

## MINUTES

### CHARTER REVISION COMMISSION

September 21, 2011  
Town Hall Meeting Room

A meeting of the Charter Revision Commission was held on September 21, 2011 in the Weston Town Hall Meeting Room. Present were Woody Bliss, Richard A. Bochinski, Nina Daniel, Arne de Keijzer, Kenneth C. Edgar, Jr., Susan Moch and Dennis H. Tracey, III. The meeting was called to order at 7:30.

The Commission first deferred consideration of the minutes of its September 17, 2011 Meeting.

The Commission then received comments from Board of Education Chair Phil Schaefer. Mr. Schaefer's comments primarily concerned the budget process, which he reviewed for the Commission. Mr. Schaefer supported having a referendum to determine the Town budget, but questioned the value of separate votes on the budget at the Annual Town Budget Meeting (ATBM), particularly given the relatively low turnout for that Meeting. A full transcript of Mr. Schaefer's remarks will be made available on the Town's website.

First Selectman Gayle Weinstein then appeared before the Commission and shared her views on the Charter, accompanied by a detailed written submission. First Selectman Weinstein divided her remarks into conceptual (or "political") comments and technical comments; i.e. areas where the Charter needs to be examined either for accuracy or its correspondence with actual administrative practice. She responded to a series of questions presented by the Commission and then drew the Commission's attention to certain of her administrative suggestions. A full transcript of First Selectman's remarks will be made available on the Town's website.

Highlights of First Selectman Weinstein's conceptual remarks are as follows:

- 1) The balance of responsibilities in the current Charter between the Town Meeting and the Board of Selectman is appropriate.
- 2) Why is it that the ATBM can lower, but not raise, the proposed budget?
- 3) A referendum on the budget is desirable, so long as the cost makes sense.
- 4) The current number (3) of Selectmen is appropriate; no need to expand the Board.
- 5) The Commission should consider lengthening the term of the Selectmen to four years, although there are pros and cons to that approach.
- 6) No need to make First Selectman a formal full-time position. In addition, the position of Town Administrator is very important and should not be eliminated or diminished.
- 7) No need to add provisions to the Charter requiring Town Meeting approval of the Town's exemption from its zoning regulations.

- 8) No need to add a special provision regarding the Selectmen's ability to join a Council of Governments; the Charter already provides a remedy if the public is opposed to such action.
- 9) The Town Clerk and Tax Collector should be appointed positions.
- 10) If possible, we should eliminate "safe" seats in our election process, and encourage the participation of unaffiliated voters in Town Government.
- 11) No need for an ombudsman to mediate disputes involving the Town.
- 12) We should explore the ability of the Town to distribute electronically ordinances and other notices rather than incur the expense of printing them in the newspaper.
- 13) Generally not in favor of having a separate election for Selectmen.
- 14) Might consider attendance requirements for appointed officials.

The Commission next discussed the provisions of Article 1 of the Town Charter. Mr. Edgar observed that this Article consists primarily of legal provisions defining the Town of Weston, the rights, powers and obligations of the Town, and a definitions section. Much of Article 1 appears in the charters of many towns in Connecticut. It is possible that it could be simplified and the Commission may ask the Town Attorney to assist them on this. The definitions section will have to be analyzed in the process of drafting any changes to the Charter, but the Commission did not, at this point discuss specific changes. Finally, Ms. Daniel suggested that the Commission might consider recommending adding a "history" section to the Charter so that readers would understand the evolution of the document.

The Commission next discussed the process by which it would pick, and analyze, the charters of other Connecticut towns to assist the Commission in its discussion of the Town Charter. The Commission reviewed a list of potential comparator towns, and after discussion, decided to determine at its next meeting which towns should be selected as comparator towns. It also decided, at the suggestion of several members of the Commission, to split up, for purposes of review, the other town charters and assign a member to analyze each of the charters for comparison purposes as issues in our Charter were discussed.

Having no further business, the Meeting was adjourned at 9:28.

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Kenneth C. Edgar, Jr., Co-Chair