

**CHARTER REVISION COMMISSION
TOWN OF EAST WINDSOR
11 RYE STREET
EAST WINDSOR, CONNECTICUT 06088**

These minutes are not official until approved at the subsequent meeting.

Minutes of Public Hearing

Thursday, November 21, 2013 at 7:00 p.m.

Members Present:	Robert LeBourious, Lois Noble, Karla Schultz (arrived at 7:04 p.m.), Leonard Norton (arrived at 7:08 p.m.), Richard Pippin, Jr., Charles Riggott and Alan Baker
Members Absent:	None
Others:	Boy Scout Troop, Sharon Tripp, Paul Anderson, John Burnham, Jack Mannette, Steve Dearborn, Cynthia Herms, Bonnie Yosky, John Mathews, Marie DeSousa, Tom Muska, Jim Richards, Sharon Muska, Kathy Pippin, Jason Bowsza, Joseph Sauerhoefer and many others
Press:	None

I. Call to Order

Chairman Richard LeBourious called the Public Hearing to Order at 7:01 p.m. in the East Windsor Town Hall.

Chairman LeBourious thanked everyone for attending the Public Hearing. He read into the record the Public Hearing Notice which appeared in the *Journal Inquirer* on November 9, 2013. He indicated to everyone the ground rules were simple, anyone who would like to address the Committee, a sign-up sheet was on the conference table and it was asked that they write their name and address and to limit their comments related to the Charter only, to three minutes. The purpose of the meeting is to obtain public input and comments regarding the Town of East Windsor Charter. Copies of the Charter will be available in the Town Clerk's Office and on the Town's website. The process to start reviewing the Charter begins when the Committee Members are appointed and thereafter, a Public Hearing is held before the Committee can review the Charter and prepare their report. Another Public Hearing will be held until the final report will be presented to the Board of Selectmen. The Board of Selectmen reviews the recommendations of the Charter Commission and the Board of Selectmen will then have a limited time to have another Public Hearing.

Committee Member Karla Schultz entered the hearing at 7:04 p.m.

II. Public Comments

Ms. Sharon Tripp of 76 Winkler Road, East Windsor, Connecticut addressed the Committee. She indicated that the Charter was last reviewed and revised approximately five years ago, and the financial section pertaining to the budget was changed that the Town budget was to be voted upon referendum and a small percentage increase of 2% would be put into effect after three failed referendums. This has caused the Town to sustain no growth. She is suggesting that budget not to be voted by a referendum. If it has to be, the percentage of increase, if failed by the third referendum, should be increased to 3% so the Town of East Windsor will be able to grow.

Mr. Paul Anderson of 89 Main Street, Broad Brook, Connecticut addressed the Committee. He would like to make a case for a Town Manager to run the Town which is a \$35 Million Dollar plus business. The WPCA has a five member Board that hired a professional superintendent to manage the day to day operations. The Board sets policy and the superintendent implements the policies. As Board Members change, the employees know that the day to day operations will remain the same. We can no longer afford to rely on popularly elected officials that may or may not have the background to manage our Town. This is no reflection on the current or previous First Selectmen. He also added that there is a need to change the default budget to avoid the difficulties that it has been causing in the past few years.

Committee Leonard Norton entered the Public Hearing at 7:09 p.m.

Mr. John Burnham of 178 Scantic Road, East Windsor, Connecticut addressed the Committee. He remarked that he would like to see the Charter split the two budgets, Town Budget and Board of Education budget as it is done in Simsbury. He also commented in the Town of Somers during a Town referendum, questions are placed on the ballot asking the voter/taxpayer why they voted as they did, for example, if the budget is too high or too low to give the Board of Finance the climate of the taxpayer/voter in Town and how to proceed if the referendum fails. He believes that keeping the 2% default increase, but he believes the more money you give government, the more money government will spend. He believes in bonding for specific projects, for example, drainage projects or school projects, as it will increase confidence in the voter/taxpayer.

Mr. Jack Mannette of 15 Old Ellington Road, East Windsor, Connecticut addressed the Board. He indicated that Section 8-5(4) Failure of the Budget Following the Third Referendum of the Charter needs to be addressed. The section reads that if the budget fails at the third referendum the budget reverts to last year's approved budget, plus 2%, and shall be deemed to be the approved budget for such year. He is recommending that adding the word "referendum" between "last year's and approved" to read as follows:

If the budget fails at the third referendum the budget reverts to last year's referendum approved budget, plus 2%, and shall be deemed to be the approved budget for such year.

This allows the exclusion of one time appropriations, approved by a Town Meeting, which increased the annual budget from being included in the 2%.

Having the 2% after three referendums provides the taxpayer with a safety net too high of spending and too low of spending. Based upon previous budget referendums, he believes this is what the taxpayers want.

Another section which should be reviewed is Section 2-1(C)(1) Town Elections, Term of Office, First Selectmen. He believes the four-year term should be changed to a two-year term. This will make the Town of East Windsor consistent with all the other towns that have a First Selectman form of leadership.

Mr. Steve Dearborn of 144 East Road, East Windsor, Connecticut addressed the Committee. He commented that he believes that anyone who is an elected official on this Committee and is an employee of the Town should not be on this Committee. The decisions this Committee makes effects those directly. He believes it is a possible conflict of interest. The second remark he made was to see the default budget decrease to 1% increase. Presently, the Town budget is over \$37 Million Dollars and 2% increase is approximately \$750,000 per year; over ten years that is over \$7 Million Dollar increase. There are a lot of farm families in this Town. If the budget is only increased at 1% over ten years, the budget will increase to \$44.5 Million Dollars. He understands that he has a lot to learn; however, he believes that if you work for the Town of East Windsor, you should live in the Town of East Windsor.

Ms. Cynthia Herms of 12 Pamela Court, Broad Brook, Connecticut addressed the Committee. She didn't have anything written, but she wanted to tell the Committee that she does not like the automatic 2% default budget increase after the third failed referendum because contrary to beliefs of others, a 2% increase may not absorb an increase to expenses that are beyond control, such as, insurance costs or utility costs. The Town budget is already at a barebones budget and the 2% default budget increase is self-destructive. She also noted that adding a question to the budget referendum would be a helpful tool during the budget process.

Ms. Bonnie Yosky of 7 Yosky Road, Broad Brook, Connecticut addressed the Committee. She commented that she served on the last Charter Revision Committee and she was in favor of the three referendums and indicated that they determined the timelines by inquiring with the Treasurer and Assessor how long their offices would need to produce the tax bills. The 2% default

increase budget was determined by using the cost of living Social Security averages. She encourages the only fair way in determining a Town budget is to have a referendum and all have a right to vote, only using the Town Meeting approach could exclude many taxpayers who cannot attend Town Meetings due to work schedules and child care.

Mr. John Mathews of 169 Melrose Road, East Windsor, Connecticut addressed the Committee. He first wanted to thank all of the volunteers who were sitting on the Committee. He also sat on the last Charter Revision Committee and he indicated the document which is being reviewed is 250 years old and these people who are sitting on the Committee are a part of history. There are a lot of sections in the Charter and what he tried to do when he was on the Committee was to make sure the Town had a checks and balance system. He believes that there should be as many as possible referendums because not many townspeople participate in a Town Meeting versus a referendum. He does not believe the cost of a referendum, approximately \$6,000 is a lot of money to spend on such important decisions the Town makes. He again reiterated his would like a checks and balance type of government. He has many ideas he would like to discuss and will be attending as many Charter Revision Committee Meetings as he can to add input to the Meetings. He believes that the Police Commission should be defined by the Charter and should not be able to sign contracts with employees. He believes this should be reviewed.

Ms. Marie DeSousa of 10 Rice Road, Broad Brook, Connecticut addressed the Committee. She hopes the Committee reviews at Section 8 of the Charter and deletes the 2% default budget. Costs of everything increase including salaries and the Town only has so many employees and those employees cannot be laid off because the Town doesn't run itself. Her concern is of the budget process and as much as it was a good idea of the default 2% increase, the damage of the misinformation surrounding that 2% increase has been detrimental to the Town from the record keeping to the required Town Meetings to make the necessary transfers and all of these meetings are done by volunteers who serve on the Board. She somewhat agrees with a two year term for First Selectmen, it has pros and cons. She remarked when a qualified person is elected, a four year term is good because it takes approximately two years just to learn the job and the next two years implementing policies and running the Town toward the future; however, if a non-qualified person is elected, four years could be too long. If the Town continues on increasing the budget 2% year after year, the Town will never be able to afford a qualified Town Manager or pay for fire fighters or maintain or repair the Town's infrastructure and the Town will never move forward. She suggests taking the default 2% off the table.

Mr. Thomas Muska of 216 East Road, East Windsor addressed the Committee. He commented that the government cannot make the Town move

forward in particular in a bad economy. The State of Connecticut is still suffering from the past economic downturn and one of the reasons is due to the union employees and the union stronghold on government employees. He is proposing that the Charter should make union negotiation sessions open to the public. Also, he would like the Town to make available either through the Town Clerk or on the website an open checkbook, so the Town's people can look at what the Town is spending. He said that the government don't make, the government takes. He believes that the default should be 0% increase and he began speaking of a recently elected official in New Britain who has frozen salaries in the city. In closing, he reiterated that he would like to see how the money is spent, if possible, on the website and making union negotiations open to the public.

Mr. Jim Richards of 43 Rockville Road, East Windsor, Connecticut addressed the Committee. He agreed with comments made earlier by Mr. Burnham regarding splitting the budget between the Town budget and Board of Education budget and make the budget referendum pass.

Ms. Sharon Muska of 216 East Road, East Windsor, Connecticut addressed the Committee. She supports continuing referendums on budgets even though only a small percentage of people attend those referendums. Those who are compelled to vote and pay their taxes will vote for the referendums. Others do not have an interest. She would like open communication between the Town and the taxpayers by using technology, such as, Facebook and email. People complain there is misinformation throughout the Town, maybe this could be changed by communicating with the taxpayers. She suggested emailing the minutes to meetings. She reads the minutes of meetings so she is informed. She would like the Town officials to be prepared and she encouraged them to deal with the 2% default budget.

Mr. LeBourious asked if anyone else wished to address the Committee, he then gave others who spoke an additional three minutes if they wished.

Ms. Cynthia Herms of 12 Pamela Court, Broad Brook, Connecticut addressed the Committee for a second time. She wanted to add an additional comment that if the Committee feels that the 2% default budget should stay, then could the Committee clarify how that 2% can be applied, for example, if a particular line should be increased while others are decreased.

Ms. Bonnie Yosky of 7 Yosky Road, Broad Brook, Connecticut addressed the Committee for a second time. She commented that the Committee will have to address many parts of the Charter and there is so much information that has to be considered from the Board of Selectmen, Board of Finance and Board of Education. Putting information on the website and/or emailing information to the taxpayers may stop the misinformation throughout the Town.

Ms. Marie DeSousa of 10 Rice Road, Broad Brook, Connecticut addressed the Committee for a second time. She mentioned that the Police Commission serves the Town; however, she believes the Chief of Police should report to the CEO of the Town. The Police Commission is a viable Board and is capable of making decisions.

Mr. LeBourious indicated that the Board of Selectmen have given the Committee several recommendations in areas which need to be reviewed and which areas are required by law; however, the Committee is not limited in looking at other areas as well. The Committee will make that determination at a future meeting.

Mr. Steve Dearborn of 144 East Road, East Windsor, Connecticut addressed the Committee for a second time. He wanted to answer a question which was posed; however, Mr. LeBourious stopped Mr. Dearborn indicating this forum was not an answer and question type of forum. Mr. Dearborn remarked that the 2% default increase in the Charter does not address how the 2% increase should be allocated.

Ms. Kathy Pippin of 33 Woolam Road, East Windsor, Connecticut addressed the Committee. She commented that everyone needs to pay attention to all the meetings that happen in Town so they are aware of the on-goings. She thanked Mr. Jim Richards for his newsletter that he emails every week. If people attended meetings, all of their questions would be answered.

Mr. LaBourious asked if anyone else would be interested in speaking to the Committee. He mentioned that the Regular Meetings of the Committee will be open and there will be an agenda item of public comment. So if anyone would like to part-take in the meetings, they are welcome. The dates of the meetings along with the agendas will be available at the Town Clerk's Office and on the Town's website.

The hearing was adjourned at 7:38 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Denise M. Piotrowicz
Recording Secretary