



John L. Salomone
Town Manager

TOWN OF NEWINGTON

131 CEDAR STREET
NEWINGTON, CONNECTICUT 06111

MAYOR JEFF WRIGHT

MINUTES

CHARTER REVISION COMMISSION

February 28, 2008

I CALL TO ORDER

Mr. Boni called the meeting to order at 6:31 PM in the Helen Nelson Room of the Newington Town Hall.

Mr. Boni noted that Mrs. Bafundo will not be in attendance as she is suffering from the flu, and wished her a speedy recovery.

II PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE

III ROLL CALL

Commissioners Present (roll call)

Tony Boni
Peter Boorman
Robert Briggaman
Alan Nafis

Commissioners Absent

Nancy Bafundo, Chair (illness)

Staff Present

Marian Amodeo, Library Director
Chris Schroeder, Fire Chief/Fire Commissioner

IV PUBLIC PARTICIPATION

Myra Cohen, 42 Jeffrey Lane: Mrs. Cohen suggested that the Commission invite former Town Managers to speak about the Charter, and suggested that they do not wait too long to contact former Town Manager Paul Fetherston as he is due to leave the area. Mrs. Cohen suggested that the Commissioners ask the former Town Managers their suggestions regarding the potential move of the NCTV and Art League facilities, in particular the move of the technical equipment at NCTV.

V MINUTES

A 2-14-08 Special Meeting

Mr. Briggaman noted that on page two of the 2-14-08 minutes the term "CEO" is used in one spot and the term "CFO" is used in another. The correct term should read "CEO". (so noted)

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Mr. Boni noted that his first name is misspelled in the roll call list. The correct spelling is Tony. (so noted)
Mr. Briggaman moved to accept the minutes of the 2-14-08 Special Meeting.

Motion seconded by Mr. Nafis. Motion passed 4-0 (Mrs. Bafundo absent).

VI MATTERS TO BE CONSIDERED

A Speaker: Central Connecticut Health District: Paul Hutcheon, Director

Mr. Hutcheon spoke about Charter Section 303(A)(2), which is to be considered for removal from the Charter since Newington has voted to join the Central Connecticut Health District.

Mr. Hutcheon gave an overview of the Central Connecticut Health District:

- The District covers four communities: Newington, Rocky Hill, Wethersfield and Berlin
- The District covers a population of about 94,000 residents within the four communities
- The District acts as the local health department for the Town of Newington, replacing the former Town health department
- The District is a regional operation which operates under Mr. Hutcheon's direction and includes four Sanitarians (one for each community).
- The District has an office in the Newington Town Hall and in the town halls of each member community. Newington also has a Community Health Coordinator who is based in the Senior and Disabled Center
- The focus of the District has been to develop programs and services which help residents lead healthy lives.
- The District's new website (to be rolled out the first week of March) is www.ccthd.org. The website will contain information about regulatory and environmental health programs, health inspections, educational programs, health screening programs and grant-funded programs.

Question and answer session followed. Mr. Briggaman asked whether there is any downside to having four towns participate in the regional health program. Mr. Hutcheon replied that in his experience he has learned that the regional program can offer much more in terms of community-based health programs while keeping costs down. He stated that the cost per capita in the coming year will be \$4.06, which has been the same rate for four years in a row. Mr. Hutcheon stated that the program is a "good buy" as it provides services and an adequate staff at a reasonable rate. Mr. Hutcheon stated that overall there is very little downside to the program, noting that since Sanitarians who work in the office are sometimes out on inspections, one possible downside is that there is not necessarily a staff member in the Town's office at all times.

Mr. Boorman stated that the Charter language in Section 303(A)(2) is obsolete at this point, and will have to be changed. He asked whether other member towns have enabling language in their charters. Mr. Hutcheon replied in the affirmative. Mr. Boorman requested to see that information, and asked Mr. Hutcheon to coordinate the information with Ms. Amodeo. Mr. Hutcheon remarked that he has seen ordinance language regarding the District in some towns. Mr. Boorman requested to see that information as well, to help make a decision as to whether language is needed in the Charter or via ordinance. Mr. Nafis asked whether Newington joined the District via ordinance. Mr. Hutcheon replied that Newington joined the district via resolution. Mr. Nafis requested to see the resolution. Mr. Boorman stated that the concern is to make sure that the language is in conformance with the founding document which states that the Town must have a Director of Health, and also to assure that the recommended revisions to the Charter reflect the appropriate enabling language if needed, and if such language is not needed then it can be removed from the Charter entirely. Mr. Hutcheon invited the Commission to contact him with any further questions.

B Speaker: Library Board of Directors: Marian Amodeo, Library Director

Ms. Amodeo, Library Director, handed out documents detailing the history and ownership of the Lucy Robbins Wells Library. She called up the Library Board President and two other Board members to the table. Ms. Amodeo stated that the discussion will regard Charter Article 6, Section 603: Library Directors. She stated that the Library is unique because it is both a Town-run department and a private entity run by a fifteen member Library Board. Ms. Amodeo stated that Charter section 603 deals with the six Town-appointed members of the Library Board, as well as the appointment and removal of the Library Director. Ms. Amodeo introduced Maureen Lyons, Board President, Paul Crosthwaite, Vice President, and Judy Igielski, Secretary.

Ms. Lyons stated that it is important that the verbiage of Section 603 remains as-is. She stated that while the Library Director does report to the Town Manager, the Library Board should possess the ability to have input in the event of any problems or incidents regarding the Director, including those which may lead to the Director's dismissal. She stated that the Board submits yearly reviews of the Director, and that the review is considered by the Town Manager during his evaluation and review of the Director. Ms. Lyons stated that it is important that the lines of communication remain open between the Director, Board and Town Manager. Ms. Lyons stated that the document handed out to the Commissioners speaks to the six elected and nine corporate members of the Board.

Question and answer session followed. Mr. Boorman stated that Section 603 of the Charter calls for six-year terms for Town-appointed Board members, and asked how well the six-year terms have worked for the Board. Ms. Lyons replied that the six-year terms have generally worked very well. She stated that the six-year terms are important for continuity among the Board members, as many policy and budget issues do not happen and are not resolved overnight, and Board members must be able to provide thoughtful, knowledgeable input on the issues. Mr. Briggaman asked whether the terms are staggered. Ms. Lyons replied that the terms are only staggered in regards to appointments made to fill vacancies, and added that most attrition is due to retirement or Board members moving out of Town. Ms. Igielski added that appointments made to fill vacancies have terms that expire at the date of the original member's term end, so a member appointed to fill a vacancy with two years left in the term will serve the remaining two years of the term. She stated that the new member could, at the end of the term, be considered for reappointment for a full six-year term. Ms. Igielski stated that the six-year terms are important because it can take several years for a member to learn the intricacies of the Library. Ms. Igielski noted that the Library staff is fantastic, and the Library is well known throughout the State and nationwide and is currently ranked fifth in the State. Ms. Lyons elaborated that the Library is ranked fifth in the State in circulation, which is impressive considering that the rankings include larger libraries in larger towns.

Mr. Boni asked for the plans and aspirations of the Board for 2008 and beyond, noting the recent acquisition of a parcel of land. Ms. Amodeo replied that the future needs of the Library are currently being assessed through a formal needs assessment process. She stated that it will be a long and involved process. She stated that Board trustees have acquired many endowments over the years, including a property which became available for purchase in 2003 and another in 2007. Ms. Amodeo stated that it is crucial that a Town entity owns those parcels and that future discussion with the Town Manager and Board are needed for expansion of the entire campus, not just the Library, based on the needs of the community.

C Board of Fire Commissioners: Chris Schroeder, Fire Chief/Fire Marshal

Fire Commissioner Kevin Ziegler, Fire Chief/Fire Marshal Chris Schroeder and Fire Commissioner Ken Stoddard came to the table and distributed a letter and written materials to the Commissioners. Fire Commissioner Ziegler stated that the discussion will regard Charter Section 202(B), Board of Fire Commissioners. He stated that the third Commissioner was not able to attend the meeting due to family issues. Fire Commissioner Ziegler stated that the Board currently feels that there are no major changes needed to the language of Charter Section 202(B), with the exception of some outdated wording contained in the first paragraph. He stated that the last sentence of that paragraph should be changed to reflect the fact that the Board of Fire Commissioners is an elected body rather than an appointed body. He gave a rundown of the history and purpose of the Board of Fire Commissioners:

- Oversees the buildings, fire equipment and apparatus, the Chief and the appointed officers of the Fire Department
- Appoints the Chief and all Fire Department Officers

- Prepares and submits Fire Department budgets and financial documents

Chief Schroeder asked the Charter Commission to review this section of the Charter. He stated that the language for this section was written in 1929, when the first Fire Commissioners were appointed before Newington had any fire stations. He stated that those first Fire Commissioners were tasked with dividing the Town into three fire districts, building three fire stations and purchasing necessary fire apparatus and equipment necessary to operate the Fire Department. Chief Schroeder stated that the current wording in the Charter gives the Board of Fire Commissioners very broad powers, which were granted many years ago in order to give those first Fire Commissioners the proper authority to carry out their charge. He commented that the Newington Volunteer Fire Department, like many departments across the country, has changed dramatically throughout the years. He noted that volunteer numbers are down, and stated that the Department is currently working with the Town Council to institute a pay-per-call system in order to retain and recruit volunteers. Chief Schroeder stated that this section of the Charter should be rewritten to prepare the Town for such a time as when daytime paid fire service becomes a necessity. He stated that in the event the proposed pay-per-call system does not work out as intended the Town will need to start looking at ways to provide more fire service availability during the daytime. Chief Schroeder stated that when the documents were written in 1929 the Fire Commission was the backbone of the Department, but today surrounding towns have done away with Fire Commissions. Chief Schroeder stated that the elimination of the Board may not be the answer, but that the language should be looked at and updated to help prepare the Town for future changes to the structure of the Department. He stated belief that doing so would be difficult under current Charter language, and respectfully requested that the Charter Commission consider changes to the current language.

Mr. Briggaman asked for an explanation of the proposed pay-per-call system. Chief Schroeder provided the following summary of the system:

- The proposed pay-per-call system was originally brought before the Town Council in 2007, and will be discussed at the budget review on March 18, 2008
- The program would pay firefighters a unit price per call or training, with a certain number of units allocated to each type of call or training (i.e. a structure fire would be worth three units). An average firefighter who responds to a call or attends a training session would be paid \$6.00 per unit for the call or training. An outline exists for the number of units allocated for each type of call and training session.
- The NVFD responds to about 800 calls per year, and each of the nearly 120 volunteer firefighters respond to an average of 200 of those calls per year.
- The volunteers have costs associated with their services. They must pay for gas, insurance and wear and tear to their personal vehicles which are used to respond to calls, and must also purchase their own light bars.
- The volunteers would receive a payout of twice per year
- The purpose of the program is to increase call response, help with retention, and to help absorb the cost to volunteers.

Mr. Boni asked Chief Schroeder to explain his title of Chief/Fire Marshal Schroeder. Chief Schroeder replied that as Fire Marshal he is a full-time employee of the Town of Newington and with the full-time Town position he is also Director of Emergency Management. He stated that his position as Fire Chief is a volunteer position associated with the NVFD and is completely separate from his full-time Town job. He elaborated that as Fire Marshal he and the four Deputy Fire Marshals work directly with the Town Manager and under the direction of the State Fire Marshal's office. Mr. Briggaman asked whether the four Deputy Fire Marshals are paid employees. Chief Schroeder replied that the four Deputy Marshal positions are paid, part-time positions. He further explained that the Fire Department has a Chief, an Assistant Chief and three Deputy Chiefs, all of whom receive stipends, as well as four Company Captains; those nine individuals make up the command staff of the Fire Department. Chief Schroeder referenced a document, distributed to the Commissioners, which outlines the officer assignments, and he noted that many of the duties charged to the Fire Commission in the Charter are actually performed by the staff of the Fire Department with the oversight of the Board. Fire Commissioner Stoddard stated that the Fire Commission has delegated such duties to the Fire Department staff.

Mr. Boorman commented that there is a distinct difference between what two of the three speakers at the table are recommending versus what the third is recommending. He first addressed the two members who recommended changing the language in the Charter to reflect that Fire Commission successors are elected rather than appointed. Mr. Boorman asked why they feel such changes are necessary. Fire Commissioner Ziegler replied that the changes are requested because the Board of Fire Commissioners are elected by Town voters during the November elections and are sworn in by the Town Clerk as elected officials. He stated that the language needs to be cleaned up and also noted that there are no qualifications to become a Fire Commissioner, and any member of the public can currently run for Fire Commissioner. Mr. Boorman asked if they perceive the word "qualified" to be a term meaning that there is a set of criteria that one would need to possess in order to be an appointed official. Fire Chief Ziegler replied that the language states "successors are chosen and qualified" and again stated that currently anyone can run for Fire Commissioner and there are no requirements for a candidate to possess certain qualifications. Fire Commissioner Stoddard stated he does not think that the language needs to be changed because a candidate can be chosen by election, and are qualified because they are elected. Mr. Boorman stated that there is legal precedent for using that language, as the word "qualified" has a separate legal identity to indicate whether one is serving on the job or has been elected but is not serving. He stated that the Charter Commission will need to take a close look at the language and consult with the Town Attorney and even if it chooses not to change the language it still knows what they are looking for. Mr. Boorman stated that if the Charter Commission does not choose the exact requested language it is only to assure that the Charter Commission accomplishes what it needs to and does not make the new language worse than it would be if it were not updated at all.

Mr. Boorman addressed the recommendation that the Board of Fire Commissioners be eliminated. Chief Schroeder stated that the command staff is making the request. Mr. Boorman confirmed that the command staff consists of all of the company Captains and the Chiefs who signed the letter. Chief Schroeder added that Deputy Chief Tom McGill did not sign the letter. Mr. Boorman asked whether Deputy Chief McGill was invited to the current meeting. Chief Schroeder replied that he was invited. Mr. Boorman asked the Fire Commissioners for their opinions regarding the suggested elimination of the Fire Commission. Fire Commissioner Stoddard stated that he was quite taken aback when he received Chief Schroeder's letter, as he has been involved with the process for a long time. Mr. Boorman asked when Fire Commissioner Stoddard received the letter. Fire Commissioner Stoddard replied that he had received it the day prior to the meeting (February 27, 2008), and commented that he does not feel that there is anything to be gained by doing away with the Fire Commission. He stated that there is nothing that the Fire Commission could not handle should the Town need to go to a partial or full paid Fire Department in the future. He stated that the Fire Commission performs functions as outlined in the Charter and while some of those duties are delegated to the Fire Department, it is a completely volunteer Department and a completely volunteer Fire Commission. He stated that there are some things which may need to be worked out, as is the case for many volunteer organizations, and commented that there have been some problems throughout the history of the Fire Department. Fire Commissioner Stoddard stated that a 2003 study brought forth no major problems, and that the minor problems brought forth have all been since been resolved, and with some minor changes the Department has improved and worked very well over the past five years. He stated that there is nothing in the current language that would be better off if there was no Fire Commission to make the transition to a hybrid Fire Department. He stated that the Fire Commission is dedicated to maintaining a volunteer fire service, but stated that he is unsure whether that is possible in this day and age. Fire Commissioner Stoddard commented that as a tax payer of the Town he would like to see the Fire Department stay volunteer for as long as possible, as he is familiar with the expenses associated with running a paid department. He also stated that there are still Fire Commissions active in other area towns, including the Town of New Britain which has a much larger fire department than the Town of Newington. Chief Schroeder agreed that there is a Fire Commission in New Britain, but they have different powers. He also stated that with needed updates, a Fire Commission can work. Chief Schroeder commented that Fire Commissioner Stoddard received the letter only the day prior to the meeting because he had just returned home from Florida that day. He stated that all letters were sent out by the same method on Monday. Chief Schroeder noted that the first round of Fire Commissioners were appointed 79 years ago, thereafter all Fire Commissioners were elected, which goes to show that the language has not changed in 79 years.

Mr. Nafis commented that there is a difference between eliminating the Board of Fire Commissioners and altering its function to some degree. He added that the Fire Commission is currently performing a

function, and asked who would perform those tasks should the Fire Commission be eliminated. Chief Schroeder replied that many functions are currently being performed by the Fire Department, and that the only portion of their duties that the Commission is currently performing is the appointment of all officers. He stated that the Fire Commission has delegated to the Fire Chief the appointment of all staff personnel. He stated that the 2003 study recommended either that the Board of Fire Commissioners be eliminated or changed to an advisory board, in which case they would have different duties. Chief Schroeder stated that the Fire Department does not want this to become a controversial issue, and it sees it as an opportunity to improve the organizational structure of the Fire Department and to prepare the Department for change. He stated that he has a lot of respect for the Fire Commissioners. He remarked that the Board of Police Commissioners was abolished in 1963, and commented that the volunteers Fire Department today is not the same as when he joined in 1974, there have been many changes. He stated that volunteers are treated as Town employees and as such need to follow the same chain of command, follow the same rules and procedures as other Town employees. He stated that the volunteers are required to go through and maintain a tremendous amount of training, and the old days of fire service have passed. He asked for the Charter Commission's consideration on the area. Mr. Nafis asked about the functions that would have to be replaced. Chief Schroeder replied that such functions would fall under the Town Manager.

Mr. Boorman stated that he has a great deal of respect for the organization, but for them to ask the Charter Commission to make such substantial changes to an arrangement that has worked so well for many years is a significant charge. He stated that he is not opposed to updating the language in the Charter and asked that any recommended specific or conceptual changes or updates to the language are submitted to the Charter Commission. He stated that he is not a volunteer member of the organization, but noted that in the past there have been issues regarding personnel actions. He stated that the final Board of Appeals is the Board of Fire Commissioners, and in the past this has been a significant piece of the puzzle and expressed concerns over the elimination of that body and the message it would send to the rank file volunteers. Mr. Boorman commented that while it is significant that Chief Schroeder's letter was signed by nearly all of the command staff he is concerned how the actions of the Charter Commission will affect the volunteers. He stated that the Charter Commission should hear any concerns of the rank and file volunteers before any substantial changes are considered. He asked for a document that outlines the specifics of the requests from all three gentlemen, and commented that there is some common ground between the three. He asked Chief Schroeder if he is suggesting that the Fire Chief should report directly to the Town Manager. Chief Schroeder replied in the affirmative. Mr. Boorman stated the Charter Commission will take great credence in what is presented to them and also invited the members back to speak to the Charter Commission at a later date. Mr. Boorman stated that the Charter Commission does not want jeopardize the operation of the organization and is concerned with the morale of everyone involved from the ground up. Chief Schroeder agreed that the moral and well being of all of members is important. He stated that he has spoken to many members, and that the general consensus among the membership is that the document is very old and needs a change in order to make the decisions necessary to move forward over the next five to ten years. Mr. Boorman stated that the Charter Commission will look forward to receiving written input from the members regarding the Fire Commission and the strength of the Chief and also input about any other appropriate issue. He stated that the flexibility of the current language is inviting in that it allows for an organization to change over the course of time.

Mr. Nafis stated that the Charter Commission may need to look at the idea of the Chief reporting to the Town Manager separately as one of a number of items that need to be considered. Mr. Boorman commented that the Town Manager had briefly alluded to having the Charter Commission take a look at the issue of the Chief's role in terms of his day-to-day management, since it is a quasi-department not along the lines of other Town department heads. Mr. Boorman expressed surprise to hear a push for a stronger Town Manager role in the management of the Fire Department. Chief Schroeder stated that he has a long record of working with the Town Manager in the Fire Marshal capacity, and stated that he would like to keep the jobs of Fire Marshal and Fire Chief separate. He stated that during the budget process it is the Chief that sits with the Town Manager to review the budget, and although the budget does pass through the Fire Commissioners it is the Chief that works with the Town Manager and the Finance Department on the budget. Fire Commissioner Stoddard disagreed with Chief Schroeder's statements, and stated that as Fire Commissioner he has sat with the Town Manager to review the budgets. Mr. Boorman commented that this disagreement brings to a point what his concerns and asked

for clarification, because the Charter Commission will not be in tune to making major changes to an organization without clear and complete information. Mr. Boni agreed with Mr. Boorman, and stated that he is not willing to recommend any change without further information and specifics. He thanked the gentlemen for attending the meeting.

Mr. Nafis stated that the Town Manager had brought up the fact that Mr. Schroeder serves as both the Fire Chief and the Fire Marshal. He paraphrased the Town Manager's comments from the minutes of the previous meeting that "while this arrangement can work, whenever there are areas like that there is potential for problems to develop". Mr. Nafis asked whether Chief Schroeder has seen any problems in his dual role of if he anticipates any future problems particularly if the Town moves to a paid department. He also asked how the role works in terms of answering to a number of different people. Chief Schroeder replied that he has been Chief since 1991 and Fire Marshall since 1995, and that there has never been a conflict or confusion between the two roles when he is at a fire scene. He stated that he has been on the Fire Department for an enjoyable 34 years and in that time he has done it all. He stated that if there is any feeling at all from the Town Manager, Council or Board that serving both roles is a problem he would be happy to step down as Chief. He stated that he plans on working for the Town as Fire Marshall until his age of retirement, but he also enjoys greatly his role as Chief. He also stated that he will be happy to supply any backup information the Charter Commission needs to make sound decisions and that he wants what is best for the Fire Department. Mr. Nafis stated that he did not mean to imply that a problem exists with the dual role; he simply brought it up at the Town Manager's suggestion. Chief Schroeder stated that there has been discussion on the topic over the years, and that he is not the first person in Town to be in the dual role. Mr. Boorman asked how many area towns with volunteer fire departments have one person in the dual role as Chief and Fire Marshall. Chief Schroeder replied that it is not uncommon in the State, and estimated the number of towns to be 30-40 and included West Hartford and New Britain as recent examples.

VII ANY OTHER BUSINESS PERTINENT TO THIS COMMISSION

Mr. Briggaman requested documentation from similar area towns regarding how they handle their Fire Chief and Fire Commission situation. Mr. Boorman agreed and asked to see charter language from these towns. Mr. Nafis asked whether it would be worthwhile to review the 2003 study. Mr. Boorman stated that although the daily workings in the Department have changed since 2003 the study did perform a function, and would be worthwhile to the Charter Commission. Mr. Nafis asked Ms. Amodeo to obtain a copy of the study and Mr. Briggaman asked her to obtain pertinent charter language from other towns.

Mr. Boorman spoke about Mrs. Cohen's public participation comments regarding inviting former Town Managers to speak to the Commission. He stated that current and former Town Managers are welcome to speak to the Commission and noted that former Town Manager Featherston has been invited to speak to the Commission and should be scheduled to speak within the next two months as he is planning to move to Colorado in the near future. Ms. Amodeo asked how far back she should go in her invitations to Town Managers and former Mayors, noting that former Town Manager Chapman is in the area part-time. Mr. Boorman stated that Mr. Chapman would be a good resource, and that invitations should be extended to any available former Mayor who wishes to speak to the Commission. Ms. Amodeo asked about invitations to former Town Council members. Mr. Boorman replied that a blanket invitation should be sent to the members of the past two or three Councils, and also to let members of earlier Councils know that their input is welcome as well. He also commented that current Councilors are welcome and valuable resources, even the new Councilors who are serving their first term. Mr. Boni suggested that these speakers be scheduled in such a way that several speak per meeting, but not all in one meeting, in order to maximize the Commission's time. Mr. Boorman thanked Ms. Amodeo for coordinating the current meeting's panel speakers and stated that she did a great job in coordination the panel to include both topics that were very brief and those that were much more in depth.

Mr. Boni inquired about the charter of the Town of Westbrook. Ms. Amodeo replied that she inquired and found that Westbrook does not have a charter, and was told by Westbrook's Town Clerk that they operate under State statutes. She stated that the Town Clerk looked through minutes of past meetings and could not pinpoint any motions or ordinances related to a charter, and she seems to feel that the town's Board of Selectmen make the decision regarding the budget referendum each year. Mr. Boorman commented he requested the Westbrook charter because that town has historically gone through four or five votes on

a budget referendum an issue that has been detrimental to the town. He stated that he will do more research on the town. He noted that there are State statutes regarding budget referendum, but he finds it difficult to understand how Westbrook handles the authorizing language to authorize referendum in the first place. He stated that he will report his findings back to the Commission and would like to use the information to help him make his own decision as to the appropriateness of a budget referendum and if appropriate the types of limitations, restrictions and realistic language to be used in regard to the referendum. He stated that he would like to use this information to avoid the disastrous types of situations in other towns. Mr. Boni stated that the Commission is aware that it needs to come up with limitations that work for Newington, and that it won't hurt to gather the information. Mr. Boorman replied that it will not be an issue of timeliness, and stressed the importance of examining what has happened elsewhere, good and bad, before making decisions. Mr. Briggaman stated that he has obtained a copy of the Naugatuck budget referendum code and stated that he will forward to Ms. Amodeo for distribution. Mr. Boorman remarked that Mr. Briggaman used the word "code" which indicates that the wording is from their code of ordinances rather than their charter, which is another thing for the Commission to look into in terms of how that works for Naugatuck.

VIII WRITTEN COMMUNICATIONS FROM THE PUBLIC

A Email from Bill Lindberg dated 2/14/08

Mr. Briggaman acknowledged the email he received from Mr. Lindberg and relayed Mr. Lindberg's suggestion that there should be Town Council representation from each of the Town's eight voting districts. Mr. Briggaman stated that Mr. Lindberg's suggestion does have some value, as there is a certain amount of diversity in geographic location from the center of Town, and even assessed values of houses can vary greatly in different locations. He stated that there are sections of Town that have their own issues and that Mr. Lindberg's concern is that some of those issues may not be addressed because those areas are not adequately represented on the Town Council.

Mr. Boorman recommended that the email should be read into the record if the Commission plans to discuss the contents of the email so that those watching the meeting understand the topic of discussion. He commented that this does not have to be a rule for every communication, especially lengthy documents, but this particular email is only three paragraphs long and should be read out loud if Mr. Briggaman is willing to do so. Mr. Briggaman read the email, which he received on January 31, 2008 at 11:25am:

Subject: District Representation

Hi Bob,

It was nice talking to you last night. From my comments to the commission it is obvious I am very much in favor of the budget referendum, and I am concerned about Town Council members who were elected because of their support for such a referendum and who are now taking a negative stance on the topic. I hope the commissioners will remember that Newington's residents voted for the referendum.

We only spoke briefly about district voting before the meeting, so I hope this email will give you a better understanding of my thoughts on the subject. Newington has eight voting districts and eight town council members. I would like a revision to the town charter whereby each district is represented on the town council. Over the years I have noted that sometimes council members are clustered within one or two districts while other districts have no representation.

The current selection of council members may have been sufficient when Newington was a small town. Unfortunately, we have grown as a community and equal representation in government is now imperative. A council member from one district may not know the specific problems or concerns of residents in another district across town. Having a council member residing in each district will give the residents a clearer voice on the council.

Regards,

Bill Lindberg
154 Cambria Avenue
Newington

Mr. Nafis stated that the issue will need to be discussed at some point as the Commission goes through the Charter, and that a number of people will need to be involved in the discussion. He stated that the purpose of this item on the agenda for the current meeting is to confirm that the letter has been received and to read the letter. Mr. Boorman agreed that the Commission should not begin an in-depth discussion about district voting at the current meeting, but the letter raises an interesting issue for which he would like to see input from previous and current Town Councilors, Mayors and party chairpersons. He thanked Mr. Lindberg for bringing the issue to the Commission, but commented that he does take issue with Mr. Lindberg's statement that "I hope the Commissioners will remember that Newington's residents voted for the referendum" and stated with all due respect to Mr. Lindberg that there is no basis for his comment, no basis for interpreting any past election in such a way, and that while one party did run with a referendum as part of its platform it does not mean that the last election reflected the fact that Newington residents voted for a referendum. Mr. Boorman again remarked that Mr. Lindberg's statement is incorrect and also addressed Mr. Lindberg's comments concerning Town Council members "who were elected because of their support for such a referendum and who are now taking a negative stance on the topic". Mr. Boorman took issue with Mr. Lindberg's characterization along those lines and remarked that while any Town Councilor is fully capable of coming to speak for themselves he does think that Mr. Lindberg is referring to current Councilors and invited the Councilors to respond to the comment. Mr. Boni disagreed with Mr. Boorman and stated that Mr. Lindberg's statement is accurate, and invited Mrs. Cohen (present in the audience) to speak about the topic during public participation. Mr. Briggaman commented that there is some evidence that Newington voters did indeed vote in favor of the concept of budget referendum, as the party in power was overwhelmingly elected and the referendum was part of that party's platform. He stated that one of the factors in the election was the platform. Mr. Nafis stated that it is a bit of a stretch to say why anyone voted for a particular candidate for any particular reason, but that has nothing to do with this Commission. He stated that the Commission must look at the evidence and listen to the input to make decisions about whether the referendum is a good or bad idea. Mr. Briggaman stated that he was simply replying to Mr. Boorman's statements. Mr. Nafis stated that he is replying to Mr. Briggaman's statements and was not sure that Mr. Briggaman's statements are accurate. Mr. Boni suggested that the Commission move on.

IX PUBLIC PARTICIPATION

Mr. Boni invited Mrs. Cohen to speak, and informed her that Mr. Lindberg's comments are in likely in reference to the Commission's Public Hearing in which Mrs. Cohen spoke about the budget referendum. Mr. Boorman stated that it is not a good idea for anyone to say that they know how Newington residents voted and that they voted for a referendum. He stated that while such an opinion can be interpreted politically, there was no vote ever taken on a referendum, therefore the statement that residents voted for a referendum is incorrect. Mr. Boni stated that the topic is about a statement made about a Councilor in which the Councilor was accused of advocating for the referendum and then later speaking against the referendum.

Myra Cohen, 42 Jeffery Lane: Mrs. Cohen stated that while district voting is fine for a large city, it is not appropriate for a small town such as Newington. She stated that it would be difficult to get candidates for each district, and it would also do away with the minority representation. She stated that district representation is unnecessary and she would oppose it. Mrs. Cohen stated that elected Councilors are concerned about the entire Town, and she does not recall any issues of Councilors favoring their own neighborhood. Mrs. Cohen then spoke about Mr. Lindberg's comments. She stated that a New Britain Herald reporter interpreted her comments from the Public Hearing differently than she intended. She stated that she said that a petition should be required for a budget referendum, and that a referendum should not be automatic because it makes no sense to have a referendum on a budget that is acceptable to the Town. Mrs. Cohen stated that an automatic referendum could be a waste of money. She also noted that advisory questions on the referendum may be a good idea. She again stated that her comments at the Public Hearing were that if a referendum is to be held it should not be automatic.

Jay Bottalico, 37 Valley View Drive: Mr. Bottalico commented about the discussion of doing away with the Fire Commission. He stated that doing so is not acceptable and will not be acceptable to the Town

Council. He also asked the Charter Commission to look at the roles of the Fire Marshall and the Fire Chief and stated that he does not feel that one person should do both.

X REMARKS BY COMMISSIONERS

Mr. Boorman stated that he would be interested in having Mr. Bottalico address the Charter Commission more fully about the two items he commented about during public participation. He stated that he would also like the input of other public officials, citizens and the rank and file NVFD members during public participation at future meetings.

XI ADJOURNMENT

Mr. Boorman moved to adjourn the meeting at 7:57pm. Motion seconded by Mr. Briggaman.

Motion passed 4-0. (Mrs. Bafundo absent)

Respectfully Submitted,

Mrs. Jaime Trevethan
Clerk – Charter Revision Commission