

CHARTER REVISION COMMISSION
Town of Wallingford

Regular Meeting
November 24, 2008

A Regular Meeting of the Wallingford Charter Revision Commission was held on Monday, November 24, 2008, at the Wallingford Town Hall, Room 315, Wallingford, Connecticut.

Seated from the Commission was Jeffrey Knickerbocker – Chairman, Suzanne Wright – Vice Chair, Debbie Gross, Kate Wall, Ray Lilley, Robert Applegate, Vincent Cervoni, and Recording Secretary Sonja Vining

Absent: Ray Rys and Hank Toman

Chairman Knickerbocker called the meeting to order at 7:00 p.m.

1. PUBLIC COMMENT:

Geno Zandri, 9 Balsam Ridge Circle, wanted to discuss the Planning & Zoning Commission and the Zoning Board of Appeals. He feels that these two boards have the most impact on the day-to-day lives of the residents of Wallingford. Mr. Zandri believes that the people who sit on these two boards should be elected not appointed.

Craig Fishbein, 179 Grieb Road, does not believe that the zoning boards should be elected. He would like to see these meetings televised because there are such important issues discussed. Mr. Fishbein read a statement that discussed the 1959 – 1961 charter revision committee meeting minutes. He discussed the mayoral veto issue. Mr. Fishbein feels that whenever possible politics should be left out of it, the government serves all of the people not just those of a particular party. He stated that if you take government seriously the seven-vote requirement is necessary. Mr. Fishbein questioned why the Mayor was not allowed to choose a member to serve on the current Charter Revision Commission. He finished by stating that he would like to see the seven-vote requirement remain in place. Mr. Fishbein pointed out that the Charter does not provide for an allegation against the Council for a violation of the Charter. He submitted for the record a copy of the Minutes of the November 17, 1960 Charter Revision Commission meeting. (Attachment I)

Jason Villani, 47 Parker Farms Road, feels it is essential to have ordinances, minutes and as much information as possible on the town web page. He feels that the aspect of term limits is no different than minority representation. Mr. Villani stated that the strong mayor form of government is for big cities and is not meant for a town the size of Wallingford. He feels that there needs to be a balance of powers.

Steve Knight, 289 Ivy Street, stated that this Commission is being asked to consider a drastic shift in the balance of power. He believes that the system should remain as it is today regarding the veto issue.

Chairman Knickerbocker read into the record emails from Timothy Cronin (Attachment II) and Linda Birmingham (Attachment III).

2. APPROVAL OF MINUTES:

November 10, 2008 - Regular Meeting

Ms. Wall made a motion to approve the Minutes of the November 10, 2008 – Regular Meeting. The motion was seconded by Mr. Applegate and passed.

3. REPORT BACK ON LEGAL QUESTIONS:

No report was made at this time.

4. MAYORAL VETO

There was discussion about how important this issue is and it was decided that the issue would be tabled until all Commission members were present.

LILLEY: **MOTION TO POSTPONE DISCUSSION OF THE MAYOR VETO UNTIL ALL COMMISSION MEMBERS ARE PRESENT.**

WALL: **SECOND**

VOTE: **UNANIMOUS**

5. LENGTH OF TERMS:

There was some discussion about term lengths for the BOE. Ms. Wall explained the petition system used in Berlin and discussed the three-year term used. There was some discussion about why it is sometimes difficult to get people interested in serving on the BOE and if the petition system would help or hurt participation. The Commission would like to hear from BOE members to get their thoughts on the issue. There was some feeling that the time commitment of the meetings could be a factor in why there is not more interest in the BOE and if the term is lengthened to three years will that create more issues in that people do not want to commit for that length of time.

There was some discussion about changing the length of term for the Council Members to four. The Commission generally feels that the Council should stay at two-year terms.

6. ADDITIONAL PAGES, TIME PERMITTING:

CHAPTER VI. DEPARTMENT OF LAW

Chairman Knickerbocker had some questions for Attorney Small who was not able to make the meeting so they skipped this chapter at this time.

CHAPTER VII. DEPARTMENT OF FINANCE

Section 4. Purchasing Agent

There was discussion about increasing or eliminating the amount of \$2,000 mentioned in line 59. Chairman Knickerbocker stated that it has been interpreted that insurance does not go out to bid. Insurance is a financial service and financial services are not a part of purchasing. Attorney Small would be asked to talk on this issue. There was discussion about the Risk Manager being in charge of handling insurance. The Commission was unclear about how the insurance issue is currently handled and by whom. The Members would like to have a better understanding of the current system before making any decisions. Chairman Knickerbocker will send a letter to the Mayor inviting him to attend a meeting and asking for input from department heads.

CERVONI: **MOTION TO REVISE CHAPTER VII, SECTION 4, LINE 58 & 59 TO READ “COMMODITY OR SERVICE OVER A PERIOD OF TIME INVOLVES EXPENDITURES IN A LIMIT THAT SHALL BE DETERMINED BY ORDINANCE OR THAT SHALL BE DETERMINED BY THE TOWN COUNCIL.” (DELETING – “OF TWO THOUSAND DOLLARS (\$2,000) OR MORE,”)**

WALL: **SECOND**

VOTE: **UNANIMOUS**

Some other issues were discussed but no further changes are to be made until the Commission gets input from the department head or the Mayor.

CHAPTER VIII. DEPARTMENT OF PUBLIC WORKS

There was some question if surveying, trash collection, and the building inspector belong in this section. After some discussion the Commission decided once again that it needs further input from the department before any changes can be made.

There was a question as to whether or not there was an organization chart for the Town of Wallingford showing who reports to whom. It was thought that it would be included in the annual report but there was question as to if a report is done annually. Attorney Small will be asked for input regarding the annual report.

There was a question regarding a dog warden vs. an animal control officer. Attorney Small will be asked to clarify.

The issue of appointing the Fire Marshall came up. There was some belief that the Fire Marshall should report to the Fire Department Chief. The Fire Department Chief then reports directly to the Mayor.

7. ADJOURNMENT:

Mr. Cervoni made a motion to adjourn. The motion was seconded by Mr. Applegate and passed. Meeting adjourned at approximately 8:50 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Sonja Vining
Recording Secretary
Town of Wallingford
Charter Revision Commission
November 24, 2008

