

# TOWN OF EAST WINDSOR CHARTER REVISION COMMISSION

**Regular Meeting**  
**Monday, August 27, 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\*\*\**

### **1. TIME AND PLACE OF SPECIAL MEETING:**

Co-Chairman Matthews called the Meeting to Order at 7:06 p.m. in Meeting Room 2, Scout Hall, 28 Abbe Road, East Windsor, CT.

### **2. ATTENDANCE:**

**Present:** John Matthews, Co-Chairman, Don Arcari (arrived at 8:15 p.m.), Cher Balch, William Loos, John Mazza, Charlie Szymanski, and Bonnie Yosky

**Absent:** Keith Yagaloff, Co-Chairman; Betsy Burns, and Rachel Safford.

**GUESTS:** Andy Hoffman, Selectman

**Press:** No one from the Press was present.

Co-Chairman Matthews noted the Commission has a quorum of members present this evening.

### **3. AGENDA APPROVAL/ADDED AGENDA ITEMS:**

**MOTION:** To CHANGE the order of the Agenda to move item 9B. – **NEW BUSINESS: Review Annual Budget process and proposal for Line Item Referendum Vote** before item 8: **OLD BUSINESS.**

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

**VOTE:** In Favor: Unanimous  
(Matthews/Balch/Loos/Mazza/Szymanski/Yosky)

**TOWN OF EAST WINDSOR  
CHARTER REVISION COMMISSION  
Regular Meeting – August 27, 2018  
MEETING MINUTES**

**4. APPROVAL OF MEETING MINUTES/A. Minutes of August 13, 2018:**

**MOTION:** To ACCEPT the Minutes of the Charter Revision Commission dated August 13, 2018 as presented.

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

**VOTE:** In Favor: **Unanimous**  
(Matthews/Balch/Loos/Mazza/Szymanski/Yosky)

**5. PUBLIC PARTICIPATION:** *The public is encouraged to provide their thoughts as succinctly as possible. CRC 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.*

Mr. Hoffman felt what this Commission is doing is important, and it's essential to get it right and get the message of what you're doing out to the public. Since becoming a Selectman he's read the Charter many times; he agrees that it needs work to clarify issues. Mr. Hoffman felt the Commission did good work in their preliminary committee; there are a lot of important things that could be built into the Charter.

Co-Chairman Matthews recalled that the CRC talked about bringing the issues to the voters as multiple questions; if they reject one it wouldn't reject them all. He noted that Somers is currently updating their Charter; they're presenting nine questions to voters.

**6. HOUSEKEEPING:**

Co-Chairman Matthews referenced the recently revised CRC Meeting Schedule, noting Scout Hall may not be available on October 15<sup>th</sup> due to Scout meetings. The Commission discussed possible alternative locations, such as Park Hill and the Broad Brook Fire Department. Mr. Mazza offered his home if necessary. Co-Chairman Matthews will advise the Commission of his progress regarding relocation at the next CRC Meeting.

Mrs. Yosky questioned when the Commission planned to hold public meetings to present the Commission's ideas? Mrs. Balch recalled the Commission discussed a potential January public meeting. Co-Chairman Matthews felt February may be more realistic as it will give the Commission time to prepare better presentations. Co-Chairman Matthews also advised the Commission that First Selectman Maynard had asked for an update at the Board of Selectmen's Meeting.

Discussion followed regarding methods to keep the public informed of the Commission's progress. Mr. Hoffman suggested the CRC should explain the purpose of their specific proposals. Co-Chairman Matthews felt the CRC should send out a brochure to residents prior to the February public meeting explaining the pros and cons of the proposed changes. He cited the "white paper" sent to residents by Treasurer O'Toole prior to the

**TOWN OF EAST WINDSOR  
CHARTER REVISION COMMISSION  
Regular Meeting – August 27, 2018  
MEETING MINUTES**

recent budget vote as an example. Discussion continued regarding the process and timing of referral of the proposed changes to the Board of Selectmen, and the Board's referral back to the CRC with recommendations.

**7. CORRESPONDENCE AND LOCAL NEWS:**

Co-Chairman Matthews noted receipt of e-mail correspondence from Bill Towers. The initial e-mail followed up on discussion related to Mr. Tower's poll regarding the proposal for setting a quorum at Town Meetings for votes on higher priced items. A second e-mail expanded on the Charter's monetary specifications for calling a Town Meeting vs. a Referendum. Co-Chairman Matthews reiterated the Commission's proposal to set a quorum for attendance at a Town Meeting for more expensive items. Co-Chairman Matthews noted currently the Board of Selectman can make decisions on expenditures up to \$20,000; after that expenditures go to Town Meetings. Currently there is no limit on an expenditure or project; if 20 people show up who benefit from that project it can be passed. The Charter currently specifies that when borrowing amounts in excess of \$1 million then that decision goes to Referendum; the Charter is silent ,however,on the limit of expenditures.that can be approved at a Town meeting

Co-Chairman Matthews cited Mr. Towers poll indicated people didn't like referendums which they felt were too expensive, and favored non-working voters unless held on weekends. Mr. Tower's e-mail referenced referendum hours from 8:00 a.m. to 5:00 p.m. but the Town has the ability to change the hours. Co-Chairman Matthews clarified that current referendums are held from 6:00 a.m. to 8:00 p.m., which spreads the ability for residents to vote over a longer period of time. Mrs. Yosky recalled that a referendum had been held on a Saturday in the past with limited hours – noon to 8:00 p.m. - but the Town received considerable negative feedback as the weekend referendum eliminated the ability for the elderly from Park Hill and others who rely on transportation provided by Senior Services, which is only available on weekdays until 3:00 p.m., to vote. Mr. Szymanski noted the Registrars of Voters have indicated voting history-shows a surge of voters from 6:00 to 7:00 a.m., which are people voting before going to work; another heavy period of voting from 4:00 to 6:00 p.m., and a final heavy period just prior to the polls closing at 8:00 p.m. The remainder of the people vote sporadically throughout the day.

Regarding the cost of referendums, Co-Chairman Matthew reported the Treasurer had cited a cost of \$4,300 to \$4,500. He suggested the items being sent to referendum would be in excess of a half million dollars; the cost of the referendum is small compared to most items being voted, and is small if it allows many more people the opportunity to vote. Mrs. Yosky suggested people are intimidated at Town Meetings. While the Town Meeting offers the opportunity for debate people are intimidated by the lack of privacy when voting. Mrs. Balch concurred, noting that was a frequent comment during her poll. People are unsettled by the negativity related to opposing opinions. Discussion followed regarding the ability to vote by ballot vs. a show of hands.

**TOWN OF EAST WINDSOR  
CHARTER REVISION COMMISSION  
Regular Meeting – August 27, 2018  
MEETING MINUTES**

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

Mr. Hoffman reported that before he was elected he heard many complaints from people that they disliked voting on a total budget rather than being able to vote on specific line items, such as education, fire services, police, parks and recreation, public works, town maintenance, or road maintenance. If the voters were given the ability to say yes or no on larger expenditures it would give them more of a voice in the budget process.

Mr. Hoffman cited the line item approach isn't widely used in Connecticut; he cited information received from CCM (Connecticut Council of Municipalities) which suggested the Town of Prospect allows line item voting. He gave examples of the line item approach as used in Maine and Texas. Voters have the ability to vote on purchase of capital items, such as fire trucks or public works vehicles or police cruisers. Mr. Hoffman indicated he's heard concern that this approach pits departments against each other but there is already competition when the budgets come before the Board of Selectmen and the Board of Finance. The Board of Selectmen is the last line of recommendation before sending the budgets on to the Board of Finance, which makes the final decisions. Mr. Hoffman suggested that a lot of people that he talks to want the ability to have a say on the education budget, how many police officers are funded, how many roads are paved; he felt the voters should be given that opportunity. The line item approach isn't a death knell for a project or budget as they would still get a 2% increase if rejected at budget referendums.

Co-Chairman Matthews requested Mr. Hoffman to contact a representative from Prospect to discuss their process. Mr. Hoffman indicated he would ask someone to attend a future CRC Meeting to discuss their methods.

Mrs. Yosky saw the additional line items becoming a part of each referendum. Those specific expenditures that fail at the first referendum would go on to the second and third referendum for consideration; those expenditures that don't pass as line items would be part of the final budget and would get a 2% increase. Mr. Szymanski offered a different line item list – police, education, dpw, parks and rec, general government - which could then be broken down further into departments. Mr. Hoffman questioned if the CIP expenditures would be included in the line item choices? Mr. Loos recalled that 10 CIP projects totaling \$997,000 were approved last year. Mr. Hoffman reported he also heard many good things about the mailer prepared by Treasurer O'Toole prior to the budget referendums; he felt the Town should continue that process in the future. Co-Chairman Matthews cited the Charter currently calls for an annual budget message to be issued. He suggested in the future if the departments don't provide a message justifying the department needs, and the Finance Director doesn't sign off, then without that validation the department budget wouldn't be moved forward to the Board of Finance. Mr. Szymanski cited that Ellington requires explanations of why budgets have increased, or

**TOWN OF EAST WINDSOR  
CHARTER REVISION COMMISSION  
Regular Meeting – August 27, 2018  
MEETING MINUTES**

decreased, as part of their budget submissions. Co-Chairman Matthews suggested the Charter should prohibit budget submission without the signature of the Finance Officer.

Mr. Arcari arrived at 8:15 p.m.

Discussion then turned to the need to hire a Finance Officer/Director; Co-Chairman Matthews suggested the Charter should be updated to define the responsibility of the Treasurer's position to include oversight of the Town's finances. The Commission reviewed Section 4.2 of the Charter relative to the Board of Selectmen's ability to create various positions.

Co-Chairman Matthews queried members regarding the preference for line item voting on larger expenditures? Mr. Szymanski felt there was still room for streamlining services; he also questioned if the Town employs a purchase order system? Mrs. Balch and Mrs. Yosky both cited people complain of having to approve the budget as a whole when they may have issues with only one aspect of the proposed budgets. Mrs. Balch felt the line item approach shows greater transparency to the voter. Mr. Arcari liked the line item approach as it gives the voter a chance to look at the larger budgets in more detail. Mr. Mazza favored the line item approach. Mr. Loos agreed with the concept of the line item vote but his list of line items would be different.

**MOTION: To INCORPORATE line item approval in the annual budget referendums.**

**Balch moved/Yosky seconded/**

**DISCUSSION:** Mrs. Balch felt the departments requesting the largest budget requests should be included in the line item choices. Mr. Loos referenced the 2018 CIP project list, citing various projects proposed. He questioned why some of the projects on the list – such as Assessor's Evaluation and the Planning Department's GIS costs - weren't specific to the department using the item rather than shown as a CIP cost? Mr. Hoffman cited he trusts the people involved in the CIP Committee to present valid projects. He felt the CIP could be one line item voting choice; if there were fire trucks or dpw trucks they could be broken out. Mrs. Balch and Co-Chairman Matthews liked presenting the CIP project budget to the voter. Discussion followed regarding the current CIP process. Mr. Loos felt department heads aren't following the Charter; the CFO will oversee that process. He cited gas used by the town vehicles isn't presented consistently; gas used by the Broad Brook Fire Department is shown in their budget while gas for the Police Department is shown elsewhere. Mr. Szymanski felt reflecting the gas usage within a department budget shows a true representation of the department costs; he suggested the current process should be reviewed with the Treasurer.

**VOTE: In Favor: Matthews/Arcari/Balch/Mazza/Szymanski/Yosky  
Opposed: Loos  
Abstained: No one**

**TOWN OF EAST WINDSOR  
CHARTER REVISION COMMISSION  
Regular Meeting – August 27, 2018  
MEETING MINUTES**

**8. OLD BUSINESS/A. Summary of Town Meeting quorum requirement:**

See discussion under CORRESPONDENCE.

**OLD BUSINESS/B. Review/Discuss Charges from the Board of Selectmen:**

**i. Consider new position for research person, See item four of CRC charge from BOS dated May 17, 2018:**

No discussion this evening.

**OLD BUSINESS/C. Review CFO position and list of responsibilities:**

See discussion under NEW BUSINESS: B. Review Annual Budget process and proposal for Line Item Referendum Vote:

**9. NEW BUSINESS/A. Review Ordinance origination/change process:**

Mrs. Yosky had provided the Recording Secretary with copies of all Town ordinances, and summarized lists of Ordinances by department of issuance. The Recording Secretary provided CRC members with copies of the ordinance summarizations for review at a future meeting; ordinances chosen for discussion will then be provided to CRC members when appropriate.

**10. 2<sup>ND</sup> PUBLIC PARTICIPATION:**

No one from the public requested to speak.

**11. SUGGESTIONS FOR NEXT MEETING AGENDA:**

Continue to work on current Agenda items.

**12. ADJOURNMENT:**

**MOTION: To ADJOURN this Meeting at 9:00 p.m.**

**Loos moved/Yosky seconded/VOTE: In Favor: Unanimous**

Respectfully submitted,

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Peg Hoffman, Recording Secretary for the 2018 Charter Revision Commission