

CHARTER REVISION COMMISSION
Special Meeting
June 2, 2022, 7:00 PM
HYBRID MEETING
BOARD OF EDUCATION CONFERENCE ROOM
501 Kings Highway, East

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

DRAFT MINUTES

MEMBERS PRESENT: Bryan Cafferelli-Chair, Christopher Brogan-Vice Chair, Marlene Battista-Secretary, Pamela Iacono, John Mitola, John Wynne

MEMBERS ABSENT: Jay Gross

OTHERS PRESENT (Via Webex): Attorney Steven Mednick, Town Attorney James Baldwin, Members of the Public both in person and Webex.

I. **Call To Order**

Chair Bryan Cafferelli called the meeting to order at 7:00pm.

II. **Roll Call**

Recording Secretary Pru O'Brien took the roll.

III. **Pledge of Allegiance**

Chair Bryan Cafferelli led the Pledge of Allegiance

IV. **Approval of Meeting Minutes: April 25th, May 11th, May 12th, May 17th**

Commissioner Wynne made a motion to approve the minutes in Item IV. Commissioner Mitola seconded the motion.

The motion carried unanimously.

V. **Public Comment on Proposed Changes to The Charter of The Town of Fairfield**

- Steven Sheinberg-15 Flax Road: Chair of DTC. Charter Revision should be non-partisan. There should be no Minority Representation in the RTM and it should stay at 40 members.
- Sharon Pistilli-RTM D3- 107 Lota Drive: These views are her own and do not represent the RTM. Keep the RTM at 40 members and Minority Representation would not represent voters.
- Kevin Flynn- 67 Sachem Road: Constable for 7 years. Doesn't know why the CRC is reducing the number of Constables. RTM should not be reduced. Do not change the Charter.
- Dick Dmochowski-Secretary FECB/FERB-Colonial Drive: Sent email to the CRC regarding changes requested through an email send 11/15/21 regarding alternate members and powers in the State Statute.
- Judy Ewing-98 Sasco Hill Terrace: Concerned about discussions with little due diligence involved. Town Administrator should be hired/fired by BOS and not just First Selectperson. Minority Representation is not democratic.
- Violet Lumani-27 Rhode Island Avenue: No party should have party control and Minority Representation should not be allowed. This is a power grab.

- Dru Georgiadis-RTM D9-321 Puritan Road: address issue of bipartisanship. RTM should stay with 40 members. To reduce the RTM would be gerrymandering. Opposed to Minority Representation.
- Laura Karson-RTM D4-187 Buena Vista Road: Minority Representation is undemocratic. Do not reduce the RTM, they serve the people in the districts
- Christine Brown-RTM D9-82 Rowland Road: Opposes Minority Representation, it ignores democracy and majority rule. Disagreements between parties are good.
- Jay Wolk-RTM D5-1157 Stratfield Road: Constable & RTM, doesn't understand why CRC is going to reduce the Constables. They are called on by probate court. Paid by the person serving papers and not by town. Also doesn't understand why the RTM numbers are reduced.
- Patrick Berhene-827 Riverside Drive: Minority Representation is a slap in the face to voters. No reason to take Constables from votes to Executive Branch appointment. Leave the budget process the way it is.
- Bill Hopf-285 Hemlock Hills Road N.: Current size of RTM is governed by RTM, doesn't see a reason to codify into Charter. He knows the CRC worked hard and for a long period of time. It would be a shame for this to not be ratified by voters. If you leave in Minority Representation this will all be for naught.
- Ken Lee-71 Rhoda Avenue: Served on RTM. Applauds Civility section. Left RTM because of hostility. Reducing RTM reduces accountability that is necessary. Minority Representation is offensive, budget process is fine. Change should be incremental.
- Craig Curley-109 Lakewood Drive: Serves on BOF and has followed budget process for 15 years. BOF provides oversight with experts in the field who know what they are doing. Combining budget process is not a good idea. Minority Representation is not a good process.
- John Kuhn-RTM D7-125 Mayweed Road: RTM district is all Democrats. If Minority Representation was in place, he would not have run. If you limit people to bring ideas, it would be a disservice.
- Bill Gerber-RTM D2-25 Shady Hill Road: Has heard comments from people regarding change in the Charter. Those comments can be a risk-change without substantiation. Reducing the RTM goes against CT Statute. Minority party candidates can and have won in districts. 27% of RTM members would have been gifted a seat if this was already in place.
- Joe Sieber-RTM D5-37 Senior Place: Doesn't believe in Minority Representation. Ran and lost and ran and won. If there is minority representation there is no incentive to run.
- Reini Knorr-83 Alberta Street: concerned about reducing the RTM and thinks they should be able to decide how many people are on it. She also objects to Minority Representation.
- Cindy Wapnitsky-41 Valley View Place: CRC members were appointed with pre-existing thoughts. Changes being made are so people can keep political power. It is openly biased against the RTM. Minority rule is undemocratic.
- Alex Durrell-RTM D3-64 Woodcrest Road-Whatever recommendations the CRC has made, he supports.
- Dylan O'Connor-31 Lowell Street-registered Independent. Spent time speaking with people from both parties who think provision is undemocratic by gifting a seat and not by winning at the ballot box. Not for the RTM to have Minority Representation.
- Eve Darcy-827 Riverside Drive: Echoing a letter from Kathy Braun-now is not the time to change the role of the DPW Director, leave engineering degree in. Opposed to combining budget process.
- Roger Aitori-1310 Melville: Please do not amend the constables. Don't delve into BOS when First selectperson is one party and two others are the other party, it doesn't work well.

- Arlene Murphy-23 Millard Street: People don't feel heard. Commission worked hard and the anti-democratic proposals will have to be defeated at the ballot box.
- Elizabeth Zezima-RTM D4-160 Fairfield Woods Road: Concerned public has grown to believe this process is to shift power. Recommendations have been sent but she doesn't find them reflected. Should be a standing committee on the RTM to vet members of Boards & Commissions as it tends to be a friends and family program. RTM should be self regulating and combining budget process will dilute it.
- Bill Perugini-1080 Fairfield Beach Road: He is a Constable and these are trying times. Doesn't see a strong need to reduce the number of Constables.
- James Oliveri- 157 Bennet Street: Population growing, do not reduce RTM, Minority Representation is gifting.
- Peter Henkle-160 Larkspur Road: Was confused about what he was reading. Do not reduce the RTM. And the RTM needs legal assistance.
- Jennifer Jacobson-40 Victoria Court: Robert's Rules of Order regarding the three sections drafted as changes. Clarification on language in provisions with boards & commissions and how they adopt their rules. The Town Charter does not dictate to the RTM what they appropriate funds for but in the changes there are sections where it does dictate and wondered if that would need to be approved by the BOF first.
- Selectwoman Nancy Lefkowitz-Redding Road: Opposes Minority Representation in the RTM. She was elected to the RTM because she worked hard. She has questions regarding codifying proposals of the CRC prior to it being presented to the Board of Selectmen. Principals of sustainability, how were the changes done and how will it effect the residents. What happen if we do nothing. There is a Civility clause but it does not include equity-it is a failure that the charter represents all people.
- Kathleen Griffin-15 Stonybrook Road: Currently on the BAA and was on the RTM. There is professional management needed and she appreciates the step in the right direction but it has not been defined. Language is highly political. New position should be modeled after other towns, currently Wilton is hiring Town Administrator. Majority of residents would like to have this in Fairfield.
- Matthew McKinnis-301 Sasco Hill Road: Reducing the RTM is dangerous. Minority Representation is undemocratic. He worked an RTM election and the candidates who lost should not be gifted a seat. Of all people speaking, only one was in support.
- Sherri Steeneck-75 Parkway: 43 years as resident. On RTM and BOS. RTM unruly body but it is a democratic process. Budget process important and by the time it gets to the RTM it has gotten a lot of discussion. Not convinced there is a need for Town Manager but should be a professional hire. If there is a good moderator on RTM, meetings run smoother. The benefits and risks of doing nothing on charter are important.

With no other members of the public requesting to speak, Chair Bryan Cafferelli thanked everyone for attending and speaking. Chair Cafferelli closed public comment.

VI. Preliminary CRC discussion of the Public Hearing

Commissioner Mitola wanted to state that the Constable issues and changes were suggested by the Probate Court.

VII. Next Steps

Attorney Mednick told the Commission to think about what they had heard tonight and let him know what should be discussed at the special meeting on Monday, June 6. Attorney Mednick will get a

redline of the changes after Monday's meeting to present to the Board of Selectmen. The Board's approval, whether in part or whole will go on the ballot in November

VIII. Adjourn

Commissioner Iacono made a motion to adjourn. Commissioner Battista seconded the motion. The meeting adjourned at 9:15pm.

Respectfully submitted,

Pru O'Brien
Recording Secretary