

TOWN OF HAMDEN, CONNECTICUT

CHARTER REVISION COMMISSION

MINUTES OF MEETING

May 6, 2021

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https://zoom.us/rec/share/Hbl6LY2875UrNoHm-xkt1LSv7XmKkMsZpxUp_Iun5YvNQBo_-HHbuoAPB5dA_8TU.NgHCaPkLNdkVu-M9

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A meeting of the Charter Revision Commission was held on Thursday, May 6, 2021 via Zoom due to the Covid-19 Pandemic. The meeting was called to order at 6:30 P.M. by the Chair, Mr. Dixon and roll call was taken.

MEMBERS PRESENT: Frank Dixon, Chair; Jackie Downing, Vice-Chair; Frank LaDore; Jeffrey Cohen; Nancy Olson; Sarah Gallagher; Jay Kaye; Todd Berton; Marnie Hebron; Tom Figlar

MEMBERS ABSENT: Tiffany Artis-Wilson, Todd Moler; Myron Hul; Joshua Sprague-Oliveira; Lamond Battle, Secretary

ALSO IN ATTENDANCE: Steve Mednick, Counsel; Janis Glover, Library Board Chair; Philip Kuchuck, Library Board Member; Melissa Canham-Clyne, Library Director

Mr. Dixon opened the meeting. He referred to Mr. Mednick. Mr. Mednick began with Sub-set J, the Library section of Boards and Commissions. He said the major changes being worked on were going to a nine member board as requested by the Library Board and the intention to modify the Charter so the Library Director will be hired/appointed by the Mayor as are other Department Heads. Mr. Mednick said these are the two substantive changes. Mr. Mednick introduced Jan Glover, Chair of the Library Board. Ms. Glover said she will be speaking about the impact these changes will have on the Library System and the Board and also review accomplishments of the Director and the Board in recent years. Ms. Glover said there are 100 municipal libraries in Connecticut and over half have governing boards with ability to appoint Directors and establish policies. She said the impact of moving hiring authority to the Mayor and Personnel Department is connected to - that a Board which is appointing, is preserving the integrity of the second most important educational institution in the Town. She said this Board works very hard to follow the American Library Association Bill of Rights and is non-partisan. She said their thorough knowledge of and participation in strategic planning and budgeting gives the Board a unique perspective in the recruitment and selection of the Library Director who they will recommend to the Mayor for appointment, and which he sends to Council. She continued, their five member Board all come from different parts of town and they serve all areas in the Town. They requested going to a nine member Board in order to even better represent all parts of Town. When the Board reviews Library Directors, they are cognizant and look for qualifications that match and extend beyond their vision of what the Board has outlined and what the

Town is looking for from the Library based on an annual community needs assessment. They work in close partnership with the Director. The Director-Board relationship is a partnership for the purpose of maintaining the Hamden Public Library, a highly important and trusted organization. They work together to enhance the development of the Hamden Public Library. An annual evaluation is conducted in June of both the Library Director and the Board. Ms. Glover said one issue they see with moving the hiring authority to the Mayor is it will take longer to develop very important relationship with the Director, a person they will be overseeing, having to work with closely and evaluate. Ms. Glover said they are in favor of changing to a nine member Board and also of term limits. They will lose an experienced member and gain five neophytes. This could have an unsettling effect on the Board and Director for the next few years, however they are in favor of it. They are not in favor of moving the hiring authority to the Mayor and Personnel. Ms. Glover said if the Charter Commission is committed to making this change, they truly urge them to do it after Melissa's tenure. This Board hired Melissa with a set of rules and expectations and it is not fair to change them on her midstream. At this point, Mr. Mednick asked Ms. Glover to clarify whether he heard correctly that she said they "recommend to the Mayor to appoint" and send to Council. She said yes, they make the recommendation and it goes to the Mayor to appoint and to Council for approval. Mr. Mednick pointed out that this will most likely allow them to retain their current system since it is the Mayor who is actually making the appointment and this brings them in line with the normal appointing process.

Next, Library Director Ms. Canham-Clyne spoke. She described a management flow chart she created in which the Mayor and Town Government are at the top because the Library Board is appointed and approved by the Mayor and the Council. Both the Town Government and The Library Board are her Boss(es). She provided some historical data on libraries and the Hamden Public Library.

Mr. Kaye asked about the process of termination of Directors. Ms. Glover said they have always been lucky with their hires and knows of no time when they terminated. Mr. Mednick said those procedures would be in the Charter for classified and non-classified public employees. Mr. Mednick asked Ms. Canham-Clyne about union/non-union employees. She said she is the only non-union employee in the Library. Library staff is hired by Civil Service/Personnel with participation by the Library Director in the interviews. Ms. Downing asked re: the Board going to nine with new members, is there something they would like the Charter Commission to put in pertaining to new commissioners receiving some form of training. Ms. Glover replied that is very important and they can draft language for the Charter Commission to work from. Brief discussion followed.

Ms. Canham-Clyne offered a brief description of Public Library historical guidelines and values which commit to keeping libraries non-partisan and protect libraries from political atmosphere. As a country, we have made sure libraries are non-partisan institutions. She pointed out that they are the second educational institution in town. They have the responsibility of addressing literacy, not in just the traditional sense, but they have at least nine literacies which they need to help people develop skills in including, financial, health and cultural. It is about more than recreational reading. It is about developing appreciative inquiry at every level.

Mr. Mednick asked Ms. Canham-Clyne if when she was appointed, was there a time frame or was it for an indeterminate period of time. She answered it was for an indeterminate period of time with regular evaluations which go into her employee file in Personnel. Mr. Mednick said you essentially serve at the will of the Board.

Ms. Olson asked if the Library has an endowment. Ms. Canham-Clyne said no but she is working toward that and hopeful it will have one before she leaves. She said they do have a gift fund. She pointed out how the utilization of this gift fund recently enabled an accomplishment, something which would have cost the

Town seven to ten thousand dollars to do. The Library expanded and re-networked their computer system so it is now socially distanced. She said that is one of the many ways they are utilizing donor money. Another way now is to bring improvements to the Brundage Branch.

There was a brief discussion clarifying language in the Charter regarding Library personnel. Mr. Kaye asked if using the word “recommending” for the hire as well as the termination was appropriate. Mr. Mednick said yes. There was more brief discussion on clarification of language regarding termination/removal.

The speakers said thank you and left.

There was a brief discussion of language regarding Library Director: The Library Board recommends, the Mayor appoints, the Legislative Council approves.

Next, Mr. Mednick reviewed language pertaining to term limits related to a possible problem with people’s terms ending and losing commissioners. Mr. Dixon said that problem would be related to clear lack of outreach. Mr. Mednick said the concern was for institutional knowledge and he thinks the Boards themselves should engage in outreach. The commissions- commissioners, would be a good source for outreach. There was a discussion of term limits.

Next, Mr Dixon went to Agenda Item #4, Action Item #7. Mr. Mednick discussed the topic of nine district –nine member boards. He displayed on the screen: Representation by Legislative Council District. “In furtherance of the objective to ensure fair and diverse representation the Legislative Council may by Ordinance modify the composition of any Board or Commission established under this Charter or by Ordinance in order to implement representation by Legislative Council District”. Mr. Mednick indicate in lieu of the proposal to go through a process of trying to make a series of commissions with Council based districts and in the interest of time, it makes sense to give the Legislative Council this The Library Board authority. The Library Board and Police Commission were changed for specific reasons. If people want other commissions to change to nine, this can be indicated to the Council. The Council can modify a Board or Commission.

Next, there was a discussion of a transitional year in the term limits to ensure institutional knowledge. Mr. Mednick will add language for this. Mr. Mednick will check with the Town Attorney on this and with the Mayor’s office to learn how many years some commissioners have been serving.

Next, Mr. Mednick displayed the section Geographical Areas of the Town. “Hamden is committed to ensuring fair representation of all voting districts on local Boards and Commissions. The Boards and Commissions of the Town include balanced representation from throughout the Town. Accordingly, no Board or Commission should be composed of members from the same Legislative Council district or a single portion of the Town”. After a brief discussion, Ms. Downing said she would work on language for the next meeting.

Next, Mr. Mednick went to Section K, Administration of Boards and Commissions: The Role of the Town Clerk. Mr. Mednick said he discussed this with the Town Clerk and she is meeting with the Mayor’s office tomorrow to discuss this section and responsibilities. He said he also pointed out the need for more outreach. He asked them to come back with clear delineation of responsibilities which meet the principles of this Charter. He said he conveyed that one person needs to be designated in the Mayor’s office for tracking Boards and Commissions.

Mr. LaDore asked about wording in the section “Restrictions” ...with regard to Finance, Ethics, Police Commission and Civil Service. He asked if it means a member of a Town Committee, Republican or

Democrat cannot serve on a Commission and if so for what reason. There was discussion and it was clarified the wording pertains only to “Officers” in a political party. The group agreed to reduce the three year restriction for waiting to serve after a term limit, to two years.

Next, the Diversity, Equity and Inclusion Section was referenced. Ms. Gallagher indicate she heard from the Human Rights and Relations Commission that they are reviewing the language especially about a commission in the Town being designated as a CHRO, and they may submit comment on this.

Mr. Dixon referenced Section 7-2C, Police Commission. Ms. Gallagher requested language defining the role of the Police Commission as existing to support an accountable Police Department and who are they accountable to, the citizens of Hamden.

Mr. Berton asked in regard to Section 7-2C, if where it reads “to ensure the safety and security of the citizens of Hamden, they should add “and the Police Officers”. There was discussion. The group decided to revise language in a different sentence the paragraph to “ The Department ensures adequate resources, training and utilizes Best Practices across the entire Department to ensure the safety of Police Officers and employees”.

There was a brief review of the Public Comment Section. and the Information and Transparency Section.

There was a discussion of Section III, Civilian Review and Outreach. Mr. Mednick answered questions about Civilian Review Boards and subpoena authority. We do not have a CRB, but if the Legislative Council created one by designating the Police Commission as the CRB, they would have subpoena authority.

Mr. Mednick referenced the section on Recruitment with regard to previous discussion of adding residency as part of an incentive system. There is question as to whether this is legally permissible. He will add wording-“and if legally permissible”.

Mr. Mednick initiated discussion on the question of the Police Commission having its own budget as a percentage of the PD budget. He suggested they decide on this soon and if so, what percentage. There was robust discussion. Mr. Mednick said we should look at the PD budget numbers and reviewed the reason why this was proposed. It is very important that they have funds in order to perform their work. If they needed an outside consultant or had to perform an investigation, they should not have to ask for money from other funds or departments.

With regard to Qualifications, Mr. Mednick said he added in having someone with background in Traffic. The Police Commission runs the Traffic Authority according to State Statute and the bulk of the work is Traffic. A commissioner with such background would not be there as a professional, but to bring their knowledge and frame of reference.

There was a brief review of the Section on Best Practices and Standards.

There was a discussion of the Charter preamble. Ms. Downing and Ms. Olson shared some Hamden historical information they had researched. There was discussion as to whether a/the Preamble should include history. Various opinions were expressed. Ms. Downing said she would draft language acknowledging the Quinnipiac people and the Ecclesiastical Society for review.

Mr. Dixon requested a motion to adjourn. Moved by Mr. LaDore, seconded by Ms. Hebron and the meeting adjourned at approximately 10:00 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.