWALK, CT COMMON COUNCIL CHAMBERS AND VIA ZOOM

ALL COMMON COUNCIL ACTIONS TAKEN AT THIS MEETING TO APPROVE EXPENDITURES AND CONTRACTS OR TO ACCEPT BIDS AND OTHER PROPOSALS REQUIRING THE EXPENDITURE OF CITY FUNDS ARE SUBJECT TO THE AVAILABILITY OF FUNDS

To allow public access, anyone may access a meeting by telephone, Zoom, and/or the City of Norwalk YouTube channel. Specific instructions and links can be found at norwalkct.gov/meetings

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Members of the public who wish to view the meeting, but are not participating, can view a live stream on the City of Norwalk YouTube channel. This stream is delayed by approximately 20 seconds. Please find the information using the link above. The meeting recording and minutes will be posted on the City of Norwalk website within seven (7) days after the meeting.

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 Irene Dixon at idxon@norwalkct.gov to provide written public comment prior to the meeting.

I. CALL TO ORDER

Mayor Rilling called the meeting to order at 7:35 p.m. and led the Assembly in reciting the Pledge of Allegiance.

II. ROLL CALL

Ms. Dixon called the Roll:

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Council at Large: Mr. Gregory Burnett Mr. Joshua Goldstein
 Ms. Nora Niedzielski Eichner Ms. Barbara Smyth

District A: Mr. David Heuvelman

District B: Ms. Diane Revolus (joined the meeting during the presentation)

District C: Ms. Jenn McMurrer

District D:

District E: Ms. Lisa Shanahan

At Roll Call there were seven (7) Common Councilmembers present and seven (7) Common Councilmembers absent (Mr. Camacho; Ms. Ayers; Ms. Revolus; Ms. Young; Mr. Kydes; Mr. Meek; Ms. Alterman).

A Quorum was present.

Also present were Mayor, Harry Rilling; City Clerk, Irene Dixon and Corporation Counsel, Mario Coppola.

Charter Revision Members Present: Patsy Brescia, Chair; Carl Dickens; Tyler Fairbairn; Benita Watford Raleigh; Angela Wasunna and Steven Mednick, Counsel to the Commission

III. PUBLIC PARTICIPATION

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

Ms. Diane Lauricella, expressed her thanks for undertaking this task. She asked that the Common Council makes sure there is a separate question on the ballot to address the Mayoral four year term because it can be contentious. She feels they should have a four year term and term limits and will ask the legislator to enact a special act for term limits.

Ms. Lauricella said that under appointments she wants to ensure that there is gender and racial equity. Under the City Clerk section she asked that the Assistant City Clerk act as the assistant to the Common Council. Under article seven Boards and Commission she asked that they look at gender and racial equity. Ms. Lauricella noted that some boards struggle to have gender

equity. She asked to consider having elections for members of the Board of Estimate and Taxation and Zoning Commission.

Ms. Lauricella asked that each board and commission meeting will include a portion on the agenda for public comment. Under Article 8 Departments and Department Heads she asked that consideration be given to adding language that the division chiefs and department heads have a public meeting with the residents on an annual basis with their related divisions.

Ms. Elsa Obuchowski expressed her thanks. She asked that each item be put on the ballot separately.

There were no other members of the public who wished to comment this evening.

IV. REVIEW ARTICLES V THROUGH VIII OF THE DRAFT NORWALK CHARTER PROPOSED BY THE CHARTER REVISION COMMISSION

Mr. Burnett turned the presentation to Mr. Mednick.

Mr. Mednick pointed out that at the last meeting there was a specific focus on diversity. He said that has been addressed by the Charter Revision Commission.

Mr. Mednick reviewed Article V: The Mayor. He said there were no substantive changes.

Mr. Mednick reviewed Article V: Organization. The only two required provisions of a charter are to name the Chief Executive Officer and the Legislative body. All the others can be approved by ordinance.

Ms. Niedzielski Eichner noted Ms. Lauricella's raised the issue about an Assistant City Clerk staffing the Common Council. Mr. Mednick said that would be a political judgement to make, and would not be a substantive change.

Mr. Goldstein commented on the term of office for the City Clerk. Ms. Brescia said it was not discussed and would not see it as an issue for the term to align with the other Chiefs. Mr. Dickens said he had no objection. Mr. Goldstein said he will discuss this further with fellow Common Council members.

Mr. Burnett asked for further clarification regarding the role of the Assistant City Clerk providing assistance to the Common Council. Mr. Mednick said he believes the intent was to memorialize the current practice. He added that he will seek recommendations from the members of the Common Council.

Mayor Rilling said that when the Common Council started this term, they did a re-write of the job description for the Assistant City Clerk. It has always been the practice for that position to assist the Common Council. Ms. Young commented that as one who served in that position, it is an important role, especially as the City grows and the Common Council needs assistance.

Ms. Brescia said she supports that concept.

Mr. Heuvelman asked if the Common Council would need the assistance of the Assistant City Clerk and an assistant to the Legislative body.

Ms. Niedzielski Eichner said more staff is needed, but they are not trying to add anything new now, but in two years she said she will advocate for more staff for the Common Council.

Mr. Mednick reviewed Article IV: Other Elected Officers. He noted that the offices of City Treasurer and Board of Selectmen would be repealed during the 2025 election cycle.

Ms. McMurrer said they need to clarify which clerk wherever clerk is referenced in the Charter.

Mr. Mednick reviewed Article VII: Boards and Commissions. He said there is a lot of new language in this section. He said that open meetings have been legal under FOI since 1983. The objective is to move toward total accessibility. Mr. Mednick said the Common Council members will discuss the appointments on the Police Commission and provide instructions.

Mr. Mednick reviewed Article VIII: Departments. The idea is to have a functional analysis and the ability to be responsive to residents.

Mr. Mednick said he will work on the updates. The next meeting date will be determined and at that meeting, the Common Council will walk through the remainder of the Charter.

V. ADJOURNMENT

**** MS. REVOLUS MOVED TO ADJOURN**
**** MOTION PASSED UNANIMOUSLY**

There was no further business, and the meeting was unanimously adjourned at 8:59 p.m.

ATTEST: _____
Irene Dixon, City Clerk

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