THESE MINUTES ARE SUBJECT TO APPROVAL BY THE CHARTER REVISION COMMISSION

The Charter Revision Commission held a regular meeting at the Senior Center, 14 Riverside Road, Sandy Hook, CT on Tuesday, August 14, 2012. John Godin called the meeting to order at 7:30 p.m.

Present: James Ritchie, Robert Hall, George "Nick" Schmidt, John Godin, Michelle Embree Ku, Craig Lehecka, George Coleman, Allan Song, Anthony Filiato
Absent: None
Also Present: Town Attorney David Grogins, Dan Wiedemann of the Legislative Council, 2 members of the public

Approval of the minutes – Jim Ritchie moved approve the minutes of the August 7, 2012 meeting as presented. Nick Schmidt seconded. All in favor.

Voter Participation: None
NEW BUSINESS
Discussion on voter comments: None
Discussion with Newtown's Town Attorney: Mr. Grogins was given a list of 8 questions from the commission members which he discussed.

He discussed that if the town has a charter "home rule" prevails. He cannot recall when advisory questioned dropped off the ballot in Newtown. He did an opinion in 2004 about advisory questions; the conclusion was there was a statutory basis of the opinion. He had a verbal opinion from the Secretary of State confirming his opinion. You can have advisory questions for the BOE and Town side breaking down the amounts of those budgets.

There are no laws on Binding advisory questions. It would be troubling because it would essentially take the authority of Board of Finance and Board of Selectman and bind their hands.

Discussion on research conducted by commission members: Michelle Embree Ku has gone through the list of the towns that have bifurcated budgets from the CCM list asking if bifurcation affects the Board of Education Budget. As of the meeting, 8 towns out of 28 responded to her e-mail. The fail rate for the education budget was 47% and the town fail rate is 32%. Nick Schmidt added that putting aside what other towns did, in 1991 when Newtown did have advisory questions; it hurt the Town's side of the budget.

Discussion on recommended proposals by commission members: Mr. Godin is for a binding split budget. He wants to have some form of advisory questions. He suggested one non-binding advisory question on each side asking if it is too low. No means down unless they are told otherwise. Everyone that has approached him has wanted a split budget and some have been in favor of advisory questions.

Nick Schmidt prefers a unified budget. Should a split budget be the way it goes, he suggested having on the ballot, Yes, No too high and No too low.

George Coleman is leaning toward a bifurcated budget but on the fence if it should be binding or not and in favor of the three advisory questions Nick Schmidt suggested.

Jim Ritchie is leaning toward splitting the budget but he is struggling with binding/not binding and advisory question. Does wish there was a way at capping the number of referendums.

Craig Lehecka looks at this an opportunity to officiate a change in the budget process. People who have bifurcated budgets seem happy with it but it doesn't seem to be the driving force to success, it is the budget process that has changed by bifurcating. A nonbinding budget seems like an advisory question and that seems unfavorable. He is in favor of a bifurcated binding budget and is not fully supportive of advisory questions but is not fully against it either.

Tony Filiato is in favor of a binding bifurcated budget. He has mixed feeling about advisory questions, however, the elected officials seem to be in favor of them.

Michelle Embree Ku wants to keep the budget unified. In Newtown there is a specific problem, and she does not think that bifurcation would answer this issue. Her impression of the elected officials is if the budget is bifurcated, would the environment be cooperative or collaborative. Bifurcation can possibly affect BOE budgets. There isn't enough positive information that makes it worth the risk. Advisory questions are the only way to get a handle on what the town is thinking.

Allan Song is in favor of a bifurcated budget with an advisory question. He is wavering on binding or non-binding.

Bob Hall is for a binding bifurcated budget. There is so many ways to interpret advisory questions. They do not have as much of a meaning as we would like them to have. He doesn't want to see a non-binding bifurcated budged. He feels that if the budget was bifurcated this budget, the towns' side would have passed on the first try. John Godin's suggestion of " is the budget too low" is a better option because even the yes votes get a vote.

Allan Song moved to draft two alternative "split budget" ballot recommendations to present at Thursday's public hearing. A question still exists as to whether these two options will be binding or non-binding options. Nick Schmidt seconded, all in favor.

OLD BUSINESS

Discussion and possible action on specific charge from Legislative Council: None

Confirm next meeting dates / final public hearing: There is a public hearing on Thursday, August 16th and a regular meeting immediately after. A meeting on Monday, August 20th has been set if deem necessary. After Thursday's meeting, they will need another meeting to finalize the draft. All meeting are at the Senior Center, 14 Riverside Road, Sandy Hook, CT.

Voter Participation:

John Moran, 8 Newfield Lane - Wanted to know if 7-100 of the charter will be corrected. Dan Wiedemann said there will be another Charter revision commission charged with looking at the entire charter.

Bob Neilson, 12 Lantern Drive - Thinks it makes it more confusing to have just a too low question. It is much clearer to answer no too high or no too low.

Announcements: NONE

Having no further business, meeting was adjourned at 9:48 p.m.

Arlene Miles, Clerk