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

CALL TO ORDER.

Mayor Rilling called the meeting to order at 6:48 p.m.

ROLL CALL.

Ms. Dixon called the roll.

Council at Large:	Mr. Richard Bonenfant	Mr. Nick Sacchinelli
	Mr. Bruce Kimmel, Council President	
District A:	Ms. Eloisa Melendez	
District B:	Ms. Phaedrel Bowman	Mr. Travis Simms
District C:	Mr. John Kydes	
District D:	Mr. Michael DePalma	
District E:	Mr. Thomas Livingston	Mr. John Igneri

A quorum was present. Ten members present. Absent: Shannon O'Toole-Giandurco, Michael Corsello, Douglas Hempstead, Michelle Maggio and Steven Serasis.

Also present were Mayor Harry Rilling and Irene Dixon, Assistant City Clerk.

ACCEPTANCE OF THE MINUTES.

There were no minutes to consider at this time.

PUBLIC PARTICIPATION.

There was no one present who wished to address the Council at this time.

MAYOR.

Mayor Rilling said that he had no remarks to make at this time.

COUNCIL PRESIDENT.

Council President Kimmel said that he had no remarks at this time.

REPORTS: DEPARTMENTS, BOARDS AND COMMISSIONS:

There were no reports to consider at this time.

COMMON COUNCIL COMMITTEES:

A. Recreation, Parks and Cultural Affairs Committee:

1. Rescind the April 26th authorization for the Mayor, Harry W. Rilling to enter into an agreement with the Norwalk High Marching Bears, Inc. for the use of Andrews Field for a Fundraiser Carnival to be held Wednesday, May 11, 2016 from 6:00 P.M. – 10:00 P.M., Thursday, May 12, 2016 from 6:00 P.M. – 10:00 P.M., and Friday May 13, 2016 from 3:00 P.M. – 10:00 P.M. Set up to take place Noon on Monday, May 9, 2016 with tear down no later than Noon on Sunday, May 15, 2016. Estimated attendance 500+.

2. Authorize the Mayor, Harry W. Rilling to enter into an agreement with the Norwalk High Marching Bears, Inc. for the use of Andrews Field for a Fundraiser Carnival to be held from 6:00 P.M. – 10:00 P.M. for both Thursday, May 12, 2016 and Friday May 13, 2016; and from 3:00 P.M. – 10:00 P.M. on Saturday, May 14, 2016. Set up to take place Noon on Monday, May 8, 2016 with tear down no later than Noon on Sunday, May 15, 2016. Estimated attendance 500+.

**** COUNCIL PRESIDENT KIMMEL MOVED TO APPROVE BOTH ITEMS.**
**** THE MOTION PASSED UNANIMOUSLY**.

RESOLUTIONS FROM COMMON COUNCIL.

There were no resolutions to consider from the Council floor at this time.

MOTIONS POSTPONED TO A SPECIFIC DATE

There were no postponed motions from the Council floor at this time.

SUSPENSION OF RULES

There were no suspensions of the rules from the Council floor at this time.

ADJOURNMENT

**** MS. BOWMAN MOVED TO ADJOURN.**
**** THE MOTION PASSED UNANIMOUSLY.**

The meeting adjourned at 6:53 p.m.

Respectfully submitted

S. L. Soltes
Telesco Secretarial Services.

CITY OF NORWALK
COMMON COUNCIL
PUBLIC HEARING
MAY 2, 2016

ATTENDANCE: Mayor Harry Rilling; Council President Bruce Kimmel, John Kydes, John Igneri, Thomas Livingston, Nick Sacchinelli, Eloisa Melendez, Phaedrel Bowman, Michael Corsello, Michael DePalma, Douglas Hempstead, Richard Bonenfant

OTHERS: Mr. William Fitzgerald, Charter Commission Chairman; Atty. Steve Keogh, Mr. Jerry Petrini, Ms. Mary Roman, Mr. Glenn Iannaccone, Mr. Stuart Wells, Ms. Patsy Brescia, Ms. Lisa Thomson, Mr. Joe Tamburri, Mr. Robert Hard, Ms. Diane Lauricella, Ms. Diane Cece

CALL TO ORDER.

Mayor Rilling called the meeting to order at 7:02 p.m. A quorum was present.

PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE.

Mayor Rilling led those present in reciting the Pledge of Allegiance.

CHARTER REVISION RECOMMENDATIONS & REPORT PUBLIC HEARING.

Mayor Rilling thanked the members of the Charter Commission and recognized the five members of the Commission present. He then called the roll.

ROLL CALL.

Council at Large:	Mr. Richard Bonenfant	Mr. Nick Sacchinelli
	Mr. Douglas Hempstead	Mr. Michael Corsello
	Mr. Bruce Kimmel, Council President	
District A:	Ms. Eloisa Melendez	
District B:	Ms. Phaedrel Bowman	Mr. Travis Simms
District C:	Mr. John Kydes	
District D:		
District E:	Mr. Thomas Livingston	Mr. John Igneri

A quorum was present. There were eleven Council Members present. Absent: Shannon O'Toole-Giandurco, Michelle Maggio, Michael DePalma and Steven Serasis.

Mayor Rilling explained that there was a BET meeting that he had to attend, so he turned the hearing over to the Council President, Mr. Kimmel.

Mr. Kimmel said that he had spoken with a number of residents who believe that the Council would approve the Charter. He said that this was incorrect and the Council was only advisory. On May 24th, the Council will either be voting to approve all the recommendations.

Mr. Kimmel said that Mayor Rilling has been searching for a certified City Planner. He said that there were a number of inquiries about why the City has separate Planning and Zoning Commissions. He pointed out that the Charter actually gives the Council the authority to either separate or combine those two Commissions and that may be done in the future. He went on to speak about the details of two Commissions and explained that the Charter Commission had recommended that the issue was too complicated to address at this time.

Mr. Kimmel then invited any member of the Charter Commission to give a brief presentation. Mr. Fitzgerald came forward. Mr. Fitzgerald recognized those members of the Charter Commission that were present.

Mr. Fitzgerald came forward and explained that the focus of the Committee was on the charge issued by the Council. He said that the members of the Committee had done a great deal of research and that there were over 30 speakers at the two public hearings. He said that the one thing that the Committee had added to the charge was to add gender neutral language to sections dealing with the Common Council.

Atty. Steve Keogh, a Charter Commission member, came forward to speak about charge given by the Council. He said that it could be summarized as being focused on the elections, length of terms and compensation for the Common Council members.

The first recommendations was that the terms of both the Mayor and Town Clerk be changed from two years to four years. This is because of the significant roles of both offices.

The second task was to eliminate the offices of City Treasurer, Selectmen, and City Sheriff. The City still has seven constables. Atty. Keogh said that these offices were actually left over from earlier years and no longer served a function other than ceremonial.

The third recommendation was about the Common Council salary. The general opinion was that $600 as a salary was much too low. The Council Members would run for office without the salary because their goal is public service. The proposal is to adjust the salary of the Council Members to something more currently reflective of the State. The current amount was set in 1980. It was $300 in 1933. The Committee is suggesting that the Council Members receive a salary of approximately 2% of the Mayor's salary. He went on to give the details of how this would work. By adopting a formula, the Council salaries will adjust automatically over time.

The last recommendation is to references to the members of the Common Council as Common Councilmen to Common Council Members.

There was no proposal for term limits. The residents of Norwalk have done an excellent job of enacting term limits at the ballot box.

No change for the length of the Council Member's terms is being proposed. The Committee also considered the issues regarding off year elections. By having a Council election every two years, it would help support voter turn out.

There were no recommended changes regarding the Board of Education.

Atty. Keogh thanked the Council for their time.

Mr. Kimmel pointed out that there was a workshop scheduled for the Common Council members on May 10th.

Mr. Petrini came forward and said that he would like to explain that Stuart Wells had attended many of the Charter meetings. One of the issues was trying to simply the ballot to one side of a page rather than both sides. Mr. Wells was invaluable in working on this issue. Mr. Petrini thanked Mr. Wells for all his hard work and the time that he devoted to making up the sample ballots.

He then spoke about the fact that when he was on the Common Council, there had been several questions about gender neutral language and eliminating the term “Councilman” . The Council issued a charge of six questions to the Commission, which did not include the gender neutral language. The reason that the gender neutral language was included was because out of the six questions given to the Commission, the Commission only addressed three questions.

In conclusion, Mr. Petrini said that if he had the opportunity to work together with the same Commission members, he would do it again and thanked the Council Members for their time.

Ms. Patsy Brescia came forward to address the Council Members. She apologized because she could not attend the committee meetings due to other civic obligations. She said that she was in support of this positive step for Norwalk. She stated had previously served on the Council for six years. Ms. Brescia listed the various Council positions she held during that time.

Ms. Brescia said that with a strong Council and weak Mayor, the Council was responsible for the well being of the City. During her time on the Council, the new NHS was constructed along with two other schools, Oak Hills Golf Course was done, Route 7 was under construction along with other major developments.

The Council Members had major responsibilities, as the current Council Members do today, with all the major developments happening in Norwalk today. Having a Mayor with vision during these times is important because when there is major construction underway, it take more than two years just from just the conception through to the planning and then to get the shovel in the ground. It takes a couple more years for the project to be completed. Ms. Brescia said that because of this, having a four year term for a Mayor would be a wonderful improvement for the City.

She suggested that perhaps that if there is another Charter revision, that the Commission look at having the At Large Council Members serve a four year term while the District Council Members continue to serve a two year term. The Mayor and the staff need people who have continuity for the community.

Ms. Brescia said that when she was on the Council, the stipend was $600 and it has remained the same until now. It is time to compensate the Council Members for staying up until 1 a.m. in the morning. Ms. Brescia thanked the Council Members for their time.

Ms. Lisa Thomson of Rowayton came forward and said that she wanted to thank the Charter Commission for their hard work. She said she attended almost all of their meetings and public discussions.   It was no secret that she was a bit critical of the charge because she felt that it addressed the wants of the politicians, but not necessarily the needs of the residents. In an election year, when both sides of the aisle were complaining about a rigged system, Ms. Thomson said that on a municipal level, there could be inconsistencies in regards to Planning and Zoning.

She then referred to the Charter section dealing with Planning and Zoning and said that it was a complicated issue. However, she asked the Council Members how many of them felt empowered to address the cries of their various constituents regarding Planning and Zoning issues that have come up on almost a weekly basis.

Ms. Thomson said that her largest expense was her property taxes and pointed out that her taxes do not keep pace with the value of her home. It hasn't. She said that she did not think it was because they were spending too much. The City is not thinking outside the box in terms of Planning and Zoning as it moves into 2016. She asked whether the question that needed to be addressed was whether the City was spending too much or whether the City needed better Planning and Zoning regulations for 2016.

The Charter Commission report said that they heard the concerns of residents about Planning and Zoning, but due to the time constraints, they chose not to deal with that aspect. She asked the Council Members if they planned to look at this issue again before the November ballot.

Ms. Thomson said that she agreed with most of the things that the Charter Revision Commission decided but pointed out that the biggest problem that the City faces is the issues involved with Planning and Zoning. Another aspect in terms of organizational structure is why there is no Planning and Zoning staff member on the Common Council Planning Committee. While the Redevelopment Director is part of the meeting, it is not his responsibility to deal with the various land use issues that are happening in various neighborhoods. This request to the Council has been made a number of times over the years. Ms. Thomson said that she was happy to hear that the City was looking for a Planning Director and asked where that individual would sit.

Ms. Thomson said her last issue was who would be leading the group providing the evaluations of the commercial properties in Norwalk. She listed a number of Planning issues that had happened in recent years, including the mosque, Belden Avenue, the White Barn property and many more. She said the residents were wondering if the City was performing its due diligence in terms of commercial property assessment.

Ms. Thomson said that her biggest was her property taxes as were the other residents in Norwalk. In closing, she pointed out that outside of Education costs, how the City utilizes the Planning and Zoning is the thing that impact the home values the most. The Council and the Mayor are the only elected officials that are responsible for what happens in the City. She hoped with all sincerity that the Council would look at Planning and Zoning carefully and charge a new Charter Commission to address these issues.

Mr. Joe Tamburri came forward and said that he was nearly a 60 year resident of Norwalk. He said that he had a long term interest in Norwalk. He thanked Atty. Fitzgerald for bringing the group to where it is now.

Mr. Tamburri said that he was basically in favor of everything that has been proposed. He said he was the current City Treasurer and was not opposed to the elimination of the office.

His one objection is that while a four year term for the Mayor is excellent and said that he felt that perhaps having a four year term for the At Large Council Members would also be a good idea.

Mr. Tamburri said that he agreed with most of what both Ms. Brescia and Ms. Thomson said.

He then said that he felt that term limits should be addressed for a number of reasons. He said that he was not able to attend the previous meetings, but felt that term limits should have been addressed and should be included in the next Charter Revision charge. It is being discussed on both a State and national level.

Mr. Robert Hard of Wolfpit Avenue came forward. He said that he was in support of the Committee's work and that he was honored to have these fine volunteers to do the heavy lifting. He suggested that the current Committee be kept together to address the other issues that have been raised, and suggested modernizing the language to make it more readable.

Mr. Stuart Wells of West Norwalk Road and a Norwalk Registrar of Voters, came forward and distributed copies of ballots to the Council Members. He said that on an 11 inch ballot, there can be 11 columns and on a 14 inch ballot it is possible to fit 15.

He then walked everyone through the various examples shown on the sample ballots. He said that the fewer offices on the ballot, the easier the election tallies becomes. If the At Large Members were moved to a four year term, they would be on the off year, and voter turn out might be light.

Ms. Diane Lauricella came forward and thanked the Council for holding the public hearing. She said that some had spoken about why some items were handed off to the Charter Commission. She said that this might be squandering an opportunity. There were other things that needed to be addressed. She applauded the gender neutral and agreed with the suggestion of a four year term for At Large Council Members.

Some have said that if there are too many questions, the public would be confused and not vote. She said that if the questions were worded simply, the public would understand.

Ms. Lauricella said that she had heard that the City was looking to hire a City Planner but felt that a City Planner was the wrong way to go. The City already has several staff members in Zoning that were Planners, but were not certified.

Ms. Lauricella said that if the City waits and doesn't address the Land Management issues now it would be years before the issue was addressed. She gave several examples, including how the City of Stamford had the employees re-apply for their jobs. She said that it was not a big deal to re-organize Planning and Zoning. One of the suggestions was to increase the size of the Council so that Council Members do not have to attend 3 Committee meetings each month.

Mr. Kimmel then asked for clarification question about the
She then submitted a document to Council President Kimmel.

Ms. Diane Cece of Olmstead Place came forward and thanked the group that had done this work. She said that she was not able to attend the meetings.

She asked if there was a second public hearing next week. Mr. Kimmel said that there was. Ms. Cece asked if she could speak. Mr. Kimmel said that she could, but that he would like to allow those who have not spoken before to speak first.

Ms. Cece said that she believed that the City was moving in the right direction but if a second swipe wasn't done, it may take years to get there. She said that she thought with a four year mayoral term they should consider a 3 term limit and allow someone to campaign for office again. Ms. Cece said that the vote to extend the term would be on the 2017 ballot. She said that she would be in favor of a properly worded question on the ballot this year, but wanted it to take effect in 2019, so there would not be an incumbent that would be favored at that time.

Ms. Cece said that people talk about a salary, and wanted to know if it should be called a stipend. Mr. Kimmel said that it was a salary.

Ms. Cece said that she agreed with Mr. Kimmel's comments about Planning and Zoning and giving the Council more authority of Planning and Zoning. The land management issues impact directly on the quality of life in Norwalk.

Ms. Cece said that she felt that the Council needed more members to help spread the work load out.

If the Commission continues, there are a number of Commission and other boards that should be reviewed. She suggested adding a Committee for Information & Technology and one for Environmental.

She said that she would like to see the City have residency requirement for key positions such as department directors.

Ms. Cece said that she agreed with the elimination of the positions and also supports the formula for the Council salaries. She asked if people could still submit comments to the Council on this issue. Mr. Kimmel said that the Council Members were open to hearing from the public about the issue.

Mr. Kimmel asked if there were any other members of the public that wished to address the Council at this time. He repeated the question. Hearing none, Mr. Kimmel closed the public hearing at 8:15 p.m.

Mr. Kimmel then reminded everyone that the next public hearing was scheduled for May 9th at 7:00 p.m. and there would be a workshop on May 10th at 6:00 p.m. He said that the Council believed that the various issues that had been brought up were important and would not be pushed aside. The timeline may not be satisfactory to everyone, but the issues will be addressed.

ADJOURNMENT.

**** MR. HEMPSTEAD MOVED TO ADJOURN.**
**** THE MOTION PASSED UNANIMOUSLY**.

The meeting adjourned at 8:16 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

S. L. Soltes
Telesco Secretarial Services