

**TOWN OF HAMDEN, CONNECTICUT  
CHARTER REVISION COMMISSION  
MINUTES OF MEETING  
January 25, 2022**

**\*To view the recording, please click the following link and observe the instructions when/if prompted:** <https://us06web.zoom.us/rec/share/U8ZNIjWfqMzQdfJMLV3rV26OVGBMarY3FiZEyg-MBLu20XnCIbwcktoM5py-vPcAu.JVBB-9KsNwsr3ihk>

**\*\* If you are reviewing a print copy of these minutes and wish to view the meeting recording, please visit the Agenda Center at [www.hamden.com/agendacenter](http://www.hamden.com/agendacenter) and click the MEDIA icon found next to the agenda listed under this date. Or download these minutes and click the link above.**

-----  
A meeting of the Charter Revision Commission was held on Tuesday, January 25, 2022 via Zoom due to the Covid-19 Pandemic.

**1. Call to Order: 6:36 PM**

Intro from Council President Dominique Baez.

**2. Roll Call and Introduction of Commission Members and Counsel**

Present: Frank Dixon, Jackie Downing, Sarah Gallagher, Jay Kaye, Y’Isiah Lopes, Laura Santino, and Patricia C Vener-Saavedra, Attorney Steve Mednick, Council Clerk Kim Renta, and Council President Dominique Baez.

Absent: None

**3. Election of Officers – Town Clerk Presides through election of Chair**

**A. Nomination and Election of Chair**

Nomination: Sarah Gallagher

Motion: Frank Dixon

2<sup>nd</sup>: Jackie Downing

Vote: Unanimous

**B. Nomination and Election of Vice Chair – Chair**

Nomination Frank Dixon

Motion: Sarah Gallagher

2<sup>nd</sup>: Jay Kaye

Vote: Unanimous

### C. Nomination and Election of Secretary – Chair

Nomination: Patricia C Vener-Saavedra

Motion: Sarah Gallagher

2<sup>nd</sup>: Jay Kaye

Vote: Unanimous

#### 4. Discussion of Meeting Schedule – moved to after the public hearing

#### 5. Convene Public Hearing: Start Time: 6:43 pm

##### A. Overview of the Law of Home Rule, Municipal Charters, 2020-2021 Charter Project and 2022 Mission: Attorney Mednick

Project and 2022 Mission: Attorney Mednick explains that Local Government has no actual sovereignty, rather states and feds do. Goes back to mid-19th century after civil war (Nebraska) - municipal entities (corps) only has powers explicitly granted to them and must be indispensable (rather than convenient). State constitution determines this. See 7-148 of general statutes. We deal with structure, functions, fiscal powers, and personnel. Must have executive and legislative body. Everything else is optional.

- Goals - clarity, flexibility, accountability, and avoid paralysis / disregard.
- Cannot - do recalls, nor term limits (unless granted by state statute), for example.
- State law has given collective bargaining a basis in law

Scope of this Commission: The LC resolution that formed this Commission stated the focus is on the work of the 2021 commission. However, the commission is not limited to only the work that happened last year.

Overview of the Process:

- The process starts tonight with organizations meeting and public comment.
- Next meeting will talk to public officials (mayo, legislative council, town clerk) and then work through the chapters of the charter.
- There is a required second statutory public hearing and comment session that will be held later on in the process. However, public comment can be given via email at [CRC2022@hamden.com](mailto:CRC2022@hamden.com). Also during public comment sections of meetings.
- After 2nd public meeting we vote on the proposed charter revisions and send to LC, they have 60 days to vote to pass it or send it back to the CRC with questions and comments. If they send it back to the CRC, we can only act on what they raise.
- The CRC then has 30 days to answer questions and send back to LC. Then they get it back and vote on either whole or changes. Then on to public referendum. By state law, town is entitled to put out explanatory text before November election. Which would be an objective document for voters to review!
- LC develops questions for the ballot. CRC can help with this
- Goal to get on the November ballot.

Questions: Kaye - Council resolved that we would look at only certain things but we are not constrained by that. Mednick confirms

Gallagher -asks, "When should we aim to have 1st draft done?" Mednick replies "end of May." Need to give Council time yet also be complete. Council has up to 60 days but that would be unusual. They could get it looked at and voted on in June. they must be done by end of Aug because it has to go to Secretary of the State in the first week of September for November ballot inclusion. If another round needed, they only get 14 days.

Kaye - Council is pressed because that's the same time as the budget considerations. Possibly we could get finished before then.

Mednick -explains that this is why he encourages our next meeting be with Council.

## **B. Brief Introduction of Commission Members**

### **c. Public Testimony (Note: Public Comment Log #1 is attached hereto and the written Public Comments for this meeting can be read here): <https://www.hamden.com/DocumentCenter/View/5309/01-25-2022>**

**Speaker:** Karlen Meinsen - has been following process. It was a professional process last time. Appreciated first efforts, mentions financial, equity and diversity aspects. "Sometimes you have to look farther outside the box to find solutions." Need to look at structure.

No other public testimony.

**End Time: 7:24**

## **6. Discussion and approval of 2022 Meeting Schedule**

Proposal from Poll: Every other Tuesday at 7:00

## **7. Further Discussion and Questions – Members**

Proposed Schedule:

- Feb 8th - testimony of Mayor, Legislative Councilmembers, Town Attorney Gruen and Town Clerk.
- Feb 19 (Saturday 10:30 AM) address 3 chapters and preamble, definitions ch 1, ch 3 processes, changes and mistakes need to be addressed. ch 2 had no changes but we can look at it anyway.
- March 1st (Tuesday) ch 4, review of LC, ch 5 Mayor's section, emergency power, COO/Chief of Staff issues, ch 6 no changes but could be. May want panelists for this discussion
- March 19 10:30 AM - ch 7, 9 board and commission issues – may want panelists for this discussion and it may take 2 meetings
- March 29th (Tuesday) - Police Commission, BOE (still in Ch 9) Ch 8 department heads
- April 13th (Wednesday) budget reform. May want a panel.
- April 30th - 10:30

- May 10th - open and unscheduled
- May 17th - Public Hearing
- Final Meeting - TBD

**Vote on this next meeting.**

Gallagher asks if we open each meeting with a period of public comment? Limit to items on agenda and limit time (especially if there are a lot of people).

Downing suggests this may not be necessary or advisable given time constraints,

Gallagher asks if we can be flexible about accepting comments for a given meeting.

Mednick replies that we can have a general rule that comments be relevant to items under consideration.

**Audience Questions**

Philip Cronan - Public comments; understands the constraints – Last CRC he had the experience where commissioners misunderstood/misinterpreted an item that a person brought up and ended up voting against it. So perhaps asking audience for clarification might be helpful.

Gallagher suggests we find opportunities for periods of time for comments where useful. Also we should look at topics for panel presentations.

Sarah Clark - 1) How will meetings be publicized and how will public attendees easily find the agendas?  
2) Is there a way to inform people where they can see written comments?

Mednick says that Renta's summary can be attached to the minutes (as addendum) Mednick informs CRC that minutes must be drafted and posted within 7 days.

Kaye - What is CRC email address? Renta - [CRC2022@hamden.com](mailto:CRC2022@hamden.com)

Mednick explains that the plan for each meeting is to supply background documents in bite sized pieces of charter being worked on for a given meeting.

Debbie Ramaya - 1) supporting Cronan that public comment is really important especially given the admin's desire to be transparent. People are taking time to attend and their comments should be welcome. Maybe there can be a time limit on the comments. Have dialogue 2) Posting written in comments - sometimes these are shown in screen share and that would be a better idea than having to go look for them in a browser elsewhere during the meeting. Kim Renta has done this for other meetings.

No other Further Discussion and Questions from Public or Members

**8. Adjourn Time: 8:08**

Motion: Frank Dixon

2<sup>nd</sup>: Jay Kaye

Vote: Unanimous

Minutes submitted by Commission Secretary

# HAMDEN CHARTER REVISION COMMISSION

## PUBLIC COMMENT LOG #1: 25 JANUARY 2022

Name/Address	Subject Matter
1. Elaine Dove Santa Fe Avenue	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Supports May 25, 2021 CRC Findings</li> <li>• Move the Charter to the November 2022 Ballot</li> </ul>
2. J. Charles and Diana S. Wakerley Blake Circle	<p>Support the following changes to the May 25, 2021 Proposed Charter:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Unimpeded access to information: town should not impede the ability of citizens to obtain information by “delay or threatened charges.” (Note from Counsel: This is government by the Freedom of Information Act which permits reasonable fees for copying and addresses time-lines for response.)</li> <li>• Report of Contracts and Agreements: Should be available for public review</li> </ul>
3. Deborah Smith East Gate Lane	<p>Urges consideration of Council/Manager form of government</p>
4. Diane Hoffman Wilmot Road	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Retain the Finance Commission and Diversity, Equity and Inclusion Commission</li> <li>• Supports a term limit on Board and Commission Service, subject to following constraints: (a) members should be permitted to continue if no community member expresses interest in the position within two (2) months of posting; and, (b) may be apply to reapply after an absence of one (1) year from prior service</li> <li>• Consider the merits of the Chief Operating Officer or Chief of Staff and avoid MERA issues pertaining to direct reports</li> <li>• Supports three accountability tools listed on May 25, 2021 Report (Note: They are not listed in her comments)</li> <li>• Supports Police Commission reforms, including: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Nine (9) members from each Legislative Council District.</li> <li>○ Granting authority to Police Commission to serve as Civilian Review Board with subpoena authority</li> <li>○ Diversification of qualifications for Commission members</li> <li>○ Training Requirements</li> </ul> </li> <li>• Public comment opportunities should be robust and enhanced. Supports Sarah Clark’s proposals in this regard</li> </ul>

# HAMDEN CHARTER REVISION COMMISSION

## PUBLIC COMMENT LOG #1: 25 JANUARY 2022

Name/Address	Subject Matter
5. Judy Lhamon King Street	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Supports identical issues as set forth in the first four bullets of Diane Hoffman’s comments</li> </ul>
6. Sarah Clark Haverford Street	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• General supports the May 25, 2021 proposal</li> <li>• Specifically supports the following provisions:               <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Finance Commission</li> <li>○ Diversity, Equity and Inclusion Commission</li> <li>○ Expansion of Police Commission with nine (9) members from each Legislative Council District</li> <li>○ Restructure of the Budget Process and creation of a Capital Projects budget process</li> </ul> </li> <li>• Consider revising the following modifications of May 25<sup>th</sup> Report:               <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ <b>§7.1.B(7)(b)</b>: increase citizen input at the <u>beginning</u> of meetings; <u>during</u> the meeting on “action items” and at the <u>conclusion</u> of meetings. Note: Emphasis on the “during” meeting component</li> <li>○ <b>§7.1.B(7)(b)</b>: wants to make sure that the public is not precluded from making “spoken” comments</li> <li>○ <b>§7.1.B(7)(b)</b>: hybrid meetings should be required and continued as the regular order</li> <li>○ <b>§7.1.B(7)(a)</b>: Receipt of public comment should be acknowledged</li> <li>○ Boards and Commissions should be required to comply with FOIA regarding posting of agendas and minutes</li> <li>○ Agendas for Boards and Commissions should be required to include links to all back-up materials</li> <li>○ Public input and comments should apply to Legislative Council and Police Commission</li> <li>○ Would like to separate the Police Commission and Traffic Authority (Note: This is mandate by the General Statutes). If not possible, increase traffic expertise of Police Commission members.</li> <li>○ Further discussion of Chief Operating Officer position</li> <li>○ Include in the Charter a long-term study of the efficacy of moving to a Council/Manager form of government with a report due in advance of the periodic revision of the Charter.</li> </ul> </li> </ul>