

CITY OF STAMFORD

19TH CHARTER REVISION

COMMISSION

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Steven Kolenberg, Co-Chair
Thomas Lombardo, Co-Chair
Jackie Pioli, Clerk

MEETING REPORT

Thursday, May 12, 2022
7:00 p.m.

This meeting remotely. In attendance were Commission Co-Chairs Kolenberg and Lombardo; Clerk Pioli; and Commission Members Bilicznianski, Bowser, Camporeale, Halpern, Lane, Loeb, Martinez, Michelson, Pramberger. Absent or excused were Commissioners McMullen, Larobina, and Williams.

Co-Chair Kolenberg called the meeting to order at 7:04 p.m.

Co-Chair Kolenberg opened the public hearing.

Jonathan Jacobson suggested that the Commission consider 1) dissolving the Board of Representatives and replacing it with a city council with 12 to 13 members in order to eliminate bureaucracy; 2) providing the city council with the power of the purse; 3) giving the Board of Representatives the power to amend the charter by a $\frac{3}{4}$ supermajority vote, which could then be voted on by public referendum; 4) halve the number of members on the Board of Representatives, either by having one per district or reducing the number of districts to 10; and 5) giving the members of the Representatives staggered terms, so $\frac{1}{2}$ of the Board is elected every 2 years.

Kieran Edmondson read the following statement into the record:

To, the 19th Charter Revision Commission,

Good evening to all of you, and I would like to be expressing my congratulations, to all 15 members of the newly Charter Revision Commission, on being appointed back in early February. My name is Kieran Edmondson, a resident of the Waterside neighborhood, of the city of Stamford, Connecticut, and I would like to be recommending the members, of the 19th Charter Revision Commission, on making such a potential change to update the city charter, that must be updated for the local government system, on behalf of all citizens of the Stamford community, to follow the lawful guidelines of our local constitution.

To the Charter Revision Commission, what I would like for all 15 appointments, of this government commission to make such a potential change, under the current city charter, is the changing of the date/time meeting, for the members of the Stamford Board of Finance, which is made up of 6 elected, and/or appointed members, by changing the date from the first Thursday of the month, and the time to be starting, at 7:00pm, so that all 6 members of the Board of Finance, must have a continuous service to represent all Stamford citizens, for economic and financial services, under Sec. C6-20-3, of the Stamford City Charter, and I am hopeful that this consideration, could make such a very big difference, for the Board of Finance, and for it members to have a new date/time, to meet on a monthly basis.

To the 19th Charter Revision Commission, I hope that my recommendation to all 15 appointed members, would be considered, changed, voted in favor of, and to remind the Board of Finance members, to start meeting the new date/time meetings, on a monthly on the first Thursday of each month, at 7:00pm.

Also, since that we are now exactly less than 6 more months, until the upcoming midterm elections, that will be taking place on November 8, 2022, that is going to be considered as one of the most important, consequential, acknowledged, and serious political elections, in the history of our electoral process, during the middle of the first-term period, of President Joe Biden, and since that the members of the Redistricting Committee, which is part of the 31st Board of Representatives, is considering such potential changes under our voting boundaries, which is on Sec. 17-1, under the city charter of the local constitution, of Stamford, Connecticut, I would also recommend that all appointed members, of the 19th Charter Revision Commission, could also work with members of the Redistricting Committee, to consider how all of the 20 voting districts, across many parts of Stamford will be validated, determined, considered, and to be officially confirmed, on behalf of all registered voters in Stamford, of every political affiliation, for all 40 members of the Board of Representatives, who represent all Stamford citizens in all of the 20 districts, for their local elections in odd-numbered years, and how every single polling station, will remind all Stamford voters of what their district is, how they will participate in the process of voting, for Federal, State, and Local officials, in every Presidential, off-year-midterm, and special election, for every 4 years, 3 years, 2 years, and or in any of the 12 months, and how Stamford must see such accurate details, in voting district boundaries for political purposes.

To the 19th Charter Revision Commission, thank you all for your time to hear my brief remarks, and hope the job will get done, on behalf of all local citizens of Stamford. From, Kieran Matthew Edmondson, To, the 19th Stamford Charter Revision Commission

Zachary Oberholtzer suggested that the Commission consider 1) removing all language that privileges people with wealth, specifically the right to petition Zoning Board decisions, which is only available to landowners; 2) raising the number of signatures necessary for valid petitions in order to prevent small groups from vetoing projects; and 3) reduce the size of the Board of Representatives; 4) more effective ways to get public input rather than petitions, which are only input from small groups.

Paul Newman spoke about 1) the Charge to review §C5-30-5(4), the position of Superintendent of Parks and Recreation, which is currently empty and the need for one person to fill these responsibilities (in this position or a different position); and 2) requesting that the Parks Commission be involved in the discussion of the Charge to review §C6-120-3, restricting the disposition of land for park purposes.

Jennifer Godzeno spoke about the Commission focusing on creating more proactive citizen engagement rather than focusing on petitions after the hearing process, including participatory budgeting, so that the public is involved at the beginning of the process, not through hearings at the end of the process, creating a citizen engagement commission.

Alan Shaw suggested that the Commission consider 1) staggered terms for the Board of Representatives, which might lead to a more bipartisan board; 2) preserve the volunteer fire service in Stamford.

Paula Waldman spoke about the need for greater public involvement in land use decisions.

Steve Garst spoke about the need for more public notice and awareness of zoning applications, text changes and map changes and the need for greater public input.

The following comments were received in the Board office in writing for the public hearing:

Stanley Mocarski

My concern is the storing of commercial vehicles and operating associated businesses out of private residences. These regulations should be strengthened to streamline corrective action delays and insure the City and the Courts have the proper authority to enforce them expeditiously. My first hand experience proves that these issues can persist over 15 years and lead to significant costs; insane!

Residents are allowed one commercial vehicle not exceeding 3/4 ton capacity. There is no reason to increase the allowed capacity or number of vehicles. Anyone who has stood next to these newer larger pick-up trucks knows that they are “huge” and loud! They can easily cause significant personal and property damage and the properties look like U Haul storage locations.

The zoning regulations do not allow the storing of ancillary commercial equipment on residential properties and this also needs to be strongly enforced. Snowplows, trailers, equipment stored in the beds of trucks all yield unsightly conditions for the surrounding homeowners.

If the regulations are strengthened and enforced word will get out to these scofflaws and more of them will come into compliance if they know they will be fined accordingly. Once it becomes cheaper for these scofflaws to comply with rather than to violate the zoning regulations the law abiding homeowners will have a better quality of life as zoning regulations are designed to insure.

Sherry Cohen

The Dept. of Education must report to the Mayor. There must be accountability for the declining performance of the Stamford Public Schools, as evidenced by the CT State Dept. of Education's portal

(https://edsight.ct.gov/SASStoredProcess/guest?_program=%2FCTDOE%2FEdSight%2FRelease%2FReporting%2FPublic%2FReports%2FStoredProcesses%2FGrowthModelReport&_year=Trend&_district=Stamford%20School%20District&_school=Northeast%20School&_subject=ELA&_subgroup=All%20Students&_grade=All+Grades+Combined&_select=Submit)

1) There should be a consultant hired to assess the schools' performance and organizational structure of the DOE as well as the needs of a growing city such as Stamford. This should be done at least every five years.

2) There must be total transparency in the DOE.

3) What are the salaries for the assistant superintendents, principals, and other administrators?

4) Where is the rest of the money going?

5) How was the money earned for using Westhill High School as a movie location allocated and used?

6) Why is Stamford High School, an older building, in better physical shape than Westhill High, which is only about 50 years old?

7) Can't some of the empty office buildings be converted to schools? (I heard there can be state tax credits for that.)

8) Shouldn't the DOE hire a grant writer to get more money for the schools, or does that fall under the responsibilities of the city government grant writer?

For at least a decade, the BOE and DOE have been like water and oil and everyone else, with or without children in the public schools, is afflicted by this. I've lived in Stamford since 1974 and have been thrilled with the way the city is developing and what it has to offer. However, the schools are at the bottom of the decision makers' concerns and their reputation has suffered.

John DeLelle

As a recent signature collector I, as well as others find the current requirements for collecting signatures extremely unfair. Requiring original only, signed petitions when you can actually purchase many things including a home or car with an electronic signature makes the current regulations seriously outdated in this electronic world we live in.

The current regulations allow only ten consecutive days from publication in the Stamford Advocate newspaper for collection of signatures. As the majority of homeowners work during the day this leaves only a few hours around dinner time plus only one weekend for someone to collect signatures. Why the hurry! The time frame must be extended to a minimum of at least fourteen business days or more.

Lastly, anyone who pays taxes to the city of Stamford, such as condo or cluster homeowners should be allowed to protest decisions made by city officials that they believe are not in their best interests.

Thank you for the opportunity to express my opinion.

Steve Dell'Olio

Why is the Municipal Building Board of Appeals not up and running? In the absence of a municipal appeals board, a citizen aggrieved by a Chief Building Official decision is to appeal to the CEO of Stamford. Seriously? I highly doubt that is acceptable to the Mayor. In any event, one can appeal to the Office of the State Building Inspector. I would think if the town wishes to keep building decisions regulated locally there needs to be a local appeal board. SUBDIVISION E. - MUNICIPAL BUILDING BOARD OF APPEALS Sec. C6-70-1. - Appointment of Municipal Building Board of Appeals. The Mayor shall appoint a Building Board of Appeals to consist of five (5) members, all of whom shall meet the qualifications set forth in the State Building Code.

There being no further speakers, the public hearing was closed at 8:06 p.m.

The Committee set the date for the next meeting on Wednesday, June 8th at 7 p.m.

A motion to approve the April 27, 2022 minutes was made, seconded and approved by unanimous voice vote.

Co-Chair Kolenberg adjourned the meeting at 8:12 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Co-Chairs Lombardo and Kolenberg

This meeting is on [video](#).