

CITY OF STAMFORD

19TH CHARTER REVISION

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Michael Larobina, Vice Chair
Jackie Pioli, Clerk

MEETING REPORT

Saturday, January 28, 2023

9:00 a.m.

This meeting was held in person at the Stamford Government Center, 888 Washington Blvd. 4th Floor Democratic Caucus Room and remotely at the above date through Zoom.

Present in person were Commissioners Bowser, Camporeale, Halpern, Kolenberg, Lane, Larobina, Lombardo, Martinez, McMullen, Pioli, Pramberger and Williams. Present remotely via Zoom were Commissioners Bilicznianski and Michelson; and Attorneys Mednick and Roberts. Commissioner Loeb was excused.

1. Chair Lombardo called the meeting to order at 9:00 a.m.
2. Chair Lombardo took attendance through those present in person and on Zoom. A quorum was confirmed to proceed.
3. Chair Lombardo led the Pledge of Allegiance.
4. Communication and Correspondence: Chair Lombardo and Vice Chair Larobina confirmed there was no updated Communication or Correspondence
15. **Finance Committee Report.** Finance Committee met on January 19th, 2023 with Attorney Mednick. Commissioner Michelson stated that Attorney Mednick confirmed 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. This gives the Committee a great deal of flexibility in crafting new relationships among the various bodies.

Commissioner Michelson discussed the following charges:

Charge # 78: (Chapter C8-30-7) Consider giving the Board of Representatives the ability to increase any item in the budget –In meeting interviews, the Board of Finance and the Fiscal Committee of the Board of Representatives were not in favor of this. Full Charter discussion is required.

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

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

¹ Video Time Stamp: 00:03:00

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 lock box 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 under-investment 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- Public Scrutiny of Budget, increase citizen participation, provide longer notice of Public Hearing. In our interviews, 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. Attorney Mednick will confer with Attorney Roberts and provide language.

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.

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.

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. 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 Meeting, Ethics and Conflicts of Interest.

The Finance Committee brought forward five action items:

Charge Number	Charter Section	Description	Committee Report Status	Commission Action
36	C5-50-2(c)	Report on Budget Impact and multi year contracts and agreements. Finance Functions: 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. Proposed Language: 1. except the Board of Education and cause internal audits to be performed as necessary. 2. prepare monthly budget reports for the BOR	Action Item: 1 Discussion held with full commission. No action take at the time of the meeting. The item goes back to the Finance Committee

	Sec. C6-00-10	Cooperation and Related Clauses: Required Cooperation *New	Attorney Mednick (language to be provided) Cooperation provision among all bodies,Civility and Order in Public Meeting,Ethics and Conflicts of Interest	Action Item: 2 Discussion held with full commission. No action taken at the time of the meeting.
	Sec. C6-10-2	Fiscal Records.	Attorney Mednick provided examples of the Proposed Language: The Superintendent of Schools may keep fiscal control records convenient for the administration of the schools. The Controller shall keep a full and complete record of all fiscal transactions of the Board of Education. The Controller shall be the Disbursing Officer of the Board of Education.	The item goes back to the Finance Committee
	Sec. C6-10-3	Municipal Ordinances,	Unless otherwise prohibited by law, the Board of Education shall adhere to and be bound by the provisions of this Charter and by all municipal ordinances, including but not limited to, ordinances which govern the subject of municipal procurement of articles, materials, supplies and insurance (including such purchases related to capital projects).	

	*New	Disclosure And Accountability Standards	Attorney Mednick provided examples of the Proposed Language: The Mayor, the President of the Board of Representatives, the Majority Leader, the Minority Leader and the Standing Committee Chairpersons of the Board of Representatives, the head of any City Department, or any elected or appointed City Board, Commission, Authority, Agency or Bureau may, in writing, request that the Corporation Counsel, and the Corporation Counsel shall, render an opinion, in writing, upon any question of law arising in connection with the exercise by the aforementioned, of their official powers and duties.	Action Item #3 Discussion held with full commission. No action take at the time of the meeting. The item goes back to the Finance Committee
	Sec. C8-20-5	Preparation of Proposed Capital Program.	Attorney Mednick provided examples of the Proposed Language: C) Any resident of the City may attend such hearings, but shall not have the right to be heard. Before taking final action on the proposed capital projects program, the Planning Board shall hold a public hearing not later than the tenth (10th) day of February on public notice.	Action Item: 4 Discussion held with full commission. No action taken at the time of the meeting. The item goes back to the Finance Committee
		Golf Commission Revenue Stream	Proposal to let the Golf commission keep their revenue stream,	Action Item: 5 Discussion held with full commission. No action taken at the time of the meeting. The item goes back to the Finance Committee

Attorney Mednick said there is a law in the State of Connecticut that permits the BOR to change the budget dates. The BOR can revise the charter without going into a revision process by a super majority vote of the BOR.

The Commission reviewed the public comment process for capital budget and agreed that there should be an opportunity for public comment prior to the development of the proposed projects possibly a community conversation. The Finance Committee will bring the proposed language to full commission.

Commissioner Larobina shared his frustration that this proposed charter change is going into the territory of invading into the budgetary process through how money is spent. Commissioner Bilicznianski agreed with Chair Larobina.

Chair Lombardo called a five-minute recess at 10:56 a.m.

26. Appointed Boards and Commissions Report: Commissioner Larobina stated the Committee met on Thursday, January 12, 2023. The status of their review is as follows:

- The Committee is still considering a Commission on ADA or Disability.
- The Committee discussed the creation of an Appointment Board and decided that the current ordinance is sufficient.
- The Committee is still considering a Commission on Aging.
- The Committee is not considering the creation of a Citizen's Complaint Board
- Increasing Minority Representation on Boards and Commissions is controlled by State statute.
- The Committee is considering revisions to the Appointments Process
- The Committee is considering expanding the responsibilities of the Health Commission
- The Committee has not gotten to the Parks & Recreation Commission
- The Committee is considering a DEI Commission

The Commission needs to determine whether the creation of these commissions should be included in the Charter but the details of these new commissions should be included in the Charter, or whether their composition, etc. should be left up to the Board of Representatives. Attorney Mednick stated that moving the commissions, as well as City departments, out of the Charter, with them remaining only until the Board of Representatives creates them by ordinance might be advisable, but that people need to have an opportunity for input before this change is made.

Minority representation on boards and commissions was discussed. The minority representation statute limits the number of members of the majority party. How would Stamford formalize this, to get more people involve in the process? Attorney Roberts said that minority representation does not apply to bodies that are voted on by district, such as the BOR. There may not be enough unaffiliated voters to fill the positions. Unfortunately, people will often game the system to switch parties far enough in advance to work around this issue. There would have to be a special act to have a specifically non-partisan body.

² Video Part 2

Combining some boards and commissions, such as having a public safety commission that combines police and fire, with the Police Chief, the Fire Chief and the Health Director as permanent members reporting directly to the Mayor

Commissioner Kolenberg brought up the subject that many of Stamford's issues revolve around housing. There are numerous boards and commissions that deal with the smaller parts of this larger issue. There needs to be a centralized housing commission so residents can go to one place for all their housing concerns, such as rent, zoning, environment, BMR, etc. Their concerns would then be brought to the proper department to handle.

Attorney Mednick said that under state law a fair rent commission can be created via ordinance. He added that we do not want to weaken a commission's authority by changing the structure. Grandfathering might be a consideration.

The Commission agreed there should be some brain-storming sessions about this item.

Chair Lombardo thanked everyone for their time.

Attorney Mednick recommended that all committees look at the items they currently do not think the Commission should move forward on, and move those items out, so the Commission can act on them at next meeting. By late February or early March the full Commission should be discussing substantive items. The Commission needs to start moving forward with the action items.

Chair Lombardo adjourned the meeting at 12:58 p.m.

This meeting is available on Video ([Pt. 1.](#) & [Pt. 2.](#))