

**COMMON COUNCIL
NORWALK, CT**

SPECIAL MEETING

**JUNE 12, 2023
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**

I. CALL TO ORDER

Mayor Rilling called the Special Meeting to order at 7:39 p.m. and led the Assembly in reciting the Pledge of Allegiance.

II. ROLL CALL

Ms. Dixon called the Roll:

Council at Large:	Mr. Gregory Burnett Ms. Barbara Smyth	Ms. Nora Niedzielski Eichner
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District A:	Ms. Nicol Ayers	Mr. David Heuvelman
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District B:	Ms. Diana Revolus	Ms. Darlene Young
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District C:	Ms. Jenn McMurrer
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District D:	Mr. Bryan Meek
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District E:

At Roll Call there were eight (8) Common Councilmembers present and six (6) absent (Mr. Camacho, Mr. Goldstein, Mr. Kydes, Ms. Alterman, Ms. Meek and Ms. Shanahan) A Quorum was present.

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

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Present from the Charter Revision Commission were Ms. Patsy Brescia, Ms. Benita Watford Raleigh, Mr. Tyler Fairburn and Commission Counsel Stephen Mednick.

III. PUBLIC PARTICIPATION

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

Ms. Brescia introduced the members of the Charter Revision Commission.

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

Mr. Mednick shared his screen and explained that the charge of the Commission was to reform the document by making it a readable and workable document.

Mr. Mednick reviewed the table of contents and noted that the existing Charter does not include a table of contents.

Mr. Mednick said that Ms. Niedzielski Eichner brought up a number of good drafting issues. He also addressed a number of other issues she brought up. He reviewed the definitions stated in the Charter and said that based on feedback from Common Council members made editorial revisions for clarity.

Mr. Mednick continued and presented Article III – Civic Engagement. A discussion took place about the position of Constable. Ms. Watford Raleigh said that an issue the new Constables had is that they received no training for the position. They did not know what they needed to do to function in that position. Mr. Burnett asked Mr. Mednick if he had any guidance from other cities with a similar function. Mr. Mednick said that many of his communities do not have Constables; however, he said he believes the Charter Commission discussed training and asked if the Corporation Counsel could provide training. He added that the Commission was in a quandary and left it status quo. Another issue was about the liability of the Constable if they get into trouble and are untrained.

Mr. Mednick presented the section on the Term of Office. He said there were several elements to the four year term. Ms. Ayers expressed concern about the transition time and noted that someone coming into office needs a substantial amount of time to address such issues as the budget. She said that not everyone comes to the table with the same abilities and skillset. It would benefit people to give them a longer time. Mr. Mednick said he has not seen that in other communities, but that does not mean it can't be done.

Ms. Watford Raleigh explained that the Commission tried to coordinate the start date with the holidays since there was a sense that not a lot gets done during the holidays.

Ms. Brescia said that most of the comments made to the Commission were about the need to have time to put together a staff. She said she was in favor of a commencement date of December.

Ms. Revolus said they should consider what was hard for them and how they could make it better and an easier transition. Mr. Mednick suggested everyone think about how they may be able to bolster the transition.

Mayor Rilling expressed concern with a four year term for Mayor, effective 2027. He said he did not know how that will work if the Mayor gets a four year term and the members of the Common Council get two year terms. Ms. Revolus agreed that onboarding should be in December and that it makes sense for both the Mayor and the members of the Common Council to have four year terms.

A discussion took place about aligning the terms of the Board of Education, Mayor and the Common Council. Mr. Mednick suggested that members of the Common Council talk to their colleagues on the Board of Education to see if they would be comfortable with an alignment and if it makes sense.

Mr. Meek said he served on the Board of Education and the staggered terms work so that they had continuity and did not have a full slate of new people coming in. It is a good system.

Mr. Mednick reviewed the section related to the Mayor and compensation. A discussion took place regarding the procedure if the Mayor is unable to perform the duties of the office or is removed. Mayor Rilling asked if in this case, would the Council President serve as Mayor until an election takes place. Mr. Mednick explained that the way it is set up in the Charter, the Common Council President would serve until the next biennial election was held.

Mr. Burnett asked who would make the determination that the Mayor was unable to serve. Mr. Mednick explained that 12 members of the Common Council would make that determination.

Mr. Mednick said he will talk to the President of the Common Council to see if he wants to put a group together.

Ms. Niedzielski Eichner suggested having a discussion on succession. She said there may be a provision missing under vacancies – registrars. Mr. Mednick said that was covered by State law. A discussion took place about the expulsion and removal provisions.

Mr. Mednick said they need to think about the big issues such as the terms of office.

Mr. Mednick reviewed the section on the Common Council. He strongly urged everyone to look at the voting standards.

Ms. Brescia said she wanted to discuss compensation for Common Council members. Mr. Mednick said that language was added that the Common Council has the right to additional compensation. Raising compensation for Common Council members requires a referendum. He noted that the Commission would not take on this issue during this cycle. Mayor Rilling said that if they are not going to increase compensation during this cycle, they should consider compensating the members of the Common Council in a way that is fair.

The next workshop will take place on June 21st where a discussion will take place about articles five, six, seven and eight.

Mayor Rilling expressed his thanks to the members of the Charter Revision. Ms. Young also expressed her thanks to all who participated.

V. ADJOURNMENT

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

There was no further business, and the meeting was unanimously adjourned at 10:09 p.m.

ATTEST: _____
Irene Dixon, City Clerk

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