

TOWN OF EAST WINDSOR CHARTER REVISION COMMISSION

**Regular Meeting
Monday, August 13, 2018
Scout Hall, 28 Abbe Road, East Windsor, CT.**

Committee Members

Co-Chairman: John Matthews, Keith Yagaloff

Members: Don Arcari, Cher Balch, Betsy Burns, William Loos, John Mazza,
Rachel Safford, Charlie Szymanski, Bonnie Yosky

MEETING MINUTES

**** These Minutes are not official until approved at a subsequent meeting****

TIME AND PLACE OF SPECIAL MEETING:

Co-Chairman Matthews called the Meeting to Order at 7:03 p.m. in the large Meeting Room, Scout Hall, 28 Abbe Road, East Windsor, CT.

ATTENDANCE:

Present: John Matthews, Co-Chairman; Keith Yagaloff, Co-Chairman (arrived at 7:10 p.m.); Don Arcari (arrived at 8:10 p.m.), Cher Balch, Betsy Burns; William Loos, John Mazza; Rachel Safford, and Charlie Szymanski

Absent: Bonnie Yosky

GUESTS: Robert Leach, Rick Leborious, Sarah Muska, and Bill Towers.

Press: No one from the Press was present.

AGENDA APPROVAL:

MOTION: To APPROVE the Agenda with the addition of discussion of Charter Objectives as item A. under Old Business, and to change item A. Continued discussion of Supplemental Appropriation Process to item B.

Loos moved/Balch seconded/**DISCUSSION:** None.

VOTE: In Favor: Matthews/Balch/Burns/Loos/Mazza/Safford/Szymanski
No one opposed/No abstentions

APPROVAL OF MEETING MINUTES/A. Minutes of July 23, 2018:

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MOTION: To APPROVE the Minutes of the Charter Revision Committee dated July 23, 2018 as presented.

Burns moved/Balch seconded/DISCUSSION: None.

VOTE: In Favor: Matthews/Balch/Burns/Loos/Mazza/Szymanski
Opposed: No one
Abstained: Safford

PUBLIC PARTICIPATION: The public is encouraged to provide their thoughts as succinct as possible. CSC members will not comment on the merits of an idea at this meeting, but may ask questions to clarify the proposal. A time limit may be imposed.

Bill Towers, Maple Avenue: Mr. Towers reported that in response to the recent Journal Inquirer article related to the discussion of setting Town Meeting quorums he had initiated discussion with various people regarding their opinions related to this proposal. Mr. Towers reported he polled neighbors and friends and people who attended the recent National Night Out event, and the Historical Society's Ice Cream Social; he held discussions face to face, and on social media as well. All respondents were eligible East Windsor voters. Mr. Towers provided the Commission with a document summarizing the questions posed, and the responses he received.

Co-Chairman Yagaloff arrived at 7:10 p.m.

Co-Chairman Matthews asked if the respondents had read the JI (Journal Inquirer) article? Mr. Towers wasn't sure.

Mr. Towers reviewed the results of his poll (poll questions in *italics*, responses follow the question):

1. *Do you think there should be a threshold or cap limit for expenditures when a town meeting is required?*

<u>Cap limit</u>	<u>Respondents</u>
A. 100,000	19
B. 150,000	1
C. 200,000	0
D. No limit	13
E. Did not answer	<u>8</u>
41 Total Respondents	

Mr. Towers noted that he had to clarify that currently there is a minimum and maximum of \$20,000 to \$1 million which can go to Town Meeting. He also noted two voters indicated they were happy with the current minimum and maximum, while one voter thought the minimum amount to go to Town Meeting was \$1 million.

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2. *Do you think there should be a minimum amount of voters “quorum” for a town meeting?*

<u>Quorum</u>	<u>Respondents</u>
A. 50	4
B. 150	7
C. No minimum	<u>30</u>
	41 Total Respondents

Mr. Towers reported that voters had indicated that the problem with not having a specified quorum and if the Town Meeting was held in July, as an example, then it's possible to have ten people making those decisions. Mr. Towers reported that another voter felt if the Town utilized long and short term planning we could prevent most of these issues.

3. *For approval of appropriations and expenditures do you prefer a Town Meeting (voters present at the meeting vote) or Referendum (polling of voters on a certain day)?*

<u>Voting Option</u>	<u>Respondents</u>
A. Town Meeting	37
B. Referendum	3
C. Doesn't Matter	<u>1</u>
	41 Total Respondents

Mr. Towers offered the following comments made by respondents to his poll:

- Since the budget is decided by a town wide vote the Appropriation/Expenditures should be decided by a small version of a town wide vote at Town Meeting; the Town Meeting is simple and open to all voters to speak and vote.
- Several voters noted referendums cost money; another respondent cited the cost of referendums (several thousand dollars for one referendum) compared to a Town Meeting (which costs only the cost of posting the Legal Notice and the cost of a Recording Secretary).
- Timing of referendums can make a difference –votes on a Saturday would get larger turnouts than weekday referendums. The same respondent/voter noted the last Saturday referendum got such a large turnout of family and parent turnout that they changed the charter to only allow votes on Tuesdays, and the hours need to be extended by the Selectmen. Those actions were not voter friendly to working parents and families.
- One mother of two recommended a designated day of voting
- Another respondent suggested there are pros and cons to both.

Co-Chairman Yagaloff asked Mr. Towers for his opinion. Mr. Towers felt that with regard to the long term plan the CIP projects seems to a good option; Mr. Towers was ok with the \$20,000 minimum for approval via a Town Meeting. Mr. Towers was ok with no minimum for passage of a vote at Town Meeting; he agreed it takes away from how small towns operate. Mr. Towers personally favored a Town Meeting. Co-Chairman

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Matthews questioned if someone came in with a \$1 million expenditure should that go to Town Meeting, or Referendum? Mr. Towers felt in that instance the vote should go to Referendum.

Discussion continued; Co-Chairman Matthews suggested the question is – was the vote (any Town Meeting vote) really representative of what the Town really wants, or a representation of what a certain small group wanted? That question initiated discussion of the quorum issue. Co-Chairman Yagaloff suggested the question now is what should that quorum number and dollar value be before the Town Meeting can't act but must send the question to Referendum?

Bob Leach, 39 Church Street: Commended Mr. Towers for the work he put into the poll, and for polling the various people.

HOUSEKEEPING:

Co-Chairman Matthews referenced the Commission's current Meeting Schedule. Based on the 2018 calendar the Commission's regularly scheduled October 8th meeting wouldn't be held due to the Columbus Day holiday. He suggested the Commission could reschedule meetings to the third Monday, October 15, and the fifth Monday, October 29th.

MOTION: To CHANGE the meeting dates for the Charter Revision Commission to October 15th and October 29th, 2019.

Loos moved/Balch seconded/DISCUSSION: None.

VOTE: In Favor: Unanimous (Matthews/Yagaloff/Balch/Burns/Loos/Mazza/Safford/Szymanski)

CORRESPONDENCE AND LOCAL NEWS/A. 1st Selectman correspondence of July 23, 2018:

- **Copy of Journal Inquirer regarding promotion of setting a quorum for the Town Meeting.**

Article used as reference during discussions.

- **Email from Mrs. Balch regarding an independent poll which she initiated with community residents.**

Mrs. Balch noted that she also spoke with 41 individuals; she asked respondents if they preferred a Town Meeting or a Referendum to cast a vote on approval of expenditures?

Mrs. Balch cited her e-mail summarized the results of her poll. She noted the responses she received were contradictory to those received by Mr. Towers. Mrs. Balch suggested

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that in her poll more people favored a Referendum over a Town Meeting. The respondents felt a Referendum gave more people an opportunity to participate as a Referendum is spread out over a longer period of the day. Co-Chairman Yagaloff cited that Mrs. Balch's survey indicated people were interested in participating in a vote; the question of a cap on Town Meeting participation didn't seem to have been related in their responses.

Mrs. Balch noted the people she spoke with were neighbors, friends, co-workers, and the general public. Some of the people she spoke with found it difficult to attend a Town Meeting set at a specific, short period of time in the evening. She suggested many people felt they were left out of the voting process as the Town Meeting time conflicted with their work schedules or ability to attend at the specified time.

Mrs. Balch also noted that many people cited another factor which contributed to respondents' preference for a Referendum was the inappropriate behavior exhibited at Town Meetings from people who oppose each other's choice. People were uncomfortable voting by a show of hands rather than by ballot due to behavior of those attending the Town Meetings.

Co-Chairman Yagaloff reiterated the intent is to maximize voter participation. Ms. Safford felt a cost benefit analysis is necessary to weigh the benefit of the projects. She acknowledged the cost of referendums. Co-Chairman Matthews noted the Commission's concern for voter fatigue if there were too many referendums; to alleviate that issue the Commission had considered scheduling referendums (set a place holder date) on a quarterly basis. He noted the Town already holds two referendums, the May budget referendum and the November elections; in reality the Commission is considering adding only two referendums, which may, or may not, be needed. Ms. Burns suggested the Town Meeting vote could be accomplished via a yes/no ballot. Co-Chairman Matthews cited past reluctance to that approach due to the need for the presence of the Town Clerk to validate the voters. Ms. Burns suggested the Town Clerk might be able to adjust her day to accommodate the voters.

Co-Chairman Yagaloff cited the consideration for a referendum is based on the cost of a project. High cost projects should go to referendum. He also cited that it's difficult for a person to question a proposal when many other people in attendance are in favor of the proposal; people see the questions as a challenge to their project. Separately, he referenced the recent denial of funding (\$3000) for the CRC commission recording secretary based on the request not being included in the budget, but \$827,000 in CIP funding, which also was not in the budget, were approved as supplemental appropriations. Discussion continued regarding the CIP process for developing projects, the timing of acquisition of quotes or price estimates, and the process for providing the support documentation for the cost of the projects. The Commission felt the CIP process needs to be clarified in the Charter.

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➤ **Co-Chairman Matthews e-mail regarding the Town Meeting vs. the Referendum.**

Co-Chairman Matthews indicated the Town would still hold Town Meetings; they would remain the same as today unless the appropriation exceeded a threshold value. The question then would be – should a quorum be required for approval of expenditures? Lacking a quorum at requests above the threshold would result in adjourning the meeting and scheduling a referendum to approve the large expenditure. A required hearing approximately 14 days before the referendum would give voters a chance for further discussion before the vote.

➤ **First Selectman Maynard's correspondence regarding comparisons for selected towns in regard to positions for financial professionals.**

This correspondence initiated discussion of various financial positions, including – Town Treasurer, Finance Director, Chief Financial Officer (CFO). Co-Chairman Matthews recalled a poll of CRC Members taken at the previous meeting found seven members favored a Finance Director over a Town Administrator. See additional discussion under **NEW BUSINESS, Items A. and B.** below.

OLD BUSINESS/A. Objectives:

Co-Chairman Matthews referenced the CRC's original objectives; he suggested the Commission should consider adding a sixth objective – to improve transparency and communication. The Commission agreed the additional objective fit their goals.

MOTION: To ADD a sixth objective – “Improve Transparency and Communication”.

Mazza moved/Balch seconded/

DISCUSSION: Mr. Mazza questioned if someone should be assigned to be a communications person to provide information to the people? He suggested the Town is a business; he'd like to see more information provided to the people.

**VOTE: In Favor: Unanimous (Matthews/Yagaloff/Balch/Burns/Loos/
Mazza/Safford/Szymanski**

OLD BUSINESS/B. Continued discussion of Supplemental Appropriation Process:

See discussion under final paragraph of discussion generated by Mrs. Balch's poll.

NEW BUSINESS/A. Review/Discuss Charges from Board of Selectman – Consider new position for research person, AND B. Review CFO position and list of responsibilities:

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Co-Chairman Matthews felt the research position would provide the transparency and communication the Commission has just added as an objective. They would also perform the cost comparisons of staff salaries relative to other towns, and other similar issues.

The Commission then initiated discussion centered on the job description and the duties assigned to the various positions – would the CFO also act as a financial analyst? It was noted East Windsor's current Charter identifies a Treasurer rather than a CFO. Co-Chairman Matthews recalled that in Ellington the CFO is responsible for overseeing the offices of the Tax Collector and the Assessor. Ms. Safford felt First Selectman Maynard seemed to be suggesting that re-titling the Treasurer's position to a Finance Director would make the candidate pool more competitive. CRC Members felt a CFO should manage the financial aspects of the town, gather comparative financial data or information, assist with long term financial planning, and *provide continuity within changing administrations*. The CRC felt the CFO or Finance Director would be in lieu of a Town Manager or Town Administrator.

Discussion followed regarding the utilization of the Treasurer by Boards and Departments. Mr. Loos explained the CIP's role, noting they provide a five year plan to the Board of Selectmen. Departments seek funding through the CIP for higher cost projects. Co-Chairman Yagaloff clarified his reference to long term financial planning would be assistance with, as an example, the monies received by the Town from the casino. Discussion continued regarding support services to Boards and Commissions.

MOTION: To INVESTIGATE a position to provide assistance to Boards and Commissions regarding financial planning and financial management.

Yagaloff moved/Szymanski seconded/

DISCUSSION: Ms. Safford questioned if this position would assume the financial analyst duties? Mr. Loos questioned that this would be a staff position in addition to the Treasurer and CFO? Co-Chairman Yagaloff felt the Treasurer manages the budget and oversees Town expenditures; he didn't feel the Treasurer could undertake the additional duties being considered due to time constraints of his or her position. He suggested the Board of Finance sets the priorities for spending, as does the Board of Selectmen. Mr. Szymanski suggested there must be an eventual return on the salary for this additional position. Ms. Burns noted the Town pays for services from CRCOG and other entities; those services could include the Town comparisons. Ms. Safford suggested the motion is really about performing a gap analysis. Co-Chairman Yagaloff recalled there are eight to ten towns which received approval from the State to self-insure; the process is being opened to additional towns. East Windsor could look into that as well. Mr. Loos was against hiring another person; the position being considered is a highly paid position. Mr. Loos felt the Town can't afford the cost; he felt the Finance Director should take on some of those duties.

Mr. Arcari arrived at 8:10 p.m.

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MOTION: To AMEND the motion that the Commission perform a gap analysis on the need for professional financial services/management and administration.

Yagaloff moved/Szymanski seconded/DISCUSSION: None.

VOTE ON AMENDING THE MOTION:

In Favor: Matthews/Yagaloff/Arcari/Balch/Mazza/Szymanski

Opposed: Loos

Abstained: Burns/Safford

VOTE ON THE AMENDED MOTION:

In Favor: Matthews/Yagaloff/Arcari/Balch/Mazza/Safford/Szymanski

Opposed: Loos

Abstained: Burns

NEW BUSINESS/C. Review Ordinance origination/change process:

No discussion this evening.

**NEW BUSINESS/D. Review Annual Budget process and proposal for Line Item
Referendum Vote:**

Co-Chairman Matthews referenced a letter to Selectman Hoffman from CCM (Connecticut Council of Municipalities) regarding which towns, if any, utilize a line item vote to pass an annual budget. CCM surveyed 18 towns; of those towns only Prospect allows voting by line item at the annual Town Budget Meeting.

In general, the Commission felt voting on each department would be cumbersome. Co-Chairman Matthews suggested picking the five highest department requests and giving the people the opportunity to vote on those items specifically. The department requests that aren't approved would then go to a second referendum after adjustment by the BOF; those department requests that fail at the second referendum would then go to the third/final referendum. Those funding requests that fail at the third referendum would be allocated a 2% increase. Co-Chairman Matthews felt this approach would give the people more say and participation and buy-in in how their money is spent.

Ms. Safford didn't like Co-Chairman Matthews suggestion, she felt it would pit one department against another; she cited the current negativity and didn't want to increase that situation. Ms. Burns felt this approach was inferring that the department heads didn't know what they need to run a department; she suggested people should have more faith in Town staff. Discussion continued regarding budget submissions. Some Commission members felt everyone inflates their budget requests in anticipation of spending cuts. Ms. Burns, as a former department head, cited she submitted accurate budgets based on department cost, including union requirements. Mr. Arcari felt the line item vote gives people more opportunity to vote on specific budgets

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which may carry a higher cost, such as the Police, DPW, Parks and Recreation, CIP, the Town Hall employees. Co-Chairman Yagaloff cited concern that the line item approach would cause competition against each department for resources. Mr. Szymanski noted this was the first time a mailer went out explaining the proposed budget; he felt if future mailers could include a brief summary of what department costs went up or down that would be beneficial to the voters. Co-Chairman Yagaloff suggested breaking the vote out to the Town vs. the School budgets. Discussion returned to comparisons with other towns. Various Commission members cited sometimes comparisons with surrounding towns aren't a good approach as the towns have different demographics, which in turn affect budgetary needs.

The Commission agreed to continue discussion on line item voting at the next meeting.

2ND PUBLIC PARTICIPATION:

Sarah Muska, 25 Maple Avenue: Ms. Muska reported that, as a sitting member of the Board of Finance, the Treasurer is very active with the Board of Finance regarding discussions, transfer requests, and expenditures.

Regarding the Commission's consideration of hiring someone to offer financial assistance, where will that person come into play? Now they go to the Board of Selectmen first, and then to the Board of Finance. Ms. Muska felt the Board of Finance gets a bad rap; the Board of Selectmen need to make changes they feel are appropriate. Does the person (being considered by the Charter Revision Commission) come to the Board of Finance after the Board of Selectmen?

And, regarding line item voting, Ms. Muska suggested there are items such as education and dues that need to be funded. The Commission also needs to consider items such as highway access which impact the needs in East Windsor but might not be needed in other towns.

Co-Chairman Matthews requested Ms. Muska make her suggestions available to the Recording Secretary in writing so the Commission can discuss them further. Ms. Muska agreed to provide the requested written information

Bob Leach, 39 Church Street: Mr. Leach reported that as someone who does estimating for cities and towns he wouldn't entertain getting quotes to do anything unless they are bid estimates. Mr. Leach didn't feel the Commission will get anyone on the CIP to get those estimates. Ms. Burns clarified it's not the CIP that acquires the bids; it's the department heads who then provide that information to the CIP. Co-Chairman Yagaloff recalled the issue considered by the Commission was that as a project passes from the CIP to the BOF to the BOS it's not clear if the cost is based on estimates. Mr. Leach suggested you won't get a correct cost until the project goes out to bid. Co-Chairman Yagaloff also noted that there was also discussion that if a project comes in under the bid cost the funds not used should be returned to the General Fund. Co-Chairman Matthews indicated that detailed costs had not been provided to the BOS. Mr. Leach indicated that to get a bid from him you need a PO (purchase order) or a bid proposal. Co-Chairman Yagaloff felt the scope of the project, including the cost, can go to vote. Mr.

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Leach noted most projects included language “at a cost not to exceed (insert specified amount)”; if the project comes in under budget then the remainder of the money allocated is returned to the General Fund.

Richard Leborious, 16 Church Street: Mr. Leborious reported he’s been involved in six Charter Revision Commissions – two in East Windsor, two in Enfield, and two in the position of consultant in other towns. Mr. Leborious offered the following comments:

A budget is a planning document that attempts to unify the purposes and wishes of the town as a whole, and when it’s put together it’s a balancing act. If you split the budget into five categories you destroy that balance, and you need to have faith in the people who put the budget together.

And, when he first moved to East Windsor he attended a Town Meeting and the first thing he heard was a motion to go to Referendum, which denied him his right to discuss and participate in the back and forth that many people in the community cherish. Co-Chairman Matthews cited the proposal for a public hearing or meeting between the Town Meeting and Referendum as an opportunity to engage in discussion. Mr. Leborious felt that public meeting becomes superfluous

Mr. Leborious also suggested the analyst the Commission has been discussing as support to the departments is called professional government; you need to pay for that. That position becomes a Town Manager, and then you need staff to support that position. A Town Administrator may be cheaper. Mr. Leborious felt that information should be provided to the boards and commissions through the First Selectmen’s Office on a regular basis.

And, finally, Mr. Leborious reported he appreciated the involvement of the Commission members; this isn’t an easy task. He suggested the Commission might consider hiring a consultant to move their work forward more quickly.

Co-Chairman Matthews thanked Mr. Leborious, and the others, for their input. He queried Mr. Leborious if, when he was a member of a Charter Revision Commission, did they have a paid recording secretary? Mr. Leborious replied affirmatively.

SUGGESTIONS FOR NEXT MEETING AGENDA:

Continue discussion of the Treasurer, Chief Financial Officer, Financial Analyst positions; also continue discussion on line item voting.

ADJOURNMENT:

MOTION: To ADJOURN this Meeting at 9:12 p.m.

Loos moved/Burns seconded/VOTE: In Favor: Unanimous

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Respectfully submitted,

Peg Hoffman, Recording Secretary for the 2018 Charter Revision Commission