

CHARTER REVISION COMMISSION OF 2022 DRAFT REPORT TO THE TOWN COUNCIL

I would like to recognize the entire Charter Revision Commission for their hard work and dedication to reviewing, commenting and recommending proposed changes to the Newington Charter. Without their dedication, this report and the proposed Charter language could not have been completed over the last four (4) months. A copy of the draft copy of the proposed Charter language, with markups, and a copy showing the proposed highlighted language to revise have been included for your review. The same information that you are receiving this evening has been posted to the Commission page for the public to review.

At its meeting of January 25, 2022, the Newington Town Council passed Resolution 2022-18, which reads as follows:

WHEREAS, the Town of Newington, as a municipal corporation, has the power to amend its Town Charter in the manner set forth in Connecticut General Statutes §7-187 through §7-193;

WHEREAS, the Newington Town Council is contemplating a revision of the Newington Town Charter for the purpose of bringing said Charter up to current standards in the State of Connecticut and to eliminate any inconsistencies that may currently exist with the State of Connecticut Constitution and /or the Connecticut General Statutes; and

WHEREAS, pursuant to Connecticut General Statutes §7-188, the proper method for the Newington Town Council to initiate the revision of the Town Charter is by way of a resolution adopted by a two-thirds vote of its entire membership;

NOW, THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED, The Newington Town Council hereby approves of the initiation of action for the amendment and revision of the Newington Town Charter pursuant to Connecticut General Statutes §7-188.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, The Newington Town Council, in accordance with Connecticut General Statutes §7-190, shall within thirty days (30) of the date of approval of this current resolution appoint, by way of a separate resolution, a Commission consisting of five to fifteen members whose purpose shall be to draft amendments to the Newington Town Charter using the procedures set forth in Connecticut General Statutes §7-187 through §7-193. No, more than one-third of the membership of said Commission shall hold any other public office in the Town of Newington. No more than a bare majority of said Commission shall be members of one political party.

The Town Council appointed members to the Commission on February 22, 2022 under Resolution 2022-36, appointing Joe Harpie, Anthony Gonsalves, Nancy Cappello, Chris Miner and Kevin Borrup.

Subsequently, on February 22, 2022, the Town Council passed Resolution 2022-37, and the Town Council issued thirteen (13) charges for review, as follow:

1. Include a mandated review of the charter every ten years. Set up committee make up and time frame for review.

2. Review and update referendum limits to bring them in line with current expenditure amounts C-408, page 9 Define Special Appropriation.
3. Review Article VI and look at the number of members, specifically Parks and Rec (11 Members) page 13-15
4. Review the document for ambiguous terms like shall and may and make them clearer
5. Review and clarify Article IX Personnel. Specify who has control over BOE personnel. C-903 page 24
6. Change time on Council Organizational meeting to 7:00 C-403 page 8
7. Specify how Commission and Board members can be removed if they do not attend meetings or we are unable to contact them or conduct unbecoming a Board or Commission member.
8. Review the language for C-603 Library Trustees. ‘Selected by town”? page 14
9. Look at all numbers in the charter related to amounts required for referenda, bidding requirements etc. and determine if appropriate
10. Review staggered terms for council and board of education and other town boards
11. Review residency requirements for Town Planner, Police Chief
12. Review language in **C-410. Right of Referendum on Ordinances**, to ensure that the existing language and timeline is properly outlined.
13. Review language in **C-609. Auditor**, to include by reference the Audit Committee, currently created under Resolution 2021-58. Recommend approval of Code language to outline duties of the Audit Committee.

The Commission was required to supply a Draft Report to the Town Council no later than July 5, 2022.

The Charter Revision Commission began its work at an Organizational meeting that took place on February 28, 2022, as a hybrid meeting. During that meeting the Commission received an overview of the process to amend the current Charter and the timetable in which the commission must complete its work. All meetings and Public Hearings were held as hybrid meetings, allowing the public and Town staff to attend and address the commission on possible language changes. All meetings of the commission are available on the Town of Newington Government YouTube page for viewing.

Voting took place to determine a Chairman and Vice-Chairperson. Commissioner Harpie was named Chairperson and Commissioner Gonsalves was named Vice-Chairperson.

The first of two Public Hearings was held on May 9, 2022, to receive public comments prior to the start of work by the Commission. The commission had the opportunity to speak with four (4) members of the public to garner recommendations for review or inclusion.

Special Meetings for the Commission were held on March 15th, March 29th, April 28th, June 1st, June 13th and June 22nd. A Regular meeting was held on May 17th. Regular meetings scheduled for May 17th, June 7th and June 21st and a Special meeting of May 19th, were cancelled due to scheduling conflicts. The final Public Hearing of the Commission took place on June 13th. Midway through the approved schedule the commission had to amend its schedule due to conflicts with the Town Council Budget meetings.

We were fortunate that Mayor DelBuono was able to attend the meetings and participate in the discussions. This had the added benefit of having first-hand knowledge of the thoughts of the Council when they issued the initial charges list.

The Commission, over the course of the last four months, had the opportunity to speak with several department heads and commission members and the public. A short excerpt of the comments that were received are listed below.

Maureen O'Connor-Lyons, Library Trustee spoke with the commission on the membership appointment language for the Lucy Robbins Welles Library Board Town members.

Rose Lyons, of 46 Elton Drive attended all meeting, either in-person or virtually and commented on several topics, including Appointment of the Town Attorney, removal of appointed officials, Manager's residency requirement

John Bachand, of 56 Maple Hill Avenue discussed, by email and in person before the commission, confusing language listed in Chapter 4 regarding financial limits, referendum requirements and initiative by the public. The supplied email and exhibits are included as part of this report.

Eileen Francolino, of 116 Lydall Road recommended possible changes to the way in which a Mayor could be chosen. (March 15, 2022)

Keith Chapman, Town Manager and Maureen Brummett, Superintendent of School met with the commission to discuss personnel issues relative to certified BOE staff. (March 29, 2022)

Janet Murphy, Finance Director discussed Special Appropriation limits with the commission and recommended the need to clean up the language as currently written. (March 29, 2022)

Renata Bertotti, Town Planner spoke with the commission about the difficulties that towns around the state are experiencing in their attempt to hire Town Planner's. Indicated that requiring residency would definitely be detrimental and may require the Town to use the services of a consultant, at a greater cost to the residents. Email correspondence supplied (April 28, 2022)

Stephen Clark, Chief of Police discussed placing a residency requirement for the position. Stated that many time the inclusion of a residency requirement limits the pool of candidates that would have interest in the position. Indicated that the most important should not be if they are or would become a resident of the Town, but if they have the necessary knowledge and leadership skills to lead the department. (April 28, 2022)

Theresa Avey, Republican Registrar of Voters discussed the transition to a staggered term form for elections. Indicated that she had spoken with Registrars that deal with that situation, and with the opportunity they would request to have it changed in the Charter. Discussion was also held regarding the change from a 2-year to a 4-year term cycle. It was stated that this type of election style could confuse voters that are accustomed to specific office elections happening during set years. (April 28, 2022)

Former Mayor Rodney Mortensen met with the committee to discuss the residency requirement for the Town Manager, which he considered to be archaic. Recommended reviewing a larger stipend amount, for the Mayor and Council members, if recommended for inclusion.

Referendum language limits should be increased. The inclusion of language for Development Commission duties was recommended for review, as well. (May 3, 2022)

Mr. Jay Bottalico and Mr. Don Woods, of the Board of Parks and Recreation, spoke with the commission about their membership and the difficulty in obtaining a quorum for meeting with 11 members. Over several meetings discussions took place regarding the appropriate membership requirements to assist in the completion of ongoing work of the commission. (June 1, 2022)

Jaime Trevethan, Director of the Senior and Disabled Center discussed the Aging and Disabled Commissions issues with acquiring a quorum to assist in the work of the commission and center. The commission was unable to meet for over a year, and she recommended removal of the member quantity from the Charter, and suggested that the Town Council could better address the changing landscape of volunteers through the ordinance process. Memorandum supplied (June 1, 2022)

The commission approved preliminary draft language, in preparation for their upcoming Public Hearing on June 13, 2022. A Special meeting was held after the Public Hearing that evening to finalize the initial language for submission to the Town Attorney for his review and comments.

On June 22, 2022, the Town Attorney met with the Commission and reviewed the proposed changes which the commission had proposed and his recommendation regarding each proposal. The table following this summary will outline the charge, whether issued by the Town Council or taken up by the commission, the reasoning behind the proposed revision and the specific page reference as shown on the Draft Markup Charter proposal.

I would like to again, personally acknowledge each member of the Commission for their extraordinary effort during the review process, the public that attended the meetings and suggested recommendations and the Town Staff which attend to advocate for or speak in opposition to recommended charges before the commission. Without the efforts of everyone involved, this process could not have been completed as successfully as we did.

Now the process is back in the Hands of the Town Council and ultimately the Electors of the Town of Newington.

Respectively Submitted,

Joseph Harpie
Chairperson
2022 Charter Revision Commission

| Chapter/Section # | Charge | Intent and Purpose of the Proposed Revision | Draft Charter Page |
|------------------------------|---|---|--------------------|
| Article II, ELECTION | 10 Review staggered terms for council and board of education and other town boards | The Commission met with the Registrar of Voters to discuss the process required to transition to a staggered election format. The additional review required to ensure proper party representation based upon the staggered election format added additional review standards that are not currently required. No evidence was presented that such change provided any measurable efficiency for local governance. | 1-3 |
| §C-403 | 6 Change time on Council Organizational meeting to 7:00 C-403 page 8 | Originally reviewed set time for organizational meeting based upon standard meeting times. Had recommended 7:00 PM. Upon advice of the Town Attorney the language was revised to allow for the Town Council to determine the meeting time based upon the Annual Schedule of meeting approved in January of each year. | 5 |
| §C-408 | 2 Review and update referendum limits to bring them in line with current expenditure amounts C-408, page 9 Define Special Appropriation. | Recommend to revise language to a percentage of General Fund Appropriation for current year. This information provides the Council and the public with a true metric of measurement as compared to a set dollar amount which has not definable measurement. New language added to define Special Appropriation to clarify the difference between a budget appropriation and an appropriation made from unencumbered funds of the Town Treasury. | 6-7 |
| C-408, §C-813, §C-814 | 9 Look at all numbers in the charter related to amounts required for referenda, bidding requirements etc. and determine if appropriate | No recommendation. The Finance Director indicated that §C-813 bid limits requirement of \$30,000, was slightly more conservative than the State requirements. | 6-7, 18-19 |
| §C-409 | Commission Review – Emergency Ordinance | Town Attorney recommended that the Commissions proposed language indicate the requirement to hold a Public Hearing, if possible, within 30 days, would allow for dissemination of important information relative to the emergency after the initial details have been compiled. | 7 |
| §C-410 | 12 Review language in C-410. Right of Referendum on Ordinances , to ensure that the existing language and timeline is properly outlined. | The Commission reviewed and discussed possible efficiencies in the public referendum petition process. Based upon the complexity and interconnectivity of multiple Charter sections the commission recommends that the language remain as currently written. (email J Bachand) | 7 |

| Chapter/Section # | Charge | Intent and Purpose of the Proposed Revision | Draft Charter Page |
|-------------------|---|--|--------------------|
| §C-412 | 7 Specify how Commission and Board members can be removed if they do not attend meetings or we are unable to contact them or conduct unbecoming a Board or Commission member. | Original discussions were based on language that would have allowed arbitrary removal by the Council for any reason. Language was revised to limit discretionary removals, due to lack of residency and excessive unexcused attendance issues. This language proposal conforms to the Board and Commission Stands Booklet approved in 2019. | 8 |
| §C-501 | Commission Review – Residency for Administrative Officers | The Commission undertook the opportunity to all review all residency requirements included within the current Charter language. Based on its review, the only existing officer requiring residency was the Town Manager. Residency data was reviewed for similar governing formats across the State. The underlying result was that most Towns, upon the review of their existing Charter language, have recommended the revision or removal of the requirement. Former Mayor Rodney Mortensen addressed the commission on May 3, 2022 and indicated that the main requirements should be based upon the individual's knowledge, performance, government knowledge and interactions with the residents, not where that individual resides. The Commission received a residency survey from Brian West of Connecticut Conference of Municipalities (CCM), dated May 6, 2022, outlining a wide variety of residency allowances. (email B West) | 9 |
| §C-603 | 8 Review the language for C-603 Library Trustees. ‘Selected by town?’ page 14 | Upon review and discussions with the Library Board member, the recommendation was to clarify the Town Council as the recommending and appointing authority. Language updated to remove the ambiguous term “selected by Town”. | 11 |

| Chapter/Section # | Charge | Intent and Purpose of the Proposed Revision | Draft Charter Page |
|-------------------|--|---|--------------------|
| §C-605 | 3 Review Article VI and look at the number of members, specifically Parks and Rec (11 Members) page 13-15 | Recommend a membership amount of 7 members. Commission makeup consistent with Minority Representation under the Connecticut General Statutes. P&R Commission requested membership makeup of 4 majority/3 minority. | 11 |
| §C-606 | Commission Review – Development Commission Powers & Duties | <p>CGS §7-136 Municipal Economic Development Commissions</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The commission shall conduct research into the economic conditions and trends in its municipality • shall seek to coordinate the activities of and cooperate with unofficial bodies organized to promote such economic development • may advertise and may prepare, print and pamphlets and other media, which in its judgment will further its official purposes • shall annually prepare and transmit to the legislative body a report of its activities and of its recommendations for improving such economic conditions and development <p>The Commission recommends the inclusion of the additional language to outline duties and responsibilities which are not currently outlined within the Charter of Code language.</p> | 11-12 |
| §C-609 | 13 Review language in C-609. Auditor , to include by reference the Audit Committee, currently created under Resolution 2021-58. Recommend approval of Code language to outline duties of the Audit Committee. | The Commission recommends the inclusion of language under this section to create an Audit Committee to assist the Town Manager and Finance Director in the review of auditing services, appointment of auditor and recommendation and review of auditing processes. The Commission suggests a three (3) member committee, with the Town Manager and Finance Director included as ex-officio members. Additionally, possible draft language has been created to assist the Town Council in the creation of the committee. | 12 |

| Chapter/Section # | Charge # | Intent and Purpose of the Proposed Revision | Draft Charter Page |
|-------------------|----------|---|--|
| §C-703 & §C-711 | 11 | <p>Review residency requirements for Town Planner, Police Chief</p> <p>The Commission invited Stephen Clark, Chief of Police and Renata Berrott, Town Planner to present their view on a residency requirement for each position during the April 28, 2022 meeting. Their recommendations were that a requirement for residency would limit the main pool of candidates and be an overall detriment to the Town. The current charter has no residency requirement for the above-named parties. The commission has a written correspondence (see email) from the Town Planner that argues against a residency requirement although she herself resides here. She points out that town planning is an aging profession and that Conn does not have an accredited graduate level urban planning program; and that due to retirements towns are struggling to find candidates. Overall, she sees such a requirement as a disincentive. The Chief of Police lives in town as well but there is no requirement for rank and file officers to reside here. Both the Chief and the Town Planner both presented their views before the Commission, stating a number of reasons as to why they did not support the residency requirement concept. The commission is not aware of any issues relative to this that have presented undue challenges to the Chief of Police in managing the force. 15 other towns have no residency requirements on the Chief of Police or Town Planner. (email R Berotti)</p> <p>The Commission recommended against requiring residency for either office.</p> | 13 & 15 |
| §C-902 & §C-903 | 5 | Review and clarify Article IX Personnel. Specify who has control over BOE personnel. C-903 page 24 | No recommendation based on legal advice, that any action taken would be inappropriate given the pending actions for both entities. |
| §C-1005 | 1 | Include a mandated review of the charter every ten years. Set up committee make up and time frame for review. | Recommend adding the mandated review of the Charter every ten (10) years for consistency. Proposed language included in Draft Charter. |

| Chapter/Section # | Charge | Intent and Purpose of the Proposed Revision | Draft Charter Page |
|---------------------|--|---|--------------------|
| Full Charter Review | 4 Review the document for ambiguous terms like shall and may and make them clearer | Research indicated that both shall and may are used to express permissions or obligations to act, and may be interchangeable. No recommendation is made to adjust the terms in the Charter at this time. | 1-22 |
| Article IV | Commission Review – Town Council Compensation | <p>The Commission discussed possible compensation for the Mayor/Town Council due to increased duties and meeting attendance. Former Mayor Rodney Mortensen indicated that a stipend was a good idea, but felt a \$500 stipend was insulting due to the work required. (memorandum (J Trevethan)</p> <p>The Commission did not make a formal recommendation of the stipend amount.</p> | 5-6 |
| §C-608 | Commission Review – Commission on Aging & Disabled Membership Issues | <p>The Director of the Senior and Disabled Center reviewed with the Commission the limitations imposed on the Aging & Disabled Commission in meeting quorum requirements. She recommended possible removal of member quantity listed in the Charter. The removal would allow for the Town Council to revised the membership requirements through the ordinance process within the Code, Chapter 8, Article V Commission on Aging & Disabled.</p> <p>The Commission, during the review of the town boards and commissions, has noticed a trend in boards with larger membership requirements having a difficulty in sustaining quorums to conduct their business.</p> | 12 |

Krupienski, James

From: John Bachand <jbachand1@gmail.com>
Sent: Thursday, March 24, 2022 9:30 PM
To: Krupienski, James
Subject: Charter Revision Suggestion
Attachments: Charter sec. 410 TYPO.JPG; Screenshot_20220324-211613~2.png

§ NOTARY PUBLIC

Hello James,

could you please see that this message gets to the Charter Revision Committee

My revision recommendation...

Researching certain charter sections related to spending I have found what appears to be an area in need of correction in section 410 (see attached annotated snip). The word More, should read Less. As it is, It clearly conflicts with section 408 where the issue is enumerated in more detail, specifically that a special appropriation less than \$375,000. would not require either a referendum or passage by ordinance, and amounts over 975,000 would automatically require a referendum. Therefore the right to petition would trigger at the amount in-between, or over \$375,000. Meaning the exception could only apply to amounts less than that (or for emergency ordinances, as stated).

For it not to be an error defies the spirit of a section labeled "Right to Referendum" and I cannot imagine such to be the intent in a transparent government environment.

It's simple, there are 3 levels of discretion in council spending, under 375k the council has absolute discretion, over 975k they have no discretion unless/ until approved by voters in referendum, in between 375 - 975 they have limited discretion in that the voting public has the right to challenge with a petition for referendum. After all the whole purpose of passage by ordinance requirement for that 375-975 range is specifically to build in the challenge period.

Also, in C-406 where only emergency ordinances are excepted from the 15 day after passage contestment period.

If special appropriations ordinances in the 375-975 range were meant to be exempt from petition for referendum then why would they require 15 days post passage before they become effective?

Finally, more info from wethersfield's charter. In their section 309 (snip also attached) they use a percentage rather than a dollar figure, but you can see the in between amount 0.15% - 0.3% is subject to petition for referendum. And they specifically use the word "less" than. So the amount in-between that which can't be challenged, and that which automatically goes to referendum (our 375-975) is subject to petition by voters for referendum, as logic dictates.

Section 405 raises another issue regarding emergency ordinances but I'll send another request for that to be looked at.

Thanks,

John Bachand



Enter search term... 

**in of Wethersfield, CT / The Charter / Charter
apter III Council**

**308 Public hearing and passage of ordinance
and resolutions.**

309 Referendum on ordinances and resolutions.

Any ordinance or resolution adopted by the Town Council, with the exception of matters relating to the annual budget, the tax rate, the removal of any person or persons, a specific appropriation of less than 0.15% of the appropriated General Fund expenditures for the current fiscal year or an emergency ordinance as defined in this chapter, may be reversed by referendum if, during the twelve

§ C-410 Right of Referendum on Ordinances.

Electors shall have the right to petition for a referendum in accordance with the Connecticut General Statutes on any ordinance passed by the Council, except an emergency ordinance, or a special appropriation in the amount of \$375,000 or more. A referendum must be held when there shall be filed with the Town Clerk, within 15 days of the published notice of the passage of the ordinance, a petition signed by qualified electors in number equal to 5% or more of the total number of electors whose names appear upon the last completed Registry List, which petition shall be filed with the Town Clerk who shall within 10 days determine whether or not the petition contains a sufficient number of valid signatures, and if it does, shall so certify to the Council. The ordinance shall not then take effect until the Council has submitted it to a referendum, which shall be held not less than 20 nor more than 30 days after the filing of such petition, except this referendum may be held at a Town election or general election if the same occurs not less than 10 days nor more than 30 days after the filing of the petition. The ordinance shall be null and void in the event that a majority of the electors voting thereon, such majority consisting of at least 10% of the qualified electors of the Town, shall vote in opposition to the ordinance. Otherwise it shall take effect immediately following the referendum.

Krupienski, James

From: Bertotti, Renata
Sent: Monday, March 7, 2022 3:08 PM
To: Krupienski, James
Subject: Comments to be shared with Charter Revision Committee and attached to minutes

Dear Charter Revision Committee:

Please accept this correspondence as my comments regarding the proposed charter revisions; I am submitting them as a town resident and as the current Newington Town Planner.

I have originally commented to Town Clerk in November 2021, stating that there should be a clearly written provision in the Charter that explicitly and actively seeks to incentivize the equitable representation on decision-making appointed boards and commissions, in particular those boards dealing with matters relative to education, housing, economy, infrastructure and the Town governance. I suggested in those comments, the Committee considers adopting a language that would allow for creation of a Town ordinance requesting the establishment of a targeted stipend to incentivize the participation of the underrepresented demographics in our appointed Boards and Commissions. I now wish to repeat that same comment.

My second comment is related to the proposed revision regarding the requiring the Town Planner's in town residency. The state of Connecticut does not have an accredited, graduate level urban planning program. Planning in Connecticut is an aging profession, undergoing retirements and facing more of them in the next 1-5 years. Towns and cities around the state have been struggling to fill the positions in planning, particularly the Town Planner positions. Towns with complicated reputation, perceived to have issues with political discord face additional problems with retaining Planners. This is a well-known issue in our state, which is discussed often at professional networking events and conferences. I was surprised to see this proposed revision included without the Council seeking any professional opinions or information on the matter.

I also want to address the targeted nature of this particular proposal. As of late, I have been subjected to series of baseless accusations and relentless, unyielding pressure, of which this is yet another example. Why is it that it is this specific position, the position of the Town Planner, that has been selected for the residency requirement and not the Chief Building Official and Fire Chief, who, like the Chief of the Police, have to respond in the case of emergency, nor the Director of Finance, the Town Assessor or any other equally important department head in Town, if not as an attempt at show of force that is intended to professionally muzzle myself and appease a singular group of angry residents threatening on social media with their re-election votes?

For the record, I am a resident, and the residency requirement, should it be adopted, will not negatively affect me in my Town Planner position; however, should I leave the town employ, the town will be burdened with this unnecessary requirement, which makes it difficult to employ the most competent, best professional at a reasonable salary. Demanding residency for a highly skilled, specialized position that is difficult to fill to begin with, only to appease few at an expense of the entire community is short sighted and ill advised.

Renata Bertotti, AICP
Town Planner
Town of Newington
860-665-8578 (office)
860-670-4003 (cell)

From: Brian West <BWEST@CCM-CT.ORG>
Sent: Friday, May 6, 2022 9:14 AM
To: Shonty, Heather <hshonty@newingtonct.gov>
Subject: Town Manager Residency Requirement

Dear Heather,

The following is in response to your request looking for whether any town manager town has a residency requirement.

I polled evry town manager/administrator and I've included those responses below:

Bolton, Canton, Columbia, Granby, Hebron, Simsbury, Tolland, Winchester, Windsor – no;

Cheshire, East Hampton, Glastonbury, Groton, Manchester, Mansfield, Meriden, Newington, Rocky Hill, Southington, South Windsor, Watertown and West Hartford – yes;

In addition,

Plainville – yes, but there is a two-year grace period to move in;

Wethersfield – yes, but there is a one-year grace period to move in;

Farmington – yes, but after fifteen years they can move within a 10-mile radius;

Avon, Clinton, Coventry, Cromwell, Enfield and North Branford – yes, but can be waived by the Council;

Killingly – Manager must live within 25 miles;

Norwich – Manager must live within 60 miles.

I hope this information is helpful. If you have any additional inquiries, please feel free to contact me directly at (203) 498-3077 or by email at bwest@ccm-ct.org.

Sincerely,

Brian

Brian West
Senior Research Analyst
Connecticut Conference of Municipalities (CCM)
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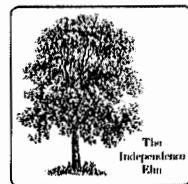


Keith Chapman
Town Manager

TOWN OF NEWINGTON

120 Cedar Street Newington, Connecticut 06111

Senior and Disabled Center



Jaime Trevethan
Director

Memorandum

To: Charter Revision Commission, Joseph Harpie - Chairperson
From: Jaime Trevethan, Director – Senior & Disabled Center
Date: May 31, 2022
Re: Request Concerning § C-608, Commission on Aging and Disabled

This memo is to request that the Charter Revision Commission consider an amendment to **§ C-608, Commission on Aging and Disabled**, which reads in part:

"There shall be a Commission on Aging and Disabled consisting of nine members whom shall have the powers and duties conferred upon it by ordinance...."

As indicated, the current Commission on Aging and Disabled (COAD) must consist of nine members. Should the Charter Revision Commission intend to maintain commission membership numbers as a function of the Charter, this request is to lower the required COAD membership from nine to seven.

As with most Town boards and commissions, the COAD membership is appointed by the Town Council at the recommendation of the Town committees. Five members are considered a quorum. Although it is a politically appointed board, the members have traditionally operated in an apolitical manner to support the Senior and Disabled Center's mission to improve the well-being of older adults and adults with disabilities in Newington. Additionally, the COAD is responsible for setting membership requirements and fees, approving certain purchases over \$500, appointing a volunteer of the year, and hosting an annual ceremony in appreciation of the Center's 75-100 volunteers.

Unfortunately, the COAD cannot maintain a quorum in its current format. In fact, despite the efforts of various town staff, the existing Commissioners, and myself, the COAD has not been able to meet for the past 13 months due to a lack of quorum. This is unfortunate, given that the Senior & Disabled Center serves a population of over 11,000 Newington residents. During that time, the Commission had four active appointed members. Had the required membership been seven rather than nine members, the four active Commissioners would have constituted a quorum and could have remained active in helping the Center navigate the pandemic, grow and move forward over the past year.

Phone: (860) 665-8778 Fax: (860) 667-5835
tonsrcenter@newingtonct.gov
www.newingtonct.gov

*First in State of Connecticut
Fully Accredited by the National Institute of Senior Centers*

Numerous recent studies have indicated that volunteer commitment has declined over the past several years. A December 2021 Gallup poll suggests that organized volunteerism has fallen 17% among middle-income adults since 2017. In addition, the COAD has experienced intermittent difficulty maintaining a quorum, going back several years pre-pandemic. A smaller group of qualified and dedicated volunteer commissioners is a sustainable long-term solution that will positively impact the operations of the Center and the Newington older adult community.

Thank you for your time and consideration.

cc: Keith Chapman, Town Manager
James Krupienski, Town Clerk
Karen Brecher, Commission on Aging and Disabled Chairperson