

CITY OF STAMFORD 19TH CHARTER REVISION COMMISSION FINANCE COMMITTEE

Shelley Michelson, Chair

Members

Susan Halpern
Steven Kolenberg
Alex Martinez
Clemon Williams

DRAFT MEETING NOTES

Thursday, January 19, 2023

7:00 P.M.

The meeting was called to order at 7:05 P.M. In attendance were Attorney Mednick and Commissioners Halpern, Martinez, Michelson, Lane and Pramberger.

Attorney Mednick informed us that the Mayor, as chief executive of the City, and the Board of Representatives, as the legislative body, are the only two bodies required by State Statutes, providing the Committee with a great deal of flexibility in crafting new relationships among the various bodies (See Charges 78, 79 and 110 below). We were informed that the capital budget provisions are those specified in the Special Act. The following issues were addressed at the meeting:

Golf Commission/Golf Authority

In addition to other appropriations, to provide adequate funds for the safe operation of the Gaynor Golf Course (which lacks the benefit of the profitable driving range located at the Sterling Golf Campus), a lockbox can be created to capture the lease rental payments to the City from the Sterling course with the uses (operating or capital) proposed by Gaynor's Golf Commission to be presented before both the Board of Finance and the Board of Representatives for approval. The lockbox provision could have a sunset date if deemed prudent. This arrangement is deemed preferable to a merger of the two courses and is designed as a method to help remedy the City's historic underinvestment in the Gaynor course by redirecting funds to Gaynor (as a budget line item) that otherwise would have been deposited in the City's General Fund or another of the City's funds. Attorney Mednick will confer with Attorney Roberts and provide language.

Charge #s 75, 76,77,111: (Chapters C8-20-5, C8-30-9) Increasing Public Scrutiny of Budget, increase citizen participation, provide longer notice of Public Hearing)

In our interview, the Fiscal Committee of the Board of Representatives proposed well publicized listening sessions among the Administration, the Planning Board, the Board of Finance and the Board of Representatives to obtain public participation in the formation of the operating and capital budgets and the budget timeline for future budgets could be adjusted to allow more public participation in advance of budget adaptation and final Public Hearings. Attorney Mednick will review the budget process and suggest appropriate places to insert relevant language

Charge # 78: (Chapter C8-30-7) Consider giving the Board of Representatives the ability to increase any item in the budget –In our interviews, the Board of Finance was not in favor nor was the Fiscal Committee of the Board of Representatives. Full Charter discussion is required.

Charge #79 (C8-30=7): Consider allowing the Board of Representatives authority to restore a budget cut by the Board of Finance by a 2/3 vote: In our interviews, the Board of Finance and the Board of Representatives Fiscal Committee were not in favor of this Charge. Full Charter discussion is required.

Charge #110: Give the Board of Representatives the ability to add to, not just cut, the budget- Full Charter discussion is required.

Charge #82 (C8-50-1): Show consolidating debt service schedule with annual debt service on all debt and make transparent all material litigation on Stamford’s website in its annual report and in its bond offerings. In our interview, the Director of Administration has agreed to display Stamford’s full debt service; Attorney Mednick will review transparent litigation disclosure of other municipalities. The City of Danbury’s transparent litigation disclosure was provided to Attorney Mednick and the Committee.

Grants Office: Merge the Community Development Block Grants Office into the City Grants Office – Attorney Mednick suggested that this change be accomplished by Ordinance. Full Charter discussion is required.

Board of Education: Require periodic outside independent audit of BOE – Attorney Mednick provided language used by the City of Waterbury to permit special internal or external audits of any City department, including, but not limited to the Board of Education. Full Charter discussion required.

Discussion at the next meeting of the Finance Committee will include Charge #s 80,81 and 83 which pertain to tax rates, taxes for sanitation and approval, requirements for increasing capital projects and additional appropriations as well as emails submitted requesting modifications in close-out of capital projects and control of appropriations.

The committee is deferring discussion of Charge #s 69, 70,71 and the drafting of language regarding the defined contribution pension programs until after the Committee has heard from pension experts at a meeting to be arranged.

Other Provisions to be Inserted into appropriate sections of the Charter, as suggested by Attorney Mednick (language to be provided)

- Cooperation provision among all bodies
- Civility and Order in Public Meetings
- Ethics and Conflicts of Interest

There being no other business, Commissioner Martinez made a motion to approve the draft minutes of the meeting of January 4, 2023, which was seconded by Commissioner Halpern and approved unanimously. Thereafter, Commissioner Martinez moved to adjourn the meeting. Commissioner Halpern seconded the motion and with unanimous approval, the meeting was adjourned at 9:23 P.M.

Respectfully submitted,
Commissioner Michelson

This meeting is on [video](#)