



John L. Salomone
Town Manager

TOWN OF NEWINGTON

131 CEDAR STREET
NEWINGTON, CONNECTICUT 06111

MAYOR JEFF WRIGHT

MINUTES

CHARTER REVISION COMMISSION SPECIAL MEETING

January 10, 2008

I CALL TO ORDER

Mrs. Bafundo called the meeting to order at 6:36 PM in the Helen Nelson Room of the Newington Town Hall.

II PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE

III ROLL CALL

Commissioners Present (roll call)

Nancy Bafundo, Chair
Tony Boni
Peter Boorman
Robert Briggaman
Alan Nafis

Staff Present

Ms. Marian Amodeo – Library Director

IV PUBLIC PARTICIPATION

Michael J. Fox, 1901 Main Street: Mr. Fox commented that he is not going to spend a lot of time speaking about budget referendum other than to state that he is against it for reasons he already listed during the last campaign and public hearing. He commented that if the public hearing (ill-attended as it was) is any indication, not too many people are in favor of a budget referendum. Mr. Fox noted that the current meeting is not well attended by the public, and asked the Commission to make sure that the citizens of Newington are well aware of the Commission's meeting schedule and that meeting agendas are posted well in advance of the meeting so that interested members of the public can attend. Mr. Fox spoke about accessibility, noting that he is unsure whether the minutes of the last meeting were verbatim as he was not in attendance of that meeting. Mr. Fox also noted the lack of microphones at the table of the current meeting, and wondered if the meeting would be difficult to hear on television and on tape. He again requested that the meetings of the Commission be transcribed in verbatim so that residents who are not in attendance of a meeting can actually read what was said during the meeting. Mr. Fox commented that as a member of the Town Planning and Zoning Commission he is against the idea of elected TPZ members (as recommended at the January 3, 2008 Public Hearing by former Mayor Mortensen). He commented that Mr. Mortensen's opinion was brought about by a knee-jerk reaction to a recent TPZ decision to remove in-law apartments from the regulations. He noted that interested residents should attend TPZ public hearings to voice their opinions. Mr. Fox stated that as an appointed body the

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TPZ has done an excellent job, as evidenced by the growth of the Berlin Turnpike. He commented that if residents who wish to serve on the TPZ are made to go through an election that there would not be as much participation and as an elected member of the TPZ he would not want to be responsible for receiving calls from residents who voted for him and want him to follow their demands. Mr. Fox concluded that the TPZ should remain an appointed Commission.

Ellie Covaleski, 84 Lydall Road: Ms. Covaleski stated that she did not attend the last meeting but watched it on NCTV. She noted that as she watched the public hearing she became aware of the fact that the Charter revision process is not what she thought it would be, and noted that she will have questions for the Commission. Ms. Covaleski asked why is there cost associated with budget referendum, and what is that cost? She also commented that she had initially feared that a budget referendum may cause a cut in services such as garbage and leaf collection and snow removal due to people voting to lower taxes. She noted, however, that Councilor Cohen explained that there should be an explanation to the public about what programs are being cut from the taxes prior to a vote. Mrs. Covaleski also asked the Commission to schedule a meeting at the Senior Center during afternoon hours to explain the process to seniors who cannot attend meetings at night, noting seniors need to know what is going on in order to vote intelligently.

Carol Anest, 30 Harding Avenue: Ms. Anest agreed with Ms. Covaleski that it would be a good idea to hold a meeting or a public hearing on a Sunday afternoon so that seniors and those who cannot attend weeknight meetings can come out to voice their opinions. Ms. Anest also asked the Commission not to be bashful about going to the Town Council to ask for more money if the \$5000.00 allocated to the Commission is not enough. She stated that it is very important that the public is kept informed of what is going on during the meetings and also asked that the meeting minutes be posted on the Town website. Ms. Anest commented that the Commission is affecting the constitution of the Town; therefore the entire Town needs to know what is going on.

Sue Mazzoccoli, 149 Harris Drive: Ms. Mazzoccoli noted that there are no microphones present at the Commissioners' table and stated that although the meeting is not being recorded microphones would be helpful so that members of the audience can hear what is being discussed. She also stated that it falls under the FOI that accommodations must be provided for those in attendance who are hearing impaired. She suggested that the Commission obtain small devices that amplify sound, which available at CVS. Mrs. Bafundo replied that the meeting is in fact being recorded. Ms. Mazzoccoli stated that digital recorders should be provided for the meetings, as the current tape recording equipment being used is obsolete.

Steve Woods, 94 New Britain Ave: Mr. Woods thanked Newington TV for broadcasting the meeting, but noted that the broadcast is useless without the microphones, as none of the discussion will be picked up on the broadcast. Mrs. Bafundo asked the NCTV volunteer about the audio, the volunteer replied that he is only picking up conversations from members of the audience.

Mrs. Bafundo called for a brief recess at 6:50pm to address the sound issues in the meeting room by locating and installing microphones at the Commissioners' table. Meeting resumed at 7:01pm with microphones in place.

V Minutes of 12-09-07 Meeting

Mr. Briggaman moved to accept the minutes of the December 19, 2007 Charter Review Commission Meeting. Motion seconded by Mr. Boni.

Mr. Boorman noted that on page two of the minutes relative to his motion, seconded by Mr. Nafis, which failed by a vote of 2-3, that it is important for the minutes to reflect who voted which way. He stated that the minutes should reflect that Mr. Boorman and Mr. Nafis voted in favor of the motion. Mrs. Bafundo added that Mrs. Bafundo, Mr. Boni and Mr. Briggaman voted in opposition of the motion. (so noted)

Mr. Boorman noted that similarly, on page two of the minutes relative to the motion made by Mr. Boni and seconded by Mr. Briggaman, which passed by a vote of 3-2 should reflect that Mrs. Bafundo, Mr. Boni

and Mr. Briggaman voted in favor of the motion and Mr. Boorman and Mr. Nafis voted in opposition of the motion. (so noted)

Mr. Boorman noted that in the middle paragraph of the second page in which reads "Town Manager Salomone asked when the first meeting would be scheduled and asked present counsel about the public hearing requirement" the word "legal" should be inserted before the word "counsel" to clarify the reference to a legal counsel as opposed to any other type of counsel. (so noted)

Mrs. Bafundo asked for a vote to accept the minutes. Mr. Boorman noted that for procedural purposes the mover of the motion should agree to amend the motion to modify his motion to accept the minutes as referenced, and that the amended motion would have to be seconded again.

Mr. Briggaman amended his motion to accept the minutes with Mr. Boorman's corrections. Motion seconded by Mr. Boni.

Motion passed 5-0.

It was the consensus of the Commission to table the approval of the minutes of the January 3, 2008 Public Hearing until the next meeting to give the Commissioners time to review the minutes.

VI ORGANIZATIONAL PROCEDURES

Mrs. Nafis commented that the Commission has held its first public hearing and now would be a very appropriate time to discuss how the Commission plans to proceed over the next several weeks.

The Commission covered the following topics during the procedural discussion:

Microphones:

Mr. Boorman suggested that part of the Commission's procedural aspects should be to have microphones available in the room setup for all meetings. Mrs. Bafundo replied that she felt that the lack of microphones at the current meeting was probably an oversight as the intent was to have the meeting broadcast on television. Mr. Briggaman asked how the setup is normally handled. Mrs. Bafundo replied that they will find out that information. Ms. Amodeo stated that she will ask the Town Manager for the information. The Commission agreed on these statements by consensus.

NCTV, Commission Meeting Schedule and Location:

Mr. Boorman stated that NCTV is welcome to participate in all of the Commission's meetings. Mr. Nafis added that NCTV is encouraged to participate. Mrs. Bafundo stated that it had been previously agreed upon that the Commission will meet on Thursdays, but never set whether the meetings are to be held every other Thursday or the second and fourth Thursday of every month. The Commission agreed by consensus that meeting dates would be set for the second and fourth Thursday of every month. Mr. Boorman noted a requirement that the Commission report its regular meeting schedule to the Town Clerk's office by the end of this month. The Commission agreed by consensus to authorize the Commission Chair to notify the Town Clerk's office of the regular meeting schedule, which will be the second and fourth Thursday of each month. Mrs. Bafundo asked whether a 6:30pm start time is good for the members. The Commission agreed by consensus that the meetings will begin at 6:30pm. Mrs. Bafundo stated that the Commission should check to see if the Helen Nelson room is available for the meetings as it does have television access capabilities, and if the room is unavailable they should try to find a room that has television capabilities. The Commission agreed by consensus with Mrs. Bafundo's statements.

Minutes and Agendas:

Mr. Boorman asked that staff work to make sure that meeting agendas and minutes are posted on the website. Mrs. Bafundo commented on the topic of verbatim minutes, stating that there are cost and time issues related to producing verbatim minutes of Commission meetings. She noted that audio tapes of meetings will be available and commented that preservation of the tape quality has been an issue in the past and should be looked into. Mrs. Bafundo requested that the minutes not be required to be verbatim. Mr. Briggaman asked whether there is the capability for audio of the meetings to be posted on the

website. Ms. Amodeo replied that the website is in the process of an overhaul and she would find out whether audio can be posted. Mr. Boorman stated that the first set of minutes were excellently done and indicated that Councilor Cohen also reviewed the minutes and agreed that they were a good product. He stated the thorough minutes as well as the availability of the tapes will address concerns regarding verbatim minutes. Mr. Boni asked whether a vote on the item would be required. Mrs. Bafundo replied that a vote would not be required as long as the Commissioners agree on the item. The Commission agreed by consensus not to require verbatim minutes for Commission meetings. Mr. Nafis commented that the Commission should make an effort to get the audio on the website if possible. Mrs. Bafundo added that it would be a good idea to preserve the meetings on DVD.

Work Sessions and Special Meetings:

Mr. Briggaman inquired about work sessions between regular meetings. Mrs. Bafundo replied that work sessions will be scheduled at the desire of the Commission. Mr. Boorman recalled discussion during the first meeting in which it was decided that the Commission will reserve the off-week Thursdays for special meetings and work sessions as necessary. Mr. Boni agreed and noted that he will try to reserve the off Thursdays for that purpose. Mr. Nafis agreed as well.

Public Participation, Public Hearings and Communication:

Mrs. Bafundo commented that many members of the public have commented about not being able to make it to a public hearing or to participate in a meeting. She noted that she has had individuals come to her at the grocery store, post office or at school events to talk to her about various items in respect to the Charter or the Charter process. She also stated that individuals have asked about emails and that she has asked Town Manager Salomone to have email addresses set up for the Commissioners. She asked Ms. Amodeo if the Commissioners can be set up with email addresses specifically for Charter Commission communication. Mrs. Bafundo also requested that a dedicated phone line or extension be allocated to the Commission as another form of communication. Mr. Briggaman stated that he is concerned about individual members of the Commission being approached in public by a resident with a suggestion. He asked whether there should be ground rules in which the Commissioners should ask the resident to either send their suggestions via email or telephone. Mrs. Bafundo stated that she does not want to shut a member of the public down if they have a suggestion. Mr. Boorman stated that he does not have a problem with any member of the Commission being approached with a suggestion by an elector of the Town, and he does not have a problem with bringing the item to the Commission verbally. He commented that the Commission does encourage public participation. Mr. Briggaman stated that he does not want to forget to pass any comments on to the Commission. Mr. Boorman agreed with Mr. Briggaman and encouraged all avenues of communication to be used. Mr. Boni agreed and stated that it would be a good idea to get the resident's name and address for the record. Mrs. Bafundo stated that it may be useful to obtain that information for a database. Mr. Boorman noted that it is a good idea as long as the resident agrees to their name and address being used for such a purpose. Mr. Boorman requested that the Commissioners' email addresses be made available on the Town website. Mr. Nafis commented about FOI requirements and noted that Commissioners must share emails with the other Commissioners. Mr. Briggaman stated that the emails can be forwarded to the other Commissioners. Mr. Boorman stated that there should be rules on how the email addresses are used, and that they should not be used for personal communication. Mr. Boni stated that he did not receive a Commission email address. Mrs. Bafundo stated that Mr. Boni's Town Council email address will serve as his Commission email address as well, as both will be used for Town business.

Guidelines for Procedures:

Mr. Boorman stated that the Commission needs a comprehensive guide on how to proceed and noted that the Town produces a pamphlet entitled "Informational Guidelines for Committees, Boards and Commissions". He noted that the pamphlet contains very good information in terms of leaving their process open to the public and encouraging participation as much as possible. He recommended that the Commission adopt the Town of Newington Informational Guidelines for Committees, Boards and Commissions, dated 12/1983 and revised in 1989 and 1993. He noted that he has spent time reviewing the guidelines and found them valuable because they are simple, brief and direct. Mr. Boorman stated that it refers back to Robert's Rules of Procedure for questions about procedural issues. Mr. Boorman moved that the Commission follows the Town of Newington Informational Guidelines for Committees, Boards and Commissions, last revised in 1993. Motion seconded by Mr. Briggaman. Motion passed 5-0.

VII ANY OTHER BUSINESS PERTINENT TO THIS COMMISSION

The Commission covered the following topics during the other pertinent business discussion:

Breakdown of the Charter for Review, Educational Meetings and Resources

Mr. Nafis asked about the best way for the Commission to approach the study. He noted that it was brought up in the public hearing that the best way to approach Charter revision is to start at page one and look at everything in the Charter. He stated that many of the items will be looked through quickly and with few changes. He suggested that the Charter be broken up into individual sections with each section being discussed at a meeting. Mrs. Bafundo agreed that categories and groupings should be created. She noted that some of the groupings will be more complex and difficult than others. She stated that human nature is to take care of the simple things first. Mr. Boni stated that he has read through the Charter three times so far and in his opinion the vast majority of the Charter is ok as is, and that some items will be clarified simply by adding a word or two. He stated that there will obviously be some items which will be more critical and difficult. He also asked whether the Charter should be looked at in blocks to move the process along as easily and expeditiously as possible. Mrs. Bafundo replied that no one wants to make major changes which will disrupt the wonderful life of Town residents, but that will be technical items and departmental items which need attention, as well as themes and topics of interest. Mr. Boorman stated concern about how to start, and recommended that before the Charter is divided up for review he'd like to have people in to address specific areas. He stated that he would like to have a cordial letter sent from the Commission to all department heads, the Town Manager and Town officials to invite them to participate. Mr. Boorman stated that in terms of some of the bigger areas he is also interested in learning about what is happening in other towns. He stated that educational meetings with these professionals would be valuable. Mrs. Bafundo agreed and added that such meetings would also help with some of the technical changes to the Charter. Mr. Briggaman stated that these educational meetings should be the first step on the agenda. Mrs. Bafundo commented that past Charter Revision Commissions have done the same. She stated that the Commission can also get some sense on how to proceed by looking through the archives of past Charter Revision Commission agendas. Ms. Amodeo added that there are also resources available through organizations such as CRCOG and COST. Mr. Boorman stated that it is important to also look at the perspectives of surrounding towns as a tool, as trends are moving towards shared services. Mr. Boorman stated that the Commission does not want to overwhelm Ms. Amodeo, but inquired whether it would be agreeable for Commissioners to touch base with her with ideas. Ms. Amodeo agreed. Mrs. Bafundo asked Ms. Amodeo to inform the Commission if she should become overwhelmed.

Public Hearings and Public Participation

Mr. Boorman commented that State Statute requires two public hearings during the Charter process, one of which has been held and the second of which will be held at the end of the process. He stated that the Commission as a body will determine as it proceeds when public hearings should be held. Mr. Boorman added that the Commission will probably want to hold public hearings around many of the larger issues such as the budget referendum. He stated that he is open to when these public hearings are scheduled because public participation is allowed at the regular meetings, but suggested that public hearings are scheduled around the time that draft language for the issues becomes available. Mr. Briggaman agreed that it would be a good idea to determine the times and dates of public hearings on an as-needed basis as pertinent issues are discussed. Mr. Boni stated that he fully supports public hearings and public participation. He stated, however, that many of the same people repeat themselves and speak multiple times about the same item. Mr. Boni stated that he welcomes new ideas and in order for the Commission to move on as quickly as possible he asked that members of the public who choose to speak do not continually repeat themselves. Mrs. Bafundo stated that public participation can be addressed by limiting it to items of the agenda for that particular meeting. Mr. Boorman stated that public participation will be manageable and the Commission should encourage the public to speak about any topic they want to. Mr. Boorman stated that he would be open to addressing the issue should it become a problem, but that limiting public participation sends the wrong message. He commented that a resident who cannot attend a meeting should be able to speak about an item addressed in that meeting while attending subsequent meetings. Mr. Boni clarified that he does not have a problem with public participation, he was only referring to the problem of the same person saying the same thing over and over which will make the Commission's job more difficult. Mr. Nafis agreed with Mr. Boorman that the public should have a chance

to speak, but noted that the Commission also has the ability to limit the amount of time that one speaker can speak. Mr. Boorman cautioned the Commission against sending the message that they will be strict about what people say, and stated that everyone should be welcome to participate in this inclusive process.

Next Meeting Agenda Ideas

Mrs. Bafundo noted that the next meeting will take place on January 24, 2008 and asked the Commission for ideas for topics, departments or speakers. Mr. Boorman suggested that at the next meeting the Commission works together to agree on an invitation letter to send to department heads. Mr. Boni asked whether all department heads will be invited at once or will they be invited according to a block of topics. Mr. Boorman suggested that everyone is invited and to allow Ms. Amodeo work with the staff on their schedules and advise the Commission as to who is coming at what time. Mrs. Bafundo commented that the Town is going into budget process. Mr. Briggaman stated that not all departments will attend the same meeting. Mrs. Bafundo agreed and stated that each meeting does not have to be limited to one department either. Mr. Briggaman suggested that time parameters be set for the departmental presentations. Mrs. Bafundo suggested that the Commission look at a structure, schedule and groupings at the next meeting. Mr. Boorman volunteered to draft a letter to the department heads for approval at the next meeting. Mrs. Bafundo suggested compiling a list of external resources as well, and also suggested that the Town Manager come in to speak to the Commission to give an overview of the Town. Mr. Nafis asked about staff availability in regards to the budget and access to staff members. Mr. Boorman replied that the issue would need to be addressed by the Town Manager, but that the idea is that Ms. Amodeo would be the focal point for the Commission's needs.

Ms. Amodeo summarized her list of requests from the Commission:

- Have microphones available at all meetings
- Let appropriate bodies know of the Commission's meeting schedule
- Check availability of Helen Nelson room for future meetings, research possible alternatives
- Look into how quickly minutes can be posted on the Town website
- Look into the possibility of placing audio of the meetings onto the Town website
- Look into email address(es) and phone numbers specifically for the Commission
- Assure that Commissioners' email addresses are posted on the Town website
- Assure that records are kept of all communications, including emails, from Town residents
- Look through the archives for previous Charter Commission's agendas and list of speakers
- Forward her contact information to the Commissioners
- Prepare possible groupings of department heads for presentations
- Create list of potential resources.

Mrs. Bafundo suggested that the Commission create an informational flier with meeting dates and other information to hand out to the public.

VIII COMMENTS BY COMMISSIONERS

Mr. Nafis stated that he did not join the Commission because he thought the process was going to be easy, and that it is important to remember that the goal is for someone who is reading the Charter ten years from now to say, "These people knew what they were doing and produced a good document". He stated that it will be more of an educational process than anything; and that the result will be worth the effort.

Mr. Boni stated that he never said he wanted to make the process "easy", only "easier" and that there is a big difference between the two. He stated that there is nothing wrong with making any job easier, no matter how big the job.

Mr. Briggaman thanked the public for coming out to the current and previous meetings, and stated hope that the public will continue to come out to express their opinions.

Mr. Boorman thanked the public who have attended the meetings or watched them on television. He encouraged all to attend, noting that it is a long process and the Commission would like to have input on ideas and suggestions. He noted that there is no such thing as a stupid question. Mr. Boorman also

noted that several speakers at the public hearing also talked about better ways to publicize the Commission's meetings and he asked the public for any ideas about how the Commission can receive more public participation.

Mrs. Bafundo stated that it will be a long, but hopefully efficient process. She stated that many of the questions that have been asked cannot be answered at this time, and cautioned the public that no Commissioners have entered the process with preconceived thoughts or ideas. Mrs. Bafundo stated that everyone wants to turn out a great product for all to live by, and that they will be listening to comments and addressing questions as content is covered. She stated that daytime meetings or public hearings may be a good idea, noting that the last Charter Commission held its first public hearing on a Saturday afternoon.

IX PUBLIC PARTICIPATION

Sue Mazzoccoli, 149 Harris Drive: Ms. Mazzoccoli stated that she feels it is best to use methods that others have used with success. She stated that the best way to control public participation is with a time limit, perhaps three minutes as is practiced at Town Council meetings. She stated that many speakers are passionate and want the Commission to hear their opinions. She commented that the Town Council recently held an orientation in which department heads each gave a brief presentation to the Council. She stated that it was a valuable tool and it may be a good idea to mirror the schedule of the Council orientation. Ms. Amodeo replied that she had coordinated the Council orientation and she would consider mirroring it for the Commission.

Steve Woods, 94 New Britain Avenue: Mr. Woods stated that the Commission should not restrict public participation with a time limit, as he does not feel that there will be a problem with participation. He also stated that people have the right to speak about issues as they please, and if they continue to speak about the same thing over and over it is probably because they feel they are not being heard. Mr. Woods stated that overall he is very happy with the way the Commission meetings are being run. He stated that the Charter is the Town's most important document and that the Commission must use care in its structure. He stated that he is confident that the Commissioners will do their jobs well. Mr. Woods stated that the previous minutes are already on the Town website, and noted that the Clerk of the Commission does a good job of creating thorough minutes. He stated that he liked the direction that the Commission is moving, and wished them luck.

Myra Cohen, 42 Jeffrey Lane: Mrs. Cohen stated that not everyone reads tiny one-inch high public notices in the newspaper or watches channel 14 and encouraged the Council to issue news releases to the papers to announce upcoming meetings. Mrs. Cohen also encouraged the Commission to go through the Charter page by page, even if it is initially broken apart into sections, just to make sure that nothing is missed.

X ADJOURNMENT

Mr. Boni moved to adjourn the meeting at 7:56pm. Motion seconded by Mr. Briggaman.

Motion passed 5-0

Respectfully Submitted,

Mrs. Jaime Trevethan
Clerk – Charter Revision Commission