

TOWN OF HAMDEN, CONNECTICUT

CHARTER REVISION COMMISSION

MINUTES OF MEETING

May 4, 2021

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

https://zoom.us/rec/share/InvOfXKiUPYXObE1vlr-cECTw-eOTk0Psu7JT0KnXEr03fDSm7vIWrfCB_Lq72B6.BrMsju0fjYexEds

**** If prompted for a password, enter: 8Rt?\$rnL**

***** 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**

Then, review the recording by downloading the digital version of these minutes and following the instructions above.

A meeting of the Charter Revision Commission was held on Tuesday, May 4, 2021 via Zoom due to the Covid-19 Pandemic. The meeting was called to order at 7:00 P.M. by the Chair, Mr. Dixon and roll call was taken.

MEMBERS PRESENT: Frank Dixon, Chair, Jackie Downing; Vice-Chair, Lamond Battle, Secretary; Nancy Olson; Myron Hul; Sarah Gallagher; Jay Kaye; Joshua Sprague Oliveira; Todd Berton; Marnie Hebron; Jeff Cohen; Tom Figlar; Frank LaDore

MEMBERS ABSENT: Tiffany Artis-Wilson; Todd Moler

ALSO IN ATTENDANCE: Steve Mednick, Counsel; Evalise Ribiero, Chair of New Haven Police Commission

Mr. Dixon opened the meeting and referred to Mr. Kaye. Mr. Kaye noted that they were waiting for the speakers to join the meeting. Mr. Kaye asked Mr. Mednick if there was any relevant discussion on Action Item 8. Mr. Mednick said he would review some changes he had worked on today. It was not posted 24 hours before this meeting, so it is informational and not an Action Item. Mr. Mednick reviewed language pertaining to the Traffic Authority coming under The Police Commission according to State Law. Mr. Mednick stated his concern about locking into the Charter the “Rule of Three” in the Section on Personnel. His concern was that if the commission conducted an aggressive recruitment drive they could very well secure more alternative candidates who finish in the top 5 or top 7. He said he was adding language: “The appointments and promotions have to be made in accordance with the certification rule governing the selection of candidates on any applicable merit system eligibility list promulgated under Civil Service rules and regulations”. He said he also indicated in both places, that at the time of Charter amendment, the Rule of Three is the rule in effect, so we don’t change anything, we simply change the language so that if the Civil Service Commission and Police Commission make a decision that is beneficial to recruitment, we don’t have to go through a Charter Revision. There was a brief discussion of the Rule of Three and also the possibility of adding the Hamden Civilian Police Academy course as a pre-requisite for Police commissioners.

The speakers were not present, so Mr. Kaye looked at public comment. No public comment.

There was more discussion on the Informational Item as the speakers were awaited.

Mr. Dixon introduced speaker Evelise Ribiero, Chair of the New Haven Police Commission. Ms. Ribiero said she was appointed to the New Haven Civilian Review Board (CRB), in 2003 by Mayor John DeStefano, where she served for two years before Mayor DeStefano appointed her to the Police Commission in 2005. Upon joining the Police commission she served as a liaison to the CRB. Ms. Ribiero said Police commissioner terms in New Haven are three years and they can serve up to three terms by Charter. She was off of the Police Commission for one year after which she was re-appointed by Mayor Harp. Ms. Ribiero offered to take questions.

Mr. Mednick asked for Ms. Ribiero to share her opinions on the proposal which Charter Commission has been working on. Ms. Ribiero said it is very comprehensive and has a lot more in it and a lot more responsibilities listed than what is in the New Haven Charter which she said lists what the Board should consist of and basic responsibilities. She said they also have Board and Commission Rules of Order and by-laws which was recently revised. Many of their responsibilities are in the by-laws and not in the Charter. Ms. Ribiero indicated the proposal is very detailed with a lot of responsibilities and perhaps thought should be given to whether they want the Police Commission to be so involved in the day to day activities, or be oversight. She made note of wording regarding budget review, they are proposing to review and comment on budget before it is submitted to the Mayor. She said they do not do that in New Haven. The New Haven Board of Alders approves City Budget. They also have a Finance Sub-committee which reviews the budget monthly with the Chief.

Ms. Gallagher asked Ms. Ribiero which she thinks is more effective for the Police Commission: day to day involvement or, oversight function and, which role she would recommend. Ms. Ribiero said she would recommend more of an oversight, but, still be able to get “in the weeds” on some things. Ms. Ribiero said she has weekly meetings with the Chief. She explained she does get phone calls on detailed day to day issues, which she will become involved with as Chair. She does not expect the commissioners to do so, but they are not prohibited from calling the Chief or Assistant Chief with questions about day to day matters. They are not involved in certain decision making, but they should be knowledgeable enough with an ear to the community to convey concerns to the Police Chief and make recommendations and suggest adjustments. Ms. Gallagher asked if she had any recommendations on the oversight function. Ms. Ribiero said she would send the New Haven by-laws. She said they have four Sub-committees: **Finance**, provides oversight for the budget, they look at overtime analysis on a regular basis, monitor budget to actuals, **Efficiency** provides oversight regarding management of the Department and General Orders, they approve General Orders, **Recruitment and Selection** Committee, assists and works with the staff regarding the process of reviewing and making decision to qualify or disqualify recruits and for consistency, objectivity and fairness- she said this committee is particularly helpful if the Department is recommending to not hire someone, this committee reviews and makes sure this recommendation is being made for the right reasons. Ms. Ribiero said they recently did General Orders regarding new hires, reinstatements, and hires for laterals to help streamline the process.

Ms. Ribiero said regarding discipline, anything over 15 days must go to the Police Commission.

Mr. Kaye asked, how did having a liaison to the Police Commission work out and does she recommend it? Ms. Said yes, she thought it was important, an important relationship and she is disappointed it was not reinstated in their revised Charter. She was able to speak with members of the CRB and bring back information to the Police Commission. Although separate boards they were looking at the same things. Ms. Ribiero said, in her opinion, Police Commission is about- you are there to support the Police Department, enforce Police accountability and bridge the gap with the community. Mr. Kaye asked if they have a line item in the budget for the Police Commission. She said no. Mr. Dixon asked, what if you need to hire an outside consultant? She said that has not occurred while she has been with the Commission. She said one

thing they will be doing now is Police Commissioner training. The Board of Aldermen passed an Ordinance to ensure that all new Commissioners get training. It being designed. It mandates certain things and other things which are not mandated are under discussion. The training will be paid for by the Department.

Mr. Cohen asked Ms. Ribiero about the Recruitment and Selection Committee. The applicants are placed on a Civil Service List in rank order. Depending on how many spots available in class they will come to the Board to make conditional offers, which begins the background check process, psychological test, polygraph test. The Board will approve conditional offers. If anything is discovered in the background check, they will bring it to the Board for removal, such as not being truthful on a questionnaire or failing the polygraph or psychological or something drug related in the background. The applicants are given the opportunity to go before the Board for review before they are removed from the list. Very rarely does the Board disagree with the Department in these cases.

Mr. Cohen asked Ms. Ribiero if there is anything they use in the vetting process that they find to be extremely helpful. She said yes, as of last year, they are using a background matrix. There may be one concern for an applicant, or more than one it is helpful for the investigators in rating the concern or concerns, some major, some minor and it is useful for the Board to have this in front of them. They may look at developing a point system with this. Ms. Ribiero added that she personally found it useful to read the psychological tests in order to understand the types of questions applicants are being asked. They will also sometimes do spot checks on files to make sure there is nothing that should be brought to them which is not.

Mr. Cohen asked about the Efficiency committee. Ms. Ribiero said it is to provide oversight of management. It loosely defines policy and General Orders. She would also like to reinstate Awards for Officers. She will be seeking to change the name of this committee.

Ms. Hebron asked Ms. Ribiero to talk about New Haven's CRB, and would she recommend a CRB for Hamden. Ms. Ribiero said she would be able to speak from her past involvement and on the intent of CRB. There is a new CRB just forming their procedures. When she was on CRB, They had an office in City Hall with a staff person in the Chief Administrators Office taking complaints. The public was aware that the staff person would visit the management teams around the city in the Police districts. There was a representative from each management team on the CRB in addition to the Mayoral appointee. When a complaint was filed with Internal affairs, (IA), or just with the CRB, in which case it would turn into an IA investigation. Once IA completed their investigation, the CRB reviewed their file to make sure all was done correctly. The liaison, which she was at the time, would make sure the same files were seen by all. If there was discipline involved and it was less than fifteen days, CRB would not know about it. They received an IA report listing the monthly complaints indicating if it resulted in discipline, or was unfounded, or required mediation. If the CRB saw anything in the file which they thought they should make a recommendation to the Chief about, they would do so. She believes it is good for a/the community to know there is a Board looking at Police Accountability, and it composed of community members-she emphasized from all parts of a town or city. Ms. Hebron asked if the Board of Alders, Police Commission or CRB have subpoena power. Ms. Ribiero said she thinks the Board of Alders may, and there has been discussion of the CRB having subpoena power, not the Police Commission. Mr. Mednick said, the Board of Alders does not have subpoena power nor the Police commission, if a body did, it would be the CRB, by State Statute.

Mr. LaDore asked how many commissioners they have and how do they represent the whole city. Ms. Ribiero said six appointed by the Mayor by Party Affiliation with a concern to try to cover the whole city. She indicated there has been diversity in gender and race and ethnicity and demographics. She added, they have two members who are experts in Police Accountability. Mr. Ladore asked about any training and she said she would send info. She also invited the Charter Commissioners to attend any of their meetings.

Mr. Hul asked what challenges did they have from the CRB and how are they addressed. Ms. Ribiero indicated that one challenge was sometimes CRB members not understanding IA investigation procedures and at times finding something, unfounded. At times, this was due to a complaint being filed and when the person is contacted to follow through they do not cooperate. So just clarifying the process of how “Unfounded” happens. They would have IA folks come to the CRB and explain. Mr. Hul asked about funding for a third party review, did they ever need it and not have it. Ms. Robiero said she did not recall this need arising. She said she would ask her Chief how this would be handled and convey to us. Ms. Ribiero thanked the group and left the meeting.

At this time Mr. Dixon asked for Public comment. There was none.

Ms. Olson referenced Training for the Police Commission and the wording for it in the paragraph, pointing out that it indicates that immediately upon becoming a Commissioner they were to take training. She said training is not always immediately available. She suggested this be changed to “as soon as possible”.

There was a brief discussion. The language was changed to “Training shall occur within six months or when practically available”.

Mr. LaDore motioned to adjourn. Mr. Cohen seconded. The meeting adjourned at approximately 9:28 PM.

This meeting had no clerk. Meeting starting/ending times and attendance were best guessed while viewing the video.

Discussion summary typed while viewing the video and submitted by Rose Lion, Secretary to the Legislative Council

Ms. Renta, Legislative Council Administrator/Clerk reviewed the minutes and added any additions and the video link before filing.