

**CHARTER REVISION COMMISSION**  
**Regular Meeting**  
**January 13, 2022**  
**7:00 PM**  
**Via Webex**  
**Fairfield, CT**

A regular meeting of the Charter Revision Commission was held at 7:00 p.m. on Thursday, January 13, 2022, via Webex in Fairfield, Connecticut.

A recording of the meeting can be found here:  
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=XVYZB7QJtM>

**MINUTES**

**MEMBERS PRESENT:** Bryan Cafferelli-Chair, Chris Brogan-Vice Chair, Pamela Iacono, John Mitola, John Wynne

**OTHERS PRESENT:** Attorney Steven Mednick, Town Attorney James Baldwin, CFO Jared Schmitt, BOF Chair Lori Charlton, former BOF Chair Jim Brown, RTM Moderator Mark McDermott, former Budget Director Linda Gardner, FairTV, members of the public.

**MEMBERS ABSENT:** Marlene Battista-Secretary, Jay Gross

- I. Call to Order: Chair Bryan Cafferelli called the meeting to order at 7:00pm.
- II. Roll Call/Pledge of Allegiance: Recording Secretary Pru O'Brien called the roll. Chair Cafferelli led the Pledge of Allegiance.
- III. Approval of Minutes: December 9, 2021. Commissioner Wynne moved approval of the minutes of December 9, 2021, as written. Commissioner Iacono seconded the motion. The motion carried unanimously.
- IV. Public Comment on Adopted Work Plan - not to exceed one hour (Published on Website). Chair Cafferelli thanked the public for their emails and talked about the proposed work plan that was made from the comments and suggestions from the public and elected officials. He then opened the meeting for public comment:
  - Sarah Roy-Chair, Fairfield Bicycle and Pedestrian Committee. The Bicycle and Pedestrian committee was formed in 2014 and is not in the charter currently because the charter hasn't been revised since 2006. She would like the committee to be part of the charter to be sure it stays active regardless of the town leadership.

- Kate Braun wanted to know if there would be another opportunity for public comment once the revision is proposed. Attorney Mednick confirmed that there will be another public hearing at the end of the process but before the final act of the charter. The public will be able to review the revision and comment at that time.

The next meeting that will have public comment will be on Thursday, February 24, 2022, at 7:00pm.

V. Panel Discussion and Commission Deliberations on Articles IV and XII – Budget Process, including Budget Appeals. Chair Cafferelli asked Attorney Mednick to introduce the panel he invited to inform the Commission of the current chapter procedures governing the budget process and any thoughts or ideas about improving the process, if any. Attorney Mednick introduced the panel members and informed the Commissioners that starting with the budget process was a good starting point because all of the major entities, The Board of Selectmen and the First Selectwoman, The Board of Finance and the Representative Town Meeting were involved. The speakers proceeded as follows:

- CFO Jared Schmitt presented the steps in getting from the department heads budget submissions to the finalized budget and setting the Mill Rate for the taxes. His full presentation can be listened to in the recording filed on the Town website.
- Linda Gardner, former town Budget Director from 1985-2020 and worked with eight different administrations. She reviewed the changes and evolution in the budget process.
  - She referred to Article X11, Section 12.3, Paragraph C which in part, states that the Board of Finance

*“shall publish the final budget in a newspaper of general circulation in the Town not later than five days before the annual budget meeting.”*

Since hardcopy newspapers are no longer the only means by which we communicate with the public, the town may consider publishing the budget on the Town’s website. This will also save on advertising/publishing costs.

- She also suggested switching the term final budget which appears twice in paragraph C to the board of finance recommended budget. The board of finance budget is not the final budget because the final budget is approved by the RTM at the annual budget meeting. Paragraph C would be changed to,

*“publication of the board of finance recommended budget. After the public hearing referred to in paragraph B the board of finance shall hold a public meeting not later than one month before the annual budget meeting at which it shall consider all matters relating to the budget and shall publish its recommended budget on the town’s website not later than five days before the annual budget meeting”*

- Ms. Gardner also asked the Commission to consider a change to section 12.2, paragraph B, the last sentence, *“the recommendation of the selectman shall be submitted to the board of finance not later than two months before the annual budget meeting”*. Ms. Gardner felt that this removes flexibility for BOF/BOS joint hearings, which has been done in the past. She suggested changing the sentence to the following:

*“the recommendation of the selectman shall be submitted to the board of finance prior to the board of finance public budget executive session.”*

Ms. Gardner feels that joint budget hearings would offer the same information on time and at the same time as opposed to having separate meetings for the separate Town bodies.

- BOF Chair Lori Charlton thought the current process works well but agreed there were many meetings not mandated by the charter. She thought that multiple meetings with different presenters were informative and helpful. A shortfall in the charter provisions is that there is no process in the charter for the Capital Budget. Some towns have adopted Capital Budget processes. Ms. Charlton felt that there is no transparency and that once a Capital Budget is approved, there is no follow-up or tracking as in an Operating Budget. The discipline of the regular budget process should also be put into Capital Planning. Ms. Charlton also prefers separate meetings as opposed to joint meetings as there might not be enough time to have a full discussion with everyone.
- Former BOF Chair and member Jim Brown said he has been through both processes, joint and separate meetings. Each board has slightly different perspectives. The BOS has a leadership view, BOF has financial perspective and long-term obligations and the RTM has a legislative perspective for the community. He feels the process for the Town’s type of government works. He agreed that the Capital Budget process needs to be better.
- RTM Moderator Mark McDermott thought the system works well with the current form of town government. How deliberations go depends on the balance of power. Repetitiveness of meetings can

be long, and he hears a lot of people asking the same questions. By the time it gets to the RTM, it is at the end of the process.

Attorney Mednick did acknowledge that most comparative towns to Fairfield have language in their charter for the Capital Budget. He will email the CRC the general language.

There was a discussion about the BOS and RTM involvement with the budget. *A change in the budget process could remove the BOS from the budget vote.* It was suggested the RTM form a subcommittee who will be involved in the budget process and inform the rest of the RTM prior to hearing presentations and voting. It was also suggested that the BOE have a specific date they would have to submit their budget to the First Selectperson as determined by the town and put into the charter. Meeting dates can be moved, but the budget must be finalized and in place as of July 1<sup>st</sup> of each year.

Chair Cafferelli urged everyone to submit thoughts on the charter and budget as soon as possible to keep the timeline for meetings and subjects of meetings.

**VI. Counsel presentation of Reorganization Draft Charter**

Attorney Mednick referred to his document of a consolidated and restructured charter. This document is also available online with the backup documents. He highlighted areas where it was suggested to review the article. He also grouped certain things together, so they aren't repeated throughout the document. Attorney Mednick consolidated all executive articles to the same section. At the bottom of each page, there are annotations and integrated some of the historical special acts.

Attorney Mednick also created categories so the public could see the breakdown of the process of the appointing authorities.

The next meeting is on Thursday, January 27 at 7:00pm.

**VII. Adjourn.**

Commissioner Wynne made a motion to adjourn. Commissioner Mitola seconded the motion. The meeting adjourned at 10:04pm.

Respectfully submitted,

Pru O'Brien  
Recording Secretary