

THESE MINUTES ARE SUBJECT TO APPROVAL BY THE CHARTER REVISION
COMMISSION

The Charter Revision Commission held a public hearing Wednesday, July 15, 2015 in the Council Chamber at the Municipal Building, 3 Primrose Street, Newtown, CT. Chairman Jeff Capeci called the meeting to order at 7:00pm.

Present: Kevin Burns, Jeffery Capeci, Tom Long, Dan Wiedemann, George Guidera, Bob Hall, Eric Paradis, James Ritchie

Absent: Deborra Zukowski

Also Present: David Grogins, Carey Schierloh, Mary Ann Jacob and First Selectman Pat Llodra

Hear public comment on proposed Charter revisions

Mary Ann Jacob, 65 Mohawk Trail – Thanked everyone for their work. When they were charged they were asked to report back to the Legislative Council so they could present the Charter revision on the November 2015 ballot. Given the immensity of the work that has been done, she is asking the Commission to consider using the rest of the time allowed by state statute to get it right. Rushing it gives a disservice to the work that has been done. It is important that legal counsel be given the time to make sure any cross references and changes make sense with each other. Each of the effected departments, boards and commission should have one final opportunity to review the recommended changes and also use the time to ensure the public is weighted.

A delay in a vote until November 2016 is worth it for a number of reasons. The next three months would be full amount of time allotted by state statute to finalize the document. As a community they will have another year to disseminate that information to the public in a variety of ways.

On a personal note, she asked them to consider some final changes in specific areas. For the record, her comments do not reflect that of the Legislative Council but her own personal opinion.

While upholding the bare majority language in the charter regarding the Board of Education meets the letter of the charge. Does it serve the communities best interest? Is a 5 person majority of any one party on the BOE change the way we do business or does it just cause bad feelings? In her experience the party affiliation doesn't come into play in our voting records past or present. Her concern is that a polarizing position such as this could put a lot of hard work down the drain.

After reading the Acquisition of real property section, she has real concerns about it being too detailed and not user friendly. Perhaps the detail that they are trying to write into the charter would be better suited as an ordinance.

Eliminating the Town Meeting format as a means to improve large capital spending reflects the 2015 reality of the Town we live in today. She is all for the changes to eliminate the Town Meeting for large capital items. However, moving what was a \$10,000,000 threshold down to \$500,000 may also prove to be unmanageable. Perhaps consider moving the threshold to a more reasonable number that reflects the 2015 spending standards.

She is also in favor of the rewording of the advisory questions.

Mr. Hall expressed concern that delaying the vote you will lose the momentum.

Mrs. Llodra also thanked everyone as well. She read the draft a couple of times and is concerned that there is not time to do the quality review that is necessary before September 15. She also questioned if some of the items put in the charter would be better served as an ordinance. Not everything we do should be in the charter such as medical benefits, that is uncertain, that should be in an ordinance. She is favor of striking the BOE language. There is no evidence that party politics play a role and it has become a lightening rod.

Town meetings happen with few people present. Last week more than 100 people came for the High School Auditorium. That issue needs to be discussed more deeply with the public. This is substantial way we govern, once it is gone, it is not coming back. When we lose the town meeting, we need to be certain that there are other avenues to hear public view.

Having no further business, the meeting was adjourned at 7:23pm

Respectfully Submitted, Arlene Miles, Clerk