

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

**March 29, 2022**

**\*To view the recording, please click the following link and observe the instructions when/if prompted:**

[https://us06web.zoom.us/rec/play/OICzd8zjI-afs70VPOOEwE0jd1q8x54B6Q8T0JQhYKq6rMqOMYS-DNh-\\_5t-V39VzuxCja74sjcrNVaY.afyGIBArdeGFYHje?continueMode=true](https://us06web.zoom.us/rec/play/OICzd8zjI-afs70VPOOEwE0jd1q8x54B6Q8T0JQhYKq6rMqOMYS-DNh-_5t-V39VzuxCja74sjcrNVaY.afyGIBArdeGFYHje?continueMode=true)

**\*\* 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.**

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A meeting of the Charter Revision Commission was held on Tuesday, March 29, 2022 via Zoom due to the Covid-19 Pandemic.

**1. Call to Order: 7:03 PM**

**2. Roll Call**

Present: Sarah Gallagher, Chair; Frank Dixon, Vice-Chair; Jackie Downing; Jay Kaye; Y'Isiah Lopes; Laura Santino; Patricia C. Vener - Saavedra, Secretary.

**Also in attendance:** Steve Mednick, Counsel to Commission, Jorge Camacho, Yale Law School, Melvin Medina, ACLU; Hamden Police Commissioner Daniel Dunn, Hamden Police Commissioner Frank LaDore; Police Chief John Sullivan

**Approval of Minutes: March 19, 2022 & March 23, 2022** - motion made: Vener-Saavedra, Seconded: Downing - Passed (both sets of minutes in one motion.)

**3. Panel Discussion on Ch. VII, §7-2.D – Police Commission (Background Doc. #6):**

Jorge Camacho from the Yale Law School and Melvin Medina from the ACLU provided their comments and thoughts on the proposed revisions to the Police Commission Language.

**Mel Medina - ACLU International;**

- Commends everyone on the progress made since he last spoke to CRC.
- One key component: policy can be set by Chief going before Commission but also the Police Commission can initiate policy on its own initiative and this solves long standing issue of lack of oversight of Police Departments in general.
- Secondly, regarding complaints: there is a misunderstanding of civil review boards. Often they have limited oversight, no discipline power, etc. The fact that Hamden is (attempting) to do this, is innovative. "Well rounded oversight body." (etc). Many of the powerful positions will depend on collective bargaining not watering the powers of the commission down.

- Public advocacy on behalf of the Police Commission's oversight role is necessary to ensure future contracts keep in mind what Hamden wants to do.

### **Jorge Camacho - Yale Law School**

- Exceptionally strong proposal but any proposal can be well fitting for any community but it's not one-size-fits-all. CRC needs to consider "does this proposal fit our needs." Will both police and residents believe that the CRC is taking their needs/desires seriously?
- People need to understand what the police commission has power to do and what they don't have power to do.
- People need to be given opportunities to understand the processes of this commission.

Mednick - Proposed (future) commission will be comprised of 9 members one from each of the LC districts of the whole town.

### **Questions:**

LaDore – With regard to the new geographic commission membership - what's the timeline?

- Mednick - There will be a need to expand but not until the next election cycle.

LaDore - What about election vs appointment of commissioners?

- Gallagher – The Commission has not addressed this yet.
- Mednick - state statute for communities without a charter requires they must be elected. Else appointing the commission members is fine.

Gallagher asks panelists about best practice in elected versus appointed

- Camacho hasn't had much experience with elected commissions. Some appointed ones can have a sense of patronage which can undermine trust.
- Medina - you have to know the market. Sometimes it depends on how many people want to actually run for office - whatever the office. They would have to fundraise and so forth. But sometimes elections are seen as more transparent. Appointments, however, can be made by Mayor and LC. Also given Hamden's commissioners serve only a 3 year term eases some of these fears. Elections would not take expertise into consideration.

Dunn wonders about the legal responsiveness of requests by commissioners.

- Medina - There are open records law that exists in CT but it's not fast. If your request is urgent you may need to go to Mayor.
- Camacho - sometimes if there is a single entrance for all complaints then that complaint gets sent to more than one place and it can get complex.
- Medina - transparency is key. "Open Records request" It's to a police department's advantage to make this process easy to track. Lack of transparency breeds bad will.
- LaDore - One request was for a lot of info that may not be readily available because of staffing issues.

Enforcement Powers by Charter

- Medina - let's say there's a complaints then the CBA is where enforcement and investigations are handled. Standards outline a grievance process. 95 different ones in CT. Complaint initiates investigation then Chief has some power but then it goes to

separate process sometimes goes to other processes, then maybe a grievance process which can end up at state level. Mednick - right now we have aligned with CBA except on appeals. Hopefully bargaining can address needs

- Kaye - Not keen on using the charter to influence bargaining agreements. In this revision "citizen of the town" was replaced with "civilian" Why? Does this mean any civilian not necessarily from town.
- Mednick - Any civilian should be able to register a complaint. There are no grounds for a civilian to appeal on anything. Kaye is concerned that police union may protest the charter.
- Dunn - Would it be possible to insure co-location of complaints in multiple sites to be more easily inspected?
- Medina thinks it's a good idea. A state law passed a few years ago that allows for that. Also allows for anonymous complaints. Tech makes it easier. Worth discussing with IT dept. Good governance is the goal.

### **Comments from HPD**

- Chief Sullivan, Hamden PD - Main concern was language that is contrary to collective bargaining Someone said they were changing the charter to change the union agreement and Union would have issues with that. Says they want to be transparent. Mentions Dunn's requests and they are complex to get out. 2024 is when collective bargaining agreement is up. We do want to be transparent but there are complaints that are sensitive - eg, investigating an officer without their knowledge.
- Mednick - there's nothing in the draft of the charter that's different from what was in it last year. Only changed things to match CBA. The only other thing (civilain complaints) that would have to be changed via bargaining first. CRC is not bargaining through the charter.
- Kaye - that was his point, that everyone understands that things are not misinterpreted. Residents and cops need to trust each other (wrt reviews and complaints). Could chief weigh in on re: expanding commission to 9?
- Sullivan believes it's fine to have the 9 members. He doesn't care how they are chosen.
- LaDore - Too many people mean it's harder to get things done. Can we consider geographic diversity as "north, central, south" rather than legislative districts.
- Sullivan offers to explain the disciplinary process to individuals.

#### **4. Public Testimony:** There were 2 written comments which can be read here:

<https://www.hamden.com/DocumentCenter/View/5625/03-29-2022>

- Sarah Clark - Addendum to letter - impressed with how many mentions of how important public input is.

**Public Comments for CRC can be sent to: [CRC2022@hamden.com](mailto:CRC2022@hamden.com)**

#### **5. CRC Discussion/Action on Chapter VII – Other Boards and Comm. (Background Doc. #5)**

(Background Doc. #5)

<https://www.hamden.com/DocumentCenter/View/5599/Hamden-2022-Background-Document-503March-23-2022Chapters-VIIExcludes-Police-Commission2022-CRC-Revisions>

<https://www.hamden.com/DocumentCenter/View/5600/Hamden-2022-Background-Document-503-02-RedlineMarch-23-2022Chapters-VIIExcludes-Police-Commission2022-CRC-Revisions>

- Vener-Saavedra – would like to add Arts as a mandated commission. Mandated commissions need to exist. Santino thinks it's fine as a subset of Recreation and doesn't need to be mentioned. Downing agrees that arts commission needs to exist. Gallagher notes it doesn't add any burden to the Town.
- Yisiah asks about the "rights, relations" etc how it relates to existing commissions. We have Human Rights and Relations Commission. (see list)
- Kaye - questions necessity of art (arts and culture) having its own mention
- Vener-Saavedra asserts Art's importance to a healthy local economy given the respectable numbers of money in that industry.
- Vener-Saavedra moves to add Arts and Culture as a required Board or Commission in Hamden; Kaye seconds. It passes unanimously.
- Mednick goes over specific sections.
- Kaye - Geographic Diversity: Could it happen that two people live across the street from each other even though in different districts? Mednick - Yes, it would be up to Mayor and LC to honor the robust intent of the diversity discussed in charter.
- Gallagher wants the clause "no more than two per district." We all agree.
- Downing - Town Clerk responsibility - distributing packet of meetings rules and other trainings. Mednick - states the phrasing as "distributing materials pertinent to the duties of newly appointed board members and commissioners.
- Downing - are we contradicting ourselves by requiring documents 5 days before a meeting and then allowing agenda amendments. Mednick - we addressed that by saying "that in the event something is added to the agenda the public needs to have it in their hands in advance."
- Kaye - possible add to diversity equity and inclusion. Pg 39: Shouldn't TC be involved with liaison so that TC knows when there are vacancies and so forth. We all agree.
- Downing - moves to accept the chapter 7 exclusive of police commission; Vener-Saavedra second. Vote - Passes.

### **Police Commission discussion?**

We discuss logistics and decide to consider Police Commission next time.

**Time adjourned:** 9:01 PM Motion: Santino, Second: Dixon

Next meeting: Wednesday, April 13th at 7:00 PM

Meeting schedule can be viewed here:

<https://www.hamden.com/DocumentCenter/View/5428/Hamden-Charter-Commission-Schedule-and-Subject-Matter>

Minutes submitted by Commission Secretary Patricia C Vener-Saavedra