

CITY OF STAMFORD 19TH CHARTER REVISION COMMISSION FINANCE COMMITTEE

Shelley Michelson, Chair

Members

Susan Halpern
Steven Kolenberg
Alex Martinez
Clemon Williams

MEETING REPORT

Wednesday, August 17, 2022

This meeting was conducted remotely

The meeting was held remotely at the above date and time. In attendance were Commissioners Halpern, Williams and Michelson, who were joined between 7:15 and 7:30 by Commissioners Kolenberg and Martinez. Also present as observers were Charter Revision Commissioners Cynthia Bowser, Frances Lane and Karen Camporeale.

The meeting was officially called to order at 7:10 PM. A motion to accept the minutes from the meeting of July 27th was made Commissioner Halpern and seconded by Commissioner Williams.

The proposed dates for follow up meetings for the remainder of the calendar year of August 24, September 7 and 21, October 19, November 2, 16 and December 7, 2022 were accepted by the members of the Committee.

A discussion was held regarding the proposed interviewees and the Committee recognized the need to coordinate with the other committees to avoid the need for overlapping interviewees to be interviewed on more than one night. A suggestion was made by Commissioner Williams that the Committee should interview the City's Controller, David Yanik. Commissioner Kolenberg suggested that the Co-Chairs of the Board of Representatives Fiscal Committee, Monica DiCostanzo and Lindsey Miller, be substituted as interviewees for Representatives Nina Sherwood and Mary Fedeli as a way to obtain the information we need and to avoid interviewing conflicts with other committees. The Committee agreed to both suggestions. It was also suggested by Commissioner Halpern that a member the minority party on the Board of Finance be interviewed and Dennis Mahoney's name has been added to the list of interviewees. Terri Dell has also been added to the list of interviewees, which now consists of the following persons:

- Director of Administration: Sandy Dennies
- Superintendent of Schools: Tamu Lucero
- Chairperson of Planning Board: Terri Dell
- Chairman, Board of Finance: Richard Freedman

- Member, Board of Finance: Dennis Mahoney
- Co-Chairs of the Fiscal Committee of Board of Representatives: Monica DiConstanzo and Lindsey Miller
- Director of Operations: Matt Quinones
- Office of Policy Management: Lee Berta
- Grants Officer: Anita Carpenter
- Director of Human Resources: Alfred Cava

Commissioner Michelson inquired of staff as to whether the Committee could receive a timeline of the dates and departments involved in both the operating and capital budgetary processes to assist in conducting the interviews. The request is being researched.

The committee reviewed and discussed the Budgetary Procedures listed in Charge numbers 23,73,74,75,76,77,78,79,80 and 83 pertaining to Charter Chapter 8, Budgetary Procedures pages 84-94 (up to Taxation Section) to formulate questions for interviewees and to promote more ideas for review.

Charge numbers 75,76 and 77 proposed more public participation in the budgetary process and Commissioner Kolenberg mentioned that a template for participatory budgeting might be available from for the Committee's review. Commissioner Michelson subsequently emailed Jennifer Godzeno to ascertain if such a template exists and if so, if she could share it with the Committee.

A discussion ensued about the historical inadequacy of Stamford's capital budget and the impact on planning for natural disasters with concerns expressed about Stamford's lack of readiness, particularly in the absence of a seasoned Public Safety Director. Flooding, inadequate road maintenance, storm drain runoff, clogged catch basins with no regular cleaning schedule, a failing seawall and the inadequacy of the City's sewage treatment plant to handle sewage treatment during severe rainfall were all mentioned as issues requiring urgent remedial action. It was suggested by Commissioner Michelson that Mayor Simmons review the recording of this meeting to obtain information that should impact future capital budgets for the City.

Commissioner Martinez recommended that the Committee add a charge to the Charter Review Commission consisting of requiring periodic independent audits of the Board of Education, as other municipalities have done. The Committee agreed to add this suggestion to the list.

Commissioner Williams has invited Scott Boulton, a pension expert who is very familiar with the City's Plans, including the 457 and 403b plans, to educate us on the subject of pensions, together with Stamford's Director of Human Resources, Alfred Cava on Wednesday, August 24, 2022.

A motion to adjourn the meeting was made by Commissioner Williams and seconded by Commissioner Kolenberg. The meeting was adjourned at 8:48 PM.

Respectfully submitted,
Commissioner Michelson

This meeting is on [video](#).