

CITY OF STAMFORD 19TH CHARTER REVISION COMMISSION ELECTED OFFICIALS COMMITTEE

Anthony Pramberger, Jr., Chair

Members

Michael Larobina
Thomas Lombardo
J.R. McMullen
Jackie Pioli

Thursday, November 3, 2022 Meeting Report

This meeting was held in person at the Government Center and via Zoom

1. The meeting was called to order by the Chair at 5:03 p.m.
2. Roll Call – in attendance: in person, were Commissioners Larobina, Lombardo, McMullen, Pioli, Pramberger; Bilicznianski, Bowser, Halpern, Lane; Camporeale attended via Zoom. Guests: in person - Mayor Caroline Simmons, Bridget Fox, David Martin, and Michael Pavia; Dannel Malloy via Zoom.
3. Suggestions from Mayor Simmons regarding the charge of the Charter Revision Commission:
 - a. Change the budget process from annual to biennial. This would align with the state process, be more conducive for better long-term planning, have more time for review by the public, and reduce cost in terms of staff time.
 - b. Add a division of Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion (DEI) and officer as a Cabinet-level position in the City Charter. This would elevate the importance of DEI, ensure a more inclusive environment, and increase the importance of DEI.
 - c. Increase the time for transition of outgoing and incoming Mayors by moving the swear-in date from early December to early January. This would assure a peaceful transition of power, allow for more practical operational issues – i.e., posting, recruitment, and hiring of a new Cabinet and Mayor’s office team, and allow more time for the outgoing administration to brief the incoming administration.
 - d. Add or incorporate an additional city department that would focus on Housing.
4. Seeking input from Mayor Simmons on specific Charter-related issues:
 - a. The mayor did not see any major hindrances in the Charter regarding her ability to run the city, other than the current short transition time between incoming and outgoing administrations, and the budget process, addressed above.
 - b. C3-10-4 - Delete “or” before the Town Clerk – Mayor Simmons agreed with the following proposed language:
 - i. “In the event Mayor is or intends to be absent from the City for a period of forty-eight (48) hours or more, the mayor shall give written notice to that effect to the President and Clerk of the Board of Representatives and the Town Clerk.”
 - c. C3-10-7 - Clarify that the mayor may issue the oath of office – the mayor agreed.

- d. Commissioner Bowser asked who is looking at poverty in the city as it has increased in last thirty years, and what the not-for-profit sector is doing to address poverty. Mayor Simmons commented that the Director of Social Services works on this and low-income populations; advancing DEI goals will help; also, various housing functions should be consolidated into one department to better address poverty.
 - e. Commissioner Pioli asked about Board of Education surpluses which go into a capital account. She asked, given the fiscal cliff the city will be facing, if the surplus could fund Board of Ed operations instead. Mayor Simmons said that she would look into this. She does want to get more resources into schools.
 - f. Commissioner Bilicznianski asked how Mayor Simmons would fund a city Department of Housing, and when does the city step in to help save affordable housing structures that exist in the city. The mayor commented that presently the city has great not-for-profit partners (e.g., Charter Oaks, Housing Development Fund) and the Land Use Bureau works on this. She would like to consolidate efforts, move forward in accord with the city's Affordable Housing Plan, look at city-owned land where we could build more affordable housing, and look at creative sources of funding to create housing.
 - g. Commissioner McMullen asked what the Social Services department does now; isn't that their job? Mayor Simmons noted that Social Services helps with evictions and relocations, which goes beyond only housing.
 - h. Commissioner Lane asked about structures, housing, and directing them. Mayor Simmons said that she hoped to consolidate all these existing housing functions with a director-level position to oversee them. Land Use would be a part of housing.
 - i. Commissioner Larobina commented that, following an election, during the time of transition, there is a lot to handle in the way of day-to-day transactional issues. He asked if it would be helpful if there were a position identified in the Charter for transition, assuring continuity from mayor to mayor. Mayor Simmons said continuity of operations is essential; that the remaining employees are strong. Mr. Larobina asked if an existing position could be replaced with a position that could provide that continuity. The mayor thought the possibility of adding such a Charter position was a good idea and should be explored; she did not see eliminating any Charter positions. The mayor noted that Sandy Dennies and her team were kept on assuring a successful financial transition; and that increasing the transition time would help also.
5. Input on the Charter Revision Process from prior Mayors of the City of Stamford:
- a. David Martin had four specific proposals:
 - i. Separate the regulatory functions that are in the operational departments from the operational functions. In practical terms, you have Land Use which works on housing; WPCA primarily controls many operational functions. By contrast, Boards such as Planning, Zoning, etc., are regulatory in nature. Create a fifth director-level position for this; a Land Use Director who will set policy for the city and include all regulatory functions.
 - ii. The CRC should not get involved with changing the present mayoral appointments processes, as prior commissions have tried and failed.

- iii. Stamford has more Boards (five) managing pensions and retirement benefits than other CT cities. The Charter should have language that those who serve on these Boards must be professionals who have investment management experience. He suggested creating a Pension Fund Management Board of seven individuals: 1 from BOR; 1 from BOF; 1 from Director of Administration, and four Mayoral appointees approved by the BOR (three of which must have relevant experience). Other pension boards would have an ex-officio member on the Pension Fund Management Board. This single item will have the most significant financial impact on the city.
- iv. CRC has 15 members. Stamford BOR has forty members; CT city average for seven largest cities "BOR" is 18. It is very difficult to get 40 people to agree. A smaller size Board of Reps increases individual authority. He suggested using the 2030 census to change the number of districts to 13 ("a patriotic number"), with two Reps per district (26 in total). He suggested that this be set in motion now, so people have plenty of time to prepare.
- v. Mr. Martin said he would be willing to write the necessary legislation to support his recommendations.
- b. Michael Pavia noted that Stamford has a 1970's/ 1980's model government with many silos, e.g., Land Use.
 - i. For instance, the Land Use permit process is very difficult, and the staff are not helpful.
 - ii. He stated that, what Stamford needs more than anything, is an analysis of contemporary management practices- skills, undertakings, initiatives.
 - iii. He suggested that departments of professionals (e.g., Engineering) should be managed by an administrator, not someone with technical competence (i.e., engineering knowledge) in each area, to evaluate from a public service perspective. He also cited the need for Environmental Protection approval is required more than necessary. A management system in place would allow for arbitration. Real management is lacking.
 - iv. He suggested that a Cabinet-level position be traded for a Director of Operations Management to visit and review the departments practices and procedures. The city needs to run like it is 2022.
 - v. Commissioner Larobina asked about building some structure to support the transition of mayoral administrations and improving consistency, into the Charter. Mr. Pavia said he left his successor a full report on status for the next mayor; perhaps this can be a legal requirement.
 - vi. Commissioner Halpern asked about the large number of map and text changes by developers in Stamford. Mr. Pavia said the answer is to stop "spot zoning" and change the Master Plan and the Zoning laws themselves. Commissioner Bowser stated that the "horse is out of the gate" and affordable housing has been replaced by housing for the wealthy (e.g., Vela site on Washington Blvd.); working class people can no longer make it in the city. Mr. Pavia commented that the CRC needs to review and see how it can improve this. There was further conversation on the topic.
- c. Dannel Malloy commented on a number of issues. He offered himself as a historical resource as needed.

- i. He said the combination of the Town and City of Stamford (1947-1949) yielded the 20 districts and 40 Reps we have today. He said changing the number of members of the BOR or the number of districts would be controversial. He also noted that we need to balance politics and the desire to improve other processes in the city.
 - ii. Commissioner Larobina note that the city government structure is basically the same as at the end of the Second World War; Stamford is very different now. Should we look at the actual structure itself. Mr. Malloy said the last large Charter change was monumental, effecting the structure of the mayor's office, with four directorships. The people of the city must have faith in the honesty of the system.
 - iii. Commissioner Camporeale expressed appreciation for Mr. Malloy's statement about the 40 BOR members; she noted that makes for better diversity, and better government; fewer members would not be an improvement.
 - iv. Commissioner Pioli asked a question about redistricting and the Rogers School. Mr. Malloy shared some history on that period of time and decisions made. He noted the city does need to redistrict to account for population growth.
 - v. Commissioner McMullen asked if Mr. Malloy saw advantages of Director positions being in the Charter versus the Ordinances. Mr. Malloy cautioned on having too many directors. He did not have an opinion of Charter vs. Ordinances, as Commissioner McMullen asked.
 - vi. Commissioner Camporeale asked if Mr. Malloy thought there should be another director-level position. Mr. Malloy said that he spoke from a historical perspective only.
 - vii. Commissioner Bilicznianski asked a question about appointments and terms. Mr. Malloy said that the beginning of the appointment process should be with the Executive. He referenced Mr. Martin's comments on this issue.
 - viii. Regarding moving the installation date of the mayor from early December to early January, Mr. Malloy wondered about how much damage could be done in that period of time. He also questioned why an incoming mayor could not be ready in thirty days.
 - ix. Mr. Malloy noted that he would not make it too hard for the mayor to get out of town, with too many notices to issue.
 - d. Commissioner Larobina cautioned that changing the Charter does not fix policy issues.
6. Review Collation of Charge Items for recommendation to the full Charter Review Commission
- a. Item #5 – C1-40-5 - Review the frequency of Charter Revision – the committee did not feel that a change was needed. It was moved, seconded, and unanimously approved (4-0) that we do not pursue this suggestion. This item needs to be moved to the full Commission for its review.
 - b. Item #12 – C1-80-70 - Consider including an Independent Registrar and/or Unaffiliated Registrar – the committee does not have the legal authority to do this. It was moved, seconded, and unanimously approved (4-0) that we do not pursue this suggestion. This item needs to be moved to the full Commission for its review.
 - c. Item 18 – C3-10-4 – Remove “or” before the Town Clerk – the committee agrees with this suggestion and has discussed it with the BOR leadership, the Town Clerk, and the mayor, who are all in agreement with making the change. It was moved,

seconded, and unanimously approved (5-0) that we pursue this suggestion. This item needs to be moved to the full Commission for its review.

7. Review and Approval of Meeting Notes of October 19, 2022 – approved unanimously (5-0) with no changes.
 - a. BOE recommendation regarding majority-minority relationship – item held by Chair.
8. Upcoming meetings:
 - Wednesday, November 16 – 5 pm at the Govt. Center
 - Thursday, December 1 (Chair will be away- McMullen to Chair; Pioli to write meeting notes); and Thursday, Dec. 15; both are 5 pm at the Govt. Center.
 - A Draft meeting calendar for 2023 was discussed. It was tentatively agreed to meet on the first Thursday and third Wednesday of each month, at the Govt. Center, starting at 6 pm, beginning in 2023:
 - January 5, 18
 - February 2, 15
 - March 2, 15
 - April 6, 19
 - May 4, 17
 - June 1, 21
 - July (if needed) 6, 19
 - August (if needed) 3, 16
 - September (if needed) 7, 20
9. Unfinished Business
 - a. 117 – Replace Board of Representatives with City Council – Rep. Jacobsen’s reply - item held by Chair.
10. New Business – there was none.
11. Meeting adjourned at 7:58 p.m.

This meeting is on [video](#)