

**TOWN OF HAMDEN, CONNECTICUT
LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL
MINUTES OF MEETING**

June 29, 2022

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A meeting of the Legislative Council was held on Wednesday, June 29, 2022. This meeting was held electronically, via Zoom, due to the Covid-19 Pandemic. The meeting was called out of recess at 8:14 P.M. by Council President Dominique Baez. The Clerk took the roll followed by the Pledge of Allegiance.

MEMBERS PRESENT:

| | |
|----------------|------------------|
| Dominique Baez | Justin Farmer |
| Paula Irvin | Sarah Gallagher |
| Jeron Alston | Kristen Zaehring |
| Abdul Osmanu | Adrian Webber |
| Laurie Sweet | Ted Stevens |

MEMBERS ABSENT: Marjorie Bonadies; Lesley DeNardis; Katie Kiely; Cory O'Brien; Betty Wetmore

PRESIDING: Dominique Baez, President

ALSO IN ATTENDANCE: Sue Gruen, Town Attorney; Steve Mednick, Counsel

PUBLIC INPUT SESSION: There were 4 speakers and 2 written comments submitted which can be read here: <https://www.hamden.com/DocumentCenter/View/6261/06-29-2022>

(Written comments can be sent to LCpublicinput@hamden.com)

REGULAR AGENDA:

1. Charter Revision Workshop

Chapter V:

§5-6: Creation of Chief Operating Officer

-- Moved by Ms. Gallagher, seconded by Ms. Sweet. DISCUSSION: Ms. Gallagher gave an overview of this section saying it does not change the structure of government in any way. She then went over what would be expected and the qualifications.

Mr. Mednick said he wanted to bring up two things the Town Attorney raised. One is in §5-5 B 2 where they listed a number of department functions and she wonders why we are only naming those functions and he doesn't know but if she wants them taken out he will delete them and that takes out everything after the word "functions". Ms. Gruen stated she just wants to make sure we don't get into labor issues.

Mr. Mednick said the second change suggested is in section 5 just below, and although he's not sure that it's really necessary he agreed that they would put a clause in there that the COO could assist the Mayor and Board of Education and Ms. Gallagher pointed out that it's the Mayor who assigns the CEOs responsibility so that would have to be assigned by the Mayor and so they added a clause that the CEO can play a role but that it's up to the Mayor or the Board of Education to make sure or invite them into playing a role in that function. Ms. Gruen said she wasn't aware of this change made and feels pretty strongly that there's no need for that to be in the Charter, if the Mayor has that authority the Mayor has that authority and she's not sure what having it in the Charter adds to it and in fact thinks it's superfluous in her opinion.

There was then some discussion on how other Towns do this and the duties they give to a COO. There was also discussion on the term and Ms. Gallagher said it's coterminous with the Mayor. Mr. Mednick said they should consider an effective date.

Mr. Stevens asked why this was placed in Chapter 5 and not 8. He also asked about the conflict of interest clause saying he can't find this anywhere else and it seems overly restrictive. Mr. Mednick said it was placed here because it tends to be where coordinators are located if you take a look at other charters. He said the conflict of interest provision he'll take a look at, he thinks it's relatively standard and used in other places. He said you don't want them to be political and you want them full-time for the Town.

There was then some discussion on charter violation. Ms. Baez said she would like to bookmark the idea of repercussions. Ms. Baez then shared on the screen the document the administration sent about the COO position.

Ms. Irvin asked what other Towns have this. Mr. Mednick answered Hartford, New Haven, Bridgeport, Stamford, Stratford, and Darien off the top of his head. He said most of the top 10 Cities have somebody of this stature.

Mr. Farmer asked if we had job descriptions from other Towns saying he's concerned with getting into trouble with CBA's. Mr. Mednick said they can look at various job descriptions if the LC sends this back to the commission.

Ms. Baez said the position seems good but she doesn't think it belongs in the charter and she's a little shaky about the paying for this role in the charter and is leaning towards no to not accept it.

Ms. Gallagher explained some of the commission's thoughts and thinks there are options the CRC could look at to make it more agreeable to all.

Mr. Stevens asked if this position was at will. Mr. Mednick said at will would be serving at the term of the Mayor, this says coterminous and the intent is if the Mayor's not happy they could ask the person to leave.

Mr. Farmer said he thinks they should give a timeline. He said he would really like a job description and then talked about the funding. Mr. Osmanu said he'd be in favor of a few amendments as the financial state is not good, etc. There was then some discussion on vetting the qualifications. Mr. Stevens said he was skeptical and that this is too expensive for his vote. Mr. Farmer suggested sending it back. Ms. Baez said there's not enough direction to send it back.

A roll call vote was taken and it failed with 3 in favor (Farmer) (Gallagher) (Zaehringer) – 7 opposed (Alston) (Irvin) (Osmanu) (Stevens) (Sweet) (Webber) (Baez) – 0 abstentions – 5 absent (Bonadies) (DeNardis) (Kiely) (O'Brien) (Wetmore)

Chapter VII:

§7-1 A (1) Role of Boards & Commissions:

Moved by Ms. Gallagher, seconded by Ms. Baez.

After Ms. Gallagher explained this paragraph a vote was taken and approved unanimously.

§7-1 A (2) Open Meetings:

Moved by Ms. Baez, seconded by Ms. Sweet. DISCUSSION: Ms. Gallagher explained this and the hybrid format saying it was updated to reflect this is better for people to access meetings they may not be able to attend in person. She said there was a lot of public comment on this. Mr. Mednick then too explained this. There was discussion on the last sentence which some said was confusing.

Ms. Baez reminded them of one of the previous public input letters and she read it.

Ms. Baez then moved a motion to change the wording and add in the last sentence of the paragraph to enable all Boards and Commissions to engage in in person meetings, as well as remote and/or hybrid interactions so that all possible means a participation are provided for every meeting. The motion was seconded by Ms. Zaehringer and Mr. Farmer.

After some concerns Mr. Mednick said they shouldn't be drafting on the fly and recommended they send it back with the motion language suggested. He asked if this was the language from Diane Hoffman. Ms. Baez said yes. Ms. Zaehringer said she'd be in favor of it going back to the CRC for wordsmithing of this language. Ms. Baez and Mr. Farmer said they are okay with this as suggested language. Ms. Baez took the vote and it passed unanimously.

PUBLIC INPUT: There was 1 speaker

There being no further business Ms. Baez recessed the meeting at 10:05 P.M.

Respectfully submitted,

Kim Renta
Clerk of the Council