

**SPECIAL MEETING NOTICE**  
**Charter Revision Commission Meeting**  
**Tuesday, November 16, 2021**  
**6:00 p.m.**  
**Via Webex**  
**Fairfield, CT**

**MINUTES**

A recording of this meeting can be found here:  
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=EKGF7QiuVPs>

**MEMBERS PRESENT:** Bryan Cafferelli-Chair, Chris Brogan-Vice Chair, Marlene Battista-Secretary, Pamela Iacono, Jay Gross, John Mitola, John Wynne

**OTHERS PRESENT:** First Selectwoman Brenda L. Kupchick, Selectman Thomas Flynn, Selectwoman Nancy Lefkowitz

**I. Call to Order**

Chairman Cafferelli called the meeting to order at 6:00pm. Mr. Cafferelli then led the Pledge of Allegiance.

**II. Roll Call**

Recording Secretary Pru O'Brien took the roll call.

**III. Information Item: Public Email Comments (Posted on CRC Webpage)**

Chairman Cafferelli thanked the public for their emails and let the public know that all emails are included in the backup and the tracking chart.

**IV. Input from Selectpersons pertaining to the effect of the Charter on Town operations**

Selectwoman Lefkowitz started by congratulating the committee for the thoughtful approach in hearing from the town. She has spent a lot of time reading the charter and has many thoughts and hopes the CRC will consider them:

- Does the Charter reflect who we are, where we are going, and who we want to be
- Not very user friendly, clunky and should be more accessible language to the lay person, add a glossary of terms.

- Does there need to be a preamble or should it be a vision statement
- Are sections of the Charter being viewed through equity
- Should be non-political
- Switching to town counsel could be more effective because the three-person Board of Selectmen is not functioning as well as it should.
- In favor of representative body
- Symbolic, unenforceable law should be removed
- Gender neutral – Selectperson and not Selectman or Selectwoman
- Look at all job descriptions and make them not gender specific
- Town Seal
- Are we still considered a town at over 60K residents?
- First Selectman staff salaries increased 25% in the last few years. Should have something in the Charter about salaries
- Make budget process more inclusive, more efficient
- Would like the Town Attorney and Assistant Attorney item looked at
- Addition of an equity and inclusion officer on staff
- Add code of ethics and conduct
- RTM to appoint boards and commissions
- Term limits for all elected positions

Selectman Thomas Flynn said he has been on town boards and government for 16 years and 2 of those years as a Selectman and was on Board of Finance prior to that.

- Charter should be consistent with the state laws. The existing Charter conflicts with state regulations.
- Not sold on changing town government but not against it either. Address inefficiency within the current town government.
- Make budget process more efficient
- Role of responsibilities for town bodies
- Address issues inherent into this form of government, it could be more efficient
- Candidates for RTM, should it be the same size
- Qualifications required for Department Heads and is it as necessary for certain department to have degrees or experience
- Are there enough boards and commissions in town and what is their responsibility
- Some salaries and benefits paid to town employees conflict with state statutes

First Selectwoman Kupchick thanked the members of the Charter Revision Commission for taking on this responsibility as the Charter has been guiding this town since 1639.

- Does not want Fairfield to become a city, but it is the 11<sup>th</sup> largest municipality in the state with over 61,000 residents. A change in government is necessary.
- Budget process is long and there are many meetings. BOS and BOF can hold joint meetings and streamline the process without compromising checks and balances. Compare the process to other towns of this size. Not efficient.
- There are over 300 people on 55 boards and commissions. What commissions oversee what departments.
- Clarity on selecting department head terms
- Tree Warden length of time served should be more than one year
- With over 60,000 residents, the First Selectman's office should be fully staffed. Chief of Staff needs to be a full-time permanent position.
- Government somewhat antiquated. Look into it and have other people from around the state come in and talk about their forms of government.
- CAO position should be a Charter position

The Commission discussed whether a preamble should be added to the Charter. The consensus of the Commission was not to add a preamble.

The Commission also discussed whether the provision for Constables in Section 1.4(A) is required. Attorney Mednick will research this question.

There was a discussion regarding the First Selectwoman's interaction with the Town Attorney. First Selectwoman Kupchick said some towns have legal departments. The First Selectperson needs the Town Attorney as in most cases, the First Selectperson is not an attorney. A leader needs someone to rely on for legal matters, labor negotiations, tax appeals, lawsuits etc. Fairfield has a town attorney and sometimes hires legal counsel. Is there a need to employ a department of attorneys or contract out as needed? That needs to be considered.

John Mitola suggested doing a cost analysis to see how much is spent on legal fees and comparing that to paying attorneys through the town payroll. Whether fair or not, there is a perception for many years that the Town Attorney is the attorney to the First Selectperson. The Charter states the First Selectperson can hire a Town Attorney and maybe it becomes a term position. First Selectwoman Kupchick said she would prefer to pick someone she knows she can trust.

There was also a discussion about the budget process and how the BOE budget is submitted in January. Attorney Mednick said the budget process for the town including the BOE is a town function and can be set forth in the Charter or an Ordinance within the Charter, as to when the budget is due and have a uniform system. It can also require the BOE to submit its budget at the same time as department heads submit. The town cannot control how the BOE money is spent. They will review how other towns' budget process.

## **VI. Commission Review and Discussion of Issues Tracking Chart: Creating the CRC Work Schedule**

Attorney Mednick said that he has a very substantial tracking chart and Fairfield is a very participatory community. Between this and the next meeting he will find priorities and he will have panels of people from around the state to speak of certain topics and have key players in Fairfield at multiple meetings. He will work with the town attorney on drafting issues. He will put the issues into the following categories: Substantial Due Diligence, Research and Report, and Relevance Discussion. The commission will make the determination if something needs to be in the town charter at all. There could also be a chapter created as a Sunset Provision. This occurs when an ordinance is adopted, it would remain a charter function until the item passes as an ordinance and this way the functions are not lost.

Due to the time constraints of some commissions, the meeting review ended.

## **VII. Discussion of Next Steps**

Attorney Mednick will do a breakdown to get through the process faster and figure out how many meetings will be needed to get through the topics.

Chairman Cafferelli said the 12/9 meeting will be a Special Meeting so it can start at 6:00pm instead of 6:30pm. The Regular Meeting will convene at 6:30.

## **VIII. Adjourn**

Marlene Battista made a motion to adjourn. Jay Gross seconded the motion. The meeting adjourned at 8:26pm.

Respectfully submitted,

Pru O'Brien  
Recording Secretary