

**TOWN OF HAMDEN, CONNECTICUT
CHARTER REVISION COMMISSION
MINUTES OF MEETING**

February 8, 2022

***To view the recording, please click the following link and observe the instructions when/if prompted:** https://us06web.zoom.us/rec/share/B6XyE4y1SR2kVQdp_IpCMAJ0zxB6dqfmosCpmC-COYOpG-BpHzOBDrJ3_Dd5_4TRp.0vYdgRH4xdmKfdrN

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A meeting of the Charter Revision Commission was held on Tuesday, February 8, 2022 via Zoom due to the Covid-19 Pandemic.

1. **Call to Order: 7:03 PM** by Sarah Gallagher, Chair
2. **Roll Call:** taken by Commission Secretary Patricia Vener-Saavedra
Present: Sarah Gallagher, Chair; Frank Dixon, Vice-Chair, Jackie Downing, Jaye Kaye, Y'Isiah Lopes, Laura Santino, Patricia C. Vener - Saavedra, Secretary
Absent: None
3. **Public Comment** – none at this time.
4. **Agenda**
 - Motion to approve the minutes of January 25, 2022: Moved by Laura Santino 2nd: Jaye Kaye with correction of spelling error of mayo to mayor on page 2, 2nd bullet. Jaye Kaye thanked Secretary for good minutes. Vote: passes unanimously
Public Comments - No live public comments at this time.
See written comments here: <https://www.hamden.com/DocumentCenter/View/5383/02-08-2022>

Public Comments for CRC can be sent to CRC2022@hamden.com

- **Testimony of Public Officers**

- Mayor Lauren Garrett - Praised original work and glad that we are working from their initial work. The work proposed for the Finance Commission is already in the Legislative Council purview and this commission could take power away from the LC. The Mayor mentioned that the commission was created to provide guard rails on previous admin and maybe they aren't necessary now. This additional finance board could also draw out the process of budgeting.
- In regards to the proposed Chief Operating Officer/Chief of Staff position, what we have now is suitable. Adding additional requirements and administrative experience would limit the pool and many would not be from Hamden. The mayor's office should have administrative flexibility in who they hire and the people you have working for you should be a reflection of you.

- Suggests that some commissions have not had quorums in years and we need something in charter so there is a process to get rid of people who don't show up.
 - Dixon - asks for follow up on Finance Committee based on public comments reiterating being tired of lack of transparency. The Finance board does not replace Legislative Committee and has no veto or other authority but rather is a resource for advice. Thanks Mayor and Councilor Irvin for joining us. Mayor replies that this present Legislative Council has financial background; their chair is a financial auditor.
 - Vener-Saavedra - Finance board is not a replacement but a resource because the Legislative Council is not always necessarily always going to include a finance expert.
 - Kaye – Agrees with Vener-Saavedra. Finance board is a safeguard.
- **Legislative Council Members**
 - Council Paula Irvin – Thanks the CRC for their effort. Will follow the process.
 - Council Ted Stevens - Would like revision on geographic diversity as written could hamstring on top of all other restrictions. Not sure if each district needs to be represented on all boards and commissions. Maybe a max of 3 from any given district might help effect more equitable representation.
 - Council President Baez – asks the CRC to look at a 4 year mayoral term because it is a paid position. With a two year term, in the election year, there can be a lot of time spent on campaigning instead of mayoral duties.
- **Town Attorney Sue Gruen** - has a list of recommendations for the CRC to consider. She was able to work out many recommendations that are included in the last revisions and would like those to remain. New items are as follows:
 - Footnote 51- Mayor and Council not 4 yrs (in this charter)
 - Section 3-5 B. Need a more defined succession plan. Are vacancies required to be filled? Is the position required to be filled?
 - Section 3-7. Need clarification of local, state and federal process. Does the committee stay the same for local/state process? The process for removal in these circumstances needs to be easier.
 - Section 3-8. Why is an ordinance needed- define in the charter.
 - Section 3-10. This section implies it includes Board/Commission members. The process for removal from Board/Commission should not be onerous. Most often a board or commission member's attendance is the reason for requested removal.
 - Section 4-2 A- This means the members meet the day after being sworn in to office. Consider, at the first regular meeting of the Council the election of officers occurs. Also- it is always asked both for
 - Council and Board/Commission who conducts the elections before a chair/president is elected to run a mtg.
 - Section 4-2 (C) - This section anticipates the Council President will be replaced if there is a resignation. Who serves as Pro Tempore if the PT is serving as President? Not necessarily in this section but if a committee chair and vice-chair are absent or unavailable, who runs a committee mtg?
 - Section 4-3 (C) Clarify public comment. At regular council mtg allow agenda and under the

purview of the council; at special council mtg only agenda; at committee mtgs allow comment on items under the purview of the committee. Consider how to deal with written comments because this is new.

- Section 7-1- Election of officers for commissions defined in the charter or when enabling ordinance is silent. Yearly? Duration of the appointment (i.e., police/fire commission)?
- Section 7-1 (E) dual appointments should also apply to BOE members; (H) removal should not require an ordinance. If a Board/Commission member is absent continuously they should be removed easily. (J) who does this apply to and what does this really mean. It does not entitle a board/commission member to confidential information.
 - Gallagher - would an alternative be by-laws for each commission and board address to the variations needed by each individual board or commissions?
- If board member is absent continuously there should be an easy removal process.
- Required cooperation - each dept head must assist with B or C except for confidential info
- Section 7-2 (C) and (D) there was some confusion over filling a term for someone whose appointment had expired. Clarify that all terms end on December 31 following a Mayoral election.
- Section 8-1 (C) this should not be a source of difficulty. We know if only applies to charter departments and the idea is to be sure the duties and responsibilities outlined in the charter continue to exist.
- Section 10-3 (B) (3) I believe lapsed funds go to the fund balance. Check with finance dept. how this should read.
- Section 10-4 A- There is confusion over who/how to set the mill rate if a council budget is not approved. Is that right?

- **Other Town Officials -**

- Town Clerk Karimah Mickens - agrees with Baez for 4 year terms for Mayor and Town Clerk. The certification requires 2 years of training so it is not cost effective for the town to keep paying for training if the Town Clerk happens to be changed every two years.

- **Public Comment -**

- Sam Julier - 1) process fascinates - would like to see more people spending more time at the meeting and comments should not be at the end. Disagrees with the idea of 4 yr mayor. Stacks the deck against regular citizens.¹
- Dixon - Did all new members get the latest charter? (YES) links are also in agenda.
- Elaine Dove - Disagrees with lack of need of board of finance. This charter is a future oriented document to enhance capability and flexibility for the future. Also thinks 4 yr terms are valuable asset as every other year elections are onerous.

- **Discussion**

- Vener-Saavedra - Is there any research on 4 yr vs 2 yr and Mayor vs Town Manager in towns our size?

¹ **Note:** The record should reflect that Item #3 of the Agenda was entitled "Public Comment". The Chair asked the participants to raise their hands or otherwise note their intent to speak. The Chair repeated her request three times prior to proceeding to Item #4. No members of the public raised their hands to speak. It was only at that point that the Commission moved on the next business item. Following the completion of Item #4 and prior to the completion of other agenda items the Chair opened the floor for additional Public Comment. Two members of the public testified at that time.

- Downing - Recommends going back and looking at the previous Commission's discussions. She further notes that the Commissioners were not reactive to any single administration but rather were there to create a document for the future.
- Dixon - notes that the last Commission had a lot of guests and notes and also suggests we go look at recordings. A list of dates of these recordings can be found below:
2021 Panels were:
 - 1/20/2021: Budget Issues: Panel Discussion General (Including Pensions and Financial Transactions) and Capital Funds: [Agenda Center • Hamden, CT • CivicEngage](#)
 - 2/23/2021: Town Governance Issues Part I: <https://www.hamden.com/AgendaCenter/ViewFile/Minutes/ 02232021-2221>
 - 3/11/2021: Town Governance Issues Part II: <https://www.hamden.com/AgendaCenter/ViewFile/Minutes/ 03022021-2235>
 - 4/14/2021: Role and Responsibility of the Police Commission; Impact of Collective Bargaining Agreements; and Civilian Review: [Agenda Center • Hamden, CT • CivicEngage](#)
- **Approval of Schedule** - Kaye - asks about start time for Saturdays. Santino seconds, Vener-Saavedra moved the motion. Passes unanimously
- **Discussion of Panels:**
The following sessions will have panels:
 - March 1: Form of government (COO/Term)
 - Invite department heads to talk about the COO position
 - Police Commission - We might want to take the commentary out of the later document (the July document) and review it along with the May document that we are starting with.
 - Invite chief and police commission chair
 - Chapter 10: Budget/Finance Committee
- Kaye - re COO position - could we hear from department heads? Mednick replies, yes, at the March 1st meeting.
- Mednick explains the difference between Charter Boards and Commissions and Ordinance boards and Commissions - We are concerned with the former not the latter. Easier to modify Ordinance boards and commissions. Regulatory documents describe what can be changed and how and etc.
- Gallagher - Consider having the police chief and chair of police commission to present.
- Motion to adjourn: Dixon Second: Kaye, Vote: Unanimous.

Motion to adjourn moved by Mr. Dixon, seconded by Mr. Kaye and approved unanimously.

Time adjourned: 8:32 PM

Minutes submitted by Commission Secretary Patricia C Vener-Saavedra