

CITY OF STAMFORD 19TH CHARTER REVISION COMMISSION FINANCE COMMITTEE

Shelley Michelson, Chair

Members

Susan Halpern
Steven Kolenberg
Alex Martinez
Clemon Williams

MEETING REPORT

**Wednesday, January 4, 2023
7:00 P.M.**

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

The Commissioners discussed the Finance Committee charges and other suggestions that have arisen during the course of our interview process.

Below is a summary of our discussions, categorized by status.

Motions to be made at the next full Charter Revision meeting

CHARGE NUMBER	CHARTER SECTION	DESCRIPTION	STATUS
36	C5-50-2(c)	Consider revising section, as it does not work with the purchasing ordinance bid waiver process	Previously reviewed, works as intended -no change necessary
37	C5-50-2(d)	Consider revising – estimate should be furnished to the Director of Administration	Previously reviewed – works as intended - no change necessary
38	C5-50-2(d)(2)	Consider revising – the Certificate should come from the Director of Operations	Previously reviewed – works as intended no change necessary
39	C5-50-2	Consider revising – section should be clarified	Previously reviewed – works as intended - no change necessary
72	C7-10-8	Review whether this section is applicable	Creates Police and Fire Pension Funds, Section is applicable, no change necessary

74	C-8-30-4	Consider having the BOE budget process earlier to allow earlier hiring of teachers	Although a legal opinion is supportive, Dr. Lucero and her team felt that SPS has sufficient recruitment practices available to render this unnecessary
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DISCUSSION FOR FULL CHARTER

CHARGE NUMBER	CHARTER SECTION	DESCRIPTION	STATUS
73	C8-30-2	Develop a biennial budget similar to the State of Connecticut	Committee discussion required; interviewees had sharp differences of opinion, Admin, BOE & grants in favor, BOF, BOR against, Yanik says premature

The Administration (Mayor and Director of Administration) favors biennial budgets to streamline the annual workload. The Board of Education and the Grants Office believe that their budgets do not fluctuate materially from year to year and they engage in longer range planning anyway, so biennial budgets would not require large adjustments in the off year. The Board of Finance and the Board of Representatives believe that the annual budget process is important fiscal discipline for the City and the Board of Finance pointed out the potential effects of unexpected events, such as the effects of COVID – 19 that could have a material effect on the collection of tax revenues, requiring a significant rejiggering in the off year. The Controller’s office believes a biennial budget is premature, as Stamford’s IT system is old and its replacement early in 2023 should be tested before such a change in the Charter is implemented.

Question for Counsel: how many comparable cities in the State, if any, have implemented biennial budgeting and how has that worked for them?

CHARGE-RELATED QUESTIONS REQUIRING LEGAL REVIEW

CHARGE NUMBER	CHARTER SECTION	DESCRIPTION	STATUS
23	C4-10-1	Add Section permitting the Town Clerk to request funding if deemed necessary from the BOF	Some activities (election-related) funded by grants, Committee is not cognizant of budget process for this office, internal designation of deputy clerk allowed by State statute
75,76,77, 111	C8-20-5; C8-30-9	Increasing public scrutiny and input, e.g., a digital checkbook or participatory budgeting. Consider increasing public input into the capital budget process and including participatory budgeting as part of that process. Consider making the budget process more inclusive of resident involvement (i.e., Participatory budgeting and provide longer notice of Public Hearing	Board of Representatives Fiscal Committee suggested instituting listening sessions for public participation prior to enactment of capital and operating budgets, as Public Hearings generally do not allow for public input that would alter the outcomes
78	C8-30-7	Consider giving the Board of Representatives the ability to increase any item in the budget	BOF not in favor, BOR Fiscal Committee opposes; may be CT Gen'l Statutes issue ?, confer with counsel
79	C8-30-7	Consider allowing the Board of Representatives authority to restore a budget cut by the BOF by a 2/3 vote	BOR Fiscal Committee, BOF not in favor, CT Gen'l Statute issue ?; confer with counsel
110	C8-30-2	Give BOR ability to add, not just cut	Statutory question, Counsel opinion required

FINANCE COMMITTEE OTHER NON-CHARGE CONSIDERATIONS FOR COUNSEL

CATEGORY	CHARTER SECTION	DESCRIPTION	STATUS
Golf Commission, Golf Authority	C6-130-3	Flow of revenues between golf courses, use Golf Authority lease payments to flow to Golf Commission for capital improvements	Charter permits consolidation, administrative action of revenue sharing subject to annual appropriation, Ordinance?
Grants Office	N/A	Merge CDBG office into City Grants Office Organizational change	Committee discussion Charter or Ordinance?
Board of Education	N/A	Require periodic outside independent audit of BOE	What are best practices? What cities do this? Charter or Ordinance?
Pension	N/A	Draft language regarding defined contribution pension plan for Charter	Who should draft?

PENSION-RELATED CHARGES AWAITING MEETING WITH PENSION EXPERTS

CHARGE NUMBER	CHARTER SECTION	DESCRIPTION	STATUS
69	Part 7 Pensions	Require the Mayor to call a meeting of all pension chair trusts and OPEB quarterly to share best practices	Comments from Richard Freedman to require pension trustees to be vetted for experience in investing pension assets – other comments include requiring same asset manager for all funds (Yanik); consult with pension experts, then counsel
70	C7-10-1	Review how frequently providers are compared	Citation question, resolve with vetted pension board members? – consult with pension experts, then counsel
71	C7-10-2	Provide the Mayor with the authority to appoint a trustee for each pension fund	Consult with counsel – Charter seems inconsistent with appointment of Trustee membership

OTHER CHARGE-RELATED ISSUES DISCUSSED AND UNDER CONSIDERATION

CHARGE NUMBER	CHARTER SECTION	DESCRIPTION	STATUS
80	C8-30-10	Fixing of tax rates – review this section	Further Committee discussion required
81	C8-40-5	Tax for Sanitation – review this section	Further Committee discussion required
82	C8-30-2(b) 4. C5-20-3	Show consolidating debt service schedule with annual debt service on all debt and make transparent all material litigation on Stamford’s website and in bond offerings	Director of Administration agreed to make debt service transparent, legal disclosure unresolved; Further Committee discussion required
83	C8-20-9, C8-30-12	Approval requirements for increasing Capital Projects; Additional Appropriations, 2/3 BOR or majority?	Further Committee discussion required

FINANCE COMMITTEE OTHER NON-CHARGE ITEMS UNDER CONSIDERATION

Close-out of Capital Projects	?	Deletes approval authority of Planning, Board, Board of Finance, Board of Representatives	Fiscal Committee of BOR opposed, submitted after BOF interview, Further Committee discussion required (See Dr. Sinani memo)
Control of Appropriations	8-30-11	Change in operating budget category approval for transfers from line items to programs, increasing amounts, and/or percentages subject to approval	Further Committee discussion required; section very poorly written (See Dr. Sinani Memo) – belongs in Ordinance?

A motion was made by Commissioner Martinez to approve the Meeting Notes from December 7, 2022 and seconded by Commissioner Kolenberg. There being no other business, a motion to adjourn the meeting was made by Commissioner Martinez and seconded by Commissioner Kolenberg. The meeting was adjourned at 9:17 P.M.

Respectfully submitted,
Commissioner Michelson

This meeting is on [video](#)