

TOWN OF EAST WINDSOR CHARTER REVISION COMMISSION

**Regular Meeting
Monday, December 10, 2018
Scout Hall, 28 Abbe Road, East Windsor, CT.**

Commission Members

Co-Chairman: John Matthews, Keith Yagaloff

Members: Don Arcari, Cher Balch, Betsy Burns, William Loos, John Mazza,
Rachel Safford, Charlie Szymanski, Bonnie Yosky

MEETING MINUTES

**** These Minutes are not official until approved at a subsequent meeting****

1. TIME AND PLACE OF MEETING:

Co-Chairman Matthews called the Meeting to Order at 7:04 p.m. in Meeting Room 2, Scout Hall, 28 Abbe Road, East Windsor, CT.

2. ATTENDANCE:

Present: John Matthews, Co-Chairman; Don Arcari; Betsy Burns; William Loos; John Mazza; Rachel Safford; Charlie Szymanski; and Bonnie Yosky

Absent: Cher Balch, and Keith Yagaloff.

GUESTS: **Warehouse Point Fire District:** James Barton, Chief; Rich Austin, Assistant Chief/Fire Marshal; Deb Nordell, President, Woman's Auxiliary; James Stremper, unidentified individual, Andy Hoffman.

Press: Anthony Branciforte, Journal Inquirer.

3. AGENDA APPROVAL/ADDED AGENDA ITEMS:

MOTION: To APPROVE the Agenda as presented.

Loos moved/Yosky seconded/DISCUSSION: None.

VOTE: In Favor: Unanimous (Matthews/Arcari/Burns/Loos/
Mazza/Safford/Szymanski/Yosky)

4. APPROVAL OF MEETING MINUTES/A. Minutes of November 12, 2018:

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MOTION: To APPROVE the Minutes of the Charter Revision Commission dated November 12, 2018 as presented.

Yosky moved/Loos seconded/**DISCUSSION:** None

VOTE: In Favor: Matthews/Arcari/Burns/Loos/Mazza/
Safford/Szymanski/Yosky)

APPROVAL OF MEETING MINUTES/A. Minutes of November 26, 2018:

MOTION: To ACCEPT the Minutes of the Charter Revision Commission dated November 26, 2018 as presented.

Yosky moved/Loos seconded/

VOTE: In Favor: Matthews/Arcari/Loos/Mazza/Szymanski/Yosky
Opposed: No one
Abstained: Burns/Safford

5. **PUBLIC PARTICIPATION:** *The public is encouraged to provide their thoughts as succinctly as possible. CRC members will not comment on the merits of an idea at this meeting, but may ask questions to clarify the proposal. A time limit may be imposed.*

Andy Hoffman: Mr. Hoffman reported that he spoke to Co-Chairman Matthews about contacting Quinnipiac Polling Institute after the recent Board of Selectmen's Meeting at which Ms. Safford and Mr. Matthews presented the survey results. Mr. Hoffman suggested his intent was to find out how valid the solicitation was. Mr. Hoffman indicated his questions were:

- 1) The Charter Revision Commission survey went out to 6,000 households, 300 responses was received; was that a significant number? The accuracy rate would be plus or minus 5%, which isn't bad.
- 2) What's the methodology for getting a random sample? The survey was sent to 6,000 households; Mr. Hoffman suggested you can't get more random than that, but, as Ms. Safford and Mr. Matthews pointed out it's difficult to define the content of that sampling.
- 3) Would someone from Quinnipiac be willing to talk to the Charter Revision Commission on how to improve the survey or what the significance of the solicitation was?

Mr. Hoffman indicated he would continue to pursue his questions with Quinnipiac if the Commission concurs.

Mr. Hoffman indicated there's a term – intuitive significance - associated with polls; it's when the number is so large compared to the other answers that it does have significance. He'll discuss with Quinnipiac if that term still has relevance. As an example, with regard to the survey question regarding *if people were satisfied with the level of economic*

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development people were NOT satisfied at a rate of 3 to 1. The same situation occurred with the question about line item voting on the budget, people preferred the line item approach at a level of 4 to 1.

Mr. Hoffman indicated he also called the Connecticut Attorney General's Office and the Office of Policy and Management to ask if it was legal to have a vote on line items. The Office of Policy and Management thought it was legal as there's nothing on the books against it. They suggested the CRC contact the Town Counsel with this question. Mr. Hoffman cited Bob DeCrescenzo is a Town Attorney; he is also the President of the Connecticut Bar Association and is a Professor at UCONN. Co-Chairman Matthews indicated he'll speak on this subject later in the meeting.

Discussion followed regarding the response to the survey. The Commission reviewed the timeline for availability of the survey. The survey was initially available online about three weeks prior to the response deadline of November 20th; subsequently paper copies were mailed to households on November 13th which allowed only a week to respond by November 20th. Co-Chairman Matthews indicated the timing was predicated on the December 6th presentation to the Board of Selectmen; he felt a fault of the Commission was pursuing an aggressive response schedule. Co-Chairman Matthews was disappointed with the 3% response rate. He requested Mr. Hoffman ask if Quinnipiac would have a suggestion to improve the response rate.

Jim Stremper, 221 North Road: Mr. Stremper indicated he enjoyed the Board of Selectmen Meeting. He suggested it was a good survey but he couldn't bring himself to fill it out; it's a lack of faith that these proposals will happen. Mr. Stremper suggested the Commission did a good job on the survey.

Regarding the job descriptions and accountability of the proposed positions to assist with the everyday function of government, Mr. Stremper felt we can't move forward until we know what we're doing now; everyone needs something called the law to fall back on. Mr. Stremper indicated he's interested in ***a Town Administrator***; he suggested a committee should be chosen to hire this person; there's a procedure to follow. Co-Chairman Matthews cited the Board of Selectmen would be the committee. Mr. Stremper cited he didn't know the qualifications of the Board members; Co-Chairman Matthews questioned if that wouldn't have been a consideration when voting for the Board? Mr. Stremper reiterated he would go forward with a Town Administrator, but wouldn't do much else with the Charter at this point.

Mr. Stremper spoke of his experience as a partner in Fleetmasters, Inc., a service provider for commercial trucks and fire and emergency apparatus.

Mr. Stremper reported he's been waiting for three months on a Zoning Permit; he questioned if the "boss" follows up on that? Co-Chairman Matthews noted the Commission has received a lot of comments about a Town Administrator. He also noted Co-Chairman Yagaloff had said there are several things in the current Charter that aren't being done, and there are no consequences for not doing something. Co-Chairman

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Matthews noted that if a department wants a budget increase the Charter calls for a statement of support and there are no consequences if that information isn't provided. Co-Chairman Matthews suggested the CRC is considering not moving a department budget forward if the support document isn't received.

Co-Chairman Matthews noted the CRC's comments are recommendations which must be approved by the voters in November, 2019. He noted the Commission will be bringing on Mr. DeCrescenzo in early 2019 to assist with Charter proposals.

6. HOUSEKEEPING:

Co-Chairman Matthews advised the Commission the next meeting is January 14, 2019. There are 10 meetings scheduled from the January 14th meeting until the May 13th meeting; 6 meetings will occur between January 14th and March 25th. In March the Commission will need to hold a Public Hearing to discuss potential proposals with residents, and will then send a list of recommendations to the Board of Selectmen. The Board of Selectmen then have a month to review the recommendations, hold a Public Hearing of their own, and then return their comments to the Charter Revision Commission. Co-Chairman Matthews suggested the Commission has about 8 meetings to accomplish their recommendations.

7. CORRESPONDENCE AND LOCAL NEWS:

Mrs. Yosky reported she had volunteered to contact the Secretary of State's Office to discuss the potential for adding Alternate Members to the Board of Selectmen. The Secretary of State's Office has advised her there is nothing in the Connecticut General Statutes to allow the addition of alternates to the Board of Selectmen. They cautioned that should the Commission decide to go with this option they should discuss the legality of this issue with the Town Attorney, and the Charter must be specific on the following:

- Define how the Alternate members come into the position, appointment or election?
- Define the Alternate members' duties
- Define how the Alternate members will interact with the Board of Selectmen.

Co-Chairman Matthews updated the Commission on the status of the Somers referendum question regarding the addition of a Town Administrator. Initially it didn't appear that there were enough affirmative votes to add the position. Then, based on further analysis, they found the proposal did pass. Subsequently, it was found the question wasn't approved by the Secretary of State's Office in enough time to be placed on the ballot. Co-Chairman Matthews reported that should Somers form another Charter Revision Commission to specifically address the Town Administrator question 15% of the population needs to participate in the referendum. As a comparison, Co-Chairman

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Matthews cited the level of participation in East Windsor is usually approximately 12%. Co-Chairman Matthews reiterated the timing of the Charter revision process is important.

8. OLD BUSINESS/A. Review Survey Results, AND B. Review Public input at BOS Survey Discussion:

Co-Chairman Matthews noted he and Ms. Safford attended the December 6th Board of Selectmen's Meeting and made a presentation summarizing the results of the survey.

QUESTION #1 – Would you like the opportunity to vote line items on our Town budget vs the yes/no for the total budget we have today? For clarity, line items would be the opportunity to vote for the larger departments individually (i.e.: Police, Education):

Regarding *the proposal for line item voting on larger valued budget items* 150 people voted yes while 45 people voted no, which looks like a 3.5 to 1 vote in favor of the line item voting proposal. Co-Chairman Matthews questioned if this was a representative number? Mr. Szymanski felt it was; Mr. Mazza felt the response was mostly younger people while East Windsor has a larger older population. Mr. Mazza didn't feel the survey reached the older population. Mr. Szymanski questioned Ms. Safford if this was a question included in surveys from other towns; Ms. Safford indicated it was not. Mrs. Yosky liked the line item proposal but felt it might not appeal to people with kids as it could divide the voting population. Mr. Arcari liked the line item voting proposal because people know what they're voting for; it's more transparent. Ms. Safford suggested the information is available at the Board of Finance Meeting level; Mr. Arcari questioned how many people attend the Board of Finance Meetings? Discussion continued regarding the availability of information, and the need for voters to become informed prior to voting. Mr. Szymanski suggested perhaps more information could be added to the annual budget message which Mrs. O'Toole, the Town Treasurer, prepared last year. Discussion continued regarding refining the wording of the question, and the clarity of department presentations.

Discussion turned to the consideration of *a Town Administrator*. Mr. Loos felt the addition of the Town Administrator will help. The First Selectman has a lot to do. Some departments can't run with a 2% increase. Mrs. Burns felt a Town Administrator would have a pulse on the functionality of government and can bring his, or her, suggestions to the First Selectman. A Town Administrator would scrutinize the budgets prior to presentation to the Board of Selectmen and make Town officials more efficient. Mr. Szymanski suggested the Town Administrator should be directed to develop efficiency within the departments. Mr. Mazza cited concern that the addition of the Town Administrator would eliminate the Town Meeting. Mrs. Yosky clarified that the Town Administrator would assist the departments run efficiently; he, or she, wouldn't set policy or create ordinances. The Town Meetings would continue; people will continue to vote on and control the expenditures. Mrs. Burns suggested many people equate a Town Administrator with a Town Manager. In actuality, the Town Manager manages

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everything for a town while the Town Administrator works with the Board of Selectmen and oversees the Board of Finance and Treasurer's Office to update the Board of Selectmen. Mrs. Yosky suggested the Town Administrator would organize and fine tune the budget process, and follow the Charter. Mr. Arcari cited the Commission's need to clearly explain the Town Administrator's duties and to clarify the Town Administrator isn't a Town Manager. Discussion continued reviewing the role the Town Manager plays in Enfield. Co-Chairman Matthews suggested the Commission should review Charters for other towns that employ a Town Administrator to review how they define the role of this employee.

Mr. Loos suggested *the Shared Services Committee* would also help the Town. They would be a separate group of people working as an advisory committee or commission to recommend efficiencies through shared services. It was noted that Ellington has a Shared Services Commission; the Commission should review Ellington's Charter for information.

Mr. Mazza felt *all the Boards and Commissions should have weekly meetings to work towards efficiencies*. He also felt the newspapers should post information about the various towns; he questioned if the cost was prohibitive? Mr. Mazza suggested submitting articles to North Central News.

Mr. Mazza felt the survey should have included a cover letter explaining the purpose or intent. Mr. Szymanski suggested the mailed survey perhaps should have included the Town seal and a notation that "the flyer included important information from the Town of East Windsor – please respond."

Mr. Szymanski also noted when he speaks of the Charter the majority of the people don't get up in the morning thinking about the Charter. He felt the Commission needs to include a message explaining the reason for the Charter and the need for the public's input. Mr. Szymanski suggested Mr. Hoffman provide a copy of the survey/mailer to Quinnipiac for their review.

QUESTION #4: Should there be a provision in our Charter to petition for a referendum to override Town Meeting decisions?

Regarding the question of *petitioning for a referendum to override decisions made at Town Meetings* it was noted that 60% of the people favored the proposal, 23% were against it, 15% were unsure, and the remainder listed no answer. The intent of this proposal provides a check and balance to override a small amount of people making decisions at Town Meetings. The Commission reviewed Ellington's use of this function when recently considering installation of a turf field.

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QUESTION #6: Are you satisfied with the Town's progress in increasing Economic Development?

Regarding *the Town's lack of satisfaction for increased economic development*, Mrs. Yosky felt that question couldn't be addressed by the Charter, while Co-Chairman Mathews suggested the Charter can require the position if the community wants to attract businesses like Amazon. Mrs. Yosky felt the Town Administrator was the first priority. Mr. Szymanski cited the need for a "hunter" to promote the community. He noted we talk about the great location and the availability of large parcels and the proximity of the highway but we as a community need a hunter to pursue businesses.

Mr. Hoffman indicated he previously served on the Economic Development Commission, at that time he spoke to local businesses and staff in Enfield, Windsor, and South Windsor about how to acquire new businesses. All professional staff said that East Windsor won't be playing a major role in regional development until the Town is willing to hire a professional Economic Development Director. Each of those people spend up to 40 nights or weekends talking to people to influence them to consider their town for economic development. It's not a volunteer position any longer; it's someone who can call the Governor's Office and they'll get time with the Governor. The consideration for an Economic Development professional is an important decision. East Windsor is positioned as good as any town but we get beat by South Windsor who isn't positioned as well. East Windsor won't realize its full potential until we "buy" this person. Mr. Hoffman indicated he isn't against education but for every household that has parents of child-bearing age we send two kids to school. At an annual cost of approximately \$20,000 those two kids cost the town \$40,000 in education costs. The parents' house must be valued at \$1.2 or \$1.5 million to bring in the revenue to support that education cost. Mr. Hoffman suggested he isn't knocking education; he attended Ellsworth High School which prepared him to go to UCONN. He suggested that along with nice residential developments we must also have businesses that pay taxes and don't send kids to school. Mr. Hoffman felt that as a community East Windsor has decided to sit on the sidelines. He cited a presentation he made to the Board of Finance requesting funding for the Economic Development Director; Board members showed little interest in his presentation. Mr. Hoffman felt the Town should be aggressively pursuing business opportunities.

Mr. Arcari noted the approval of 65 cluster homes for the Nike site (Scantic Road). Each home will pay approximately \$5,000 in taxes. If each home has one school-aged child, at a cost of \$20,000 for education, the Town is behind \$15,000. Mr. Arcari felt the parcel should have been developed as an industrial park.

Co-Chairman Matthews suggested the resident's response to their satisfaction with economic development implies the people might support this position in the Charter. Mr. Loos cited this is another paid position. Mr. Szymanski suggested the position is an

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investment in East Windsor. This professional will know the major players; they would know the real estate people interested in bringing businesses to Connecticut. Mr. Hoffman reported he was told the Town would have to pay \$80,000 for a competent person. If that person brings in \$3.2 million per year they have paid their salary; their salary is revenue neutral. It's a unique position that can pay for itself in a short time.

Mr. Loos suggested if the Town hires these professionals the budget will go over the 2%. Ms. Safford cited the survey results indicated that people feel the 2% prohibits growth. Co-Chairman Matthews clarified that the budget isn't actually limited to a 2% increase; the 2% comes into play when the residents vote three times on what the Board of Finance asks for. The Board of Finance has asked for as high as 6% in the past. If the referendums fail three times the budget goes to 2%. The three referendums were set to get a budget in place by July 1st. Co-Chairman Matthews reiterated the Town is not limited to 2%. Discussion followed regarding the budget process. Mrs. Yosky cited the Charter requires written material to go out to the voter prior to the referendums; she noted that hasn't been done in the past but was done this previous year. Mrs. Yosky suggested the addition of information regarding the importance of these positions – the Town Administrator and the Economic Development Director – to the budget message.

QUESTION #8: Do you feel there is a lack of "checks and balances" in our town government today?

Regarding the *concern for checks and balances* Mr. Szymanski felt the Charter should include a requirement for operational audits for the various departments. Mr. Szymanski suggested when such audits are done spending decreases 10% in the first year. Discussion followed regarding the audit process. Co-Chairman Matthews suggested the audits are usually done by a contracted firm; if there's a 10% savings the firm would pay for itself. Mr. Szymanski suggested the audits could be performed on an alternating basis; the departments with the largest number of employees should be done the first year and then move on to smaller departments in subsequent years. Mr. Loos questioned if the Town Administrator could perform the audits under his, or her, job description? Commission members suggested the audits require a specific set of skills best performed by an independent firm. Subsequent audits would be less expensive as departments implemented recommendations.

QUESTION #9: In our Charter today (Section 10-8 Actions requiring a Town Meeting Subsection A) states that any resolutions making an appropriation of more than \$20,000, not included in the annual budget, are required to be sent to Town Meeting. Should there be a threshold set to advance high dollar value items to a referendum?

Co-Chairman Matthews cited that although the Charter currently requires a referendum on items being bonded, the Charter currently allows small groups of people attending a

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Town Meeting to approve large dollar items. The Commission has been discussing if there should be a limit for approval at Town Meeting?

Co-Chairman Matthews cited a Town Meeting at which five projects totaling \$800,000 in the aggregate were approved. Little information was provided to support the value of the projects; the projects were introduced simply with a value attached. Co-Chairman Matthews felt that projects should include work statements explaining the steps of the project and estimates should be provided for the work proposed. Co-Chairman Matthews noted that people push back providing the estimates, but providing estimates is common practice in private industry. Co-Chairman Matthews felt the voters should have access to that information.

Mrs. Yosky felt information should be provided to the voters earlier for items requiring Town Meeting approval. Co-Chairman Matthews cited the results of the survey indicated that people wanted two weeks prior notice. Mrs. Yosky felt the larger valued items should go to referendum, and the Charter should include that limit – perhaps \$250,000 or maybe 20% of the total project. Mr. Arcari noted the Broad Brook Fire Department had needed a repair of a vehicle but were criticized for not getting other estimates; the thought process was essentially to put it back together and get another bid. The Commission cited the difference between funding requests for emergency vehicles that affect health and safety vs the installation of a park facility. Mr. Barton, of the Warehouse Point Fire District, suggested perhaps emergency vehicles could be handled separately in the Charter. Mrs. Yosky suggested the weight of each individual project should be considered.

OLD BUSINESS/C. Discuss previous minutes open items:

See discussion above.

9. NEW BUSINESS/A. Identify initial tasks for CRC attorney effort:

Co-Chairman Matthews suggested the Commission's review has reached a point when they should consider bringing in the Town Attorney to work on wordsmithing the potential changes. Mr. Loos suggested the changes should include the addition of a Shared Services Committee; Mrs. Yosky cited the need to return the specific numbers of the Statutes referenced in the Charter.

MOTION: To ENGAGE Attorney DeCrescenzo to review the items identified above.

Loos moved/Yosky seconded/DISCUSSION: None.

**VOTE: In Favor: Matthews/Arcari/Burns/Loos/Mazza/
Safford/Szymanski/Yosky)**

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NEW BUSINESS/B. Brainstorm for additional changes, Round Three continued:

See discussion above.

NEW BUSINESS/C. Discuss changes from Item B. as time permits:

See discussion above.

10. 2ND PUBLIC PARTICIPATION:

Rich Austin, Warehouse Point Fire District, Assistant Chief/Fire Marshal:

Mr. Austin suggested the Commission was doing a good job; he didn't realize the scope of the concerns being discussed. Mr. Austin wanted to advise the Commission he's discovered a software program which he felt works well processing the permitting requests. The program is being used successfully by Canton to run their fire department. Mr. Austin would like to get the people together that use the current program and have a demonstration of this new software. Co-Chairman Matthews suggested Mr. Austin contact First Selectman Maynard.

Jim Barton, Warehouse Point Fire District: Mr. Barton questioned if the Charter Revision Commission should be doing anything regarding Fire Services? Mr. Barton cited the current issue of inequality of taxation between the two sides of town. He noted Fire Services hasn't been a part of the Charter before, perhaps because it's been a volunteer organization, but it is leaning towards becoming a paid department and maybe should be looked at differently. Co-Chairman Matthews noted there's currently a sub-committee of the Board of Selectmen working with both departments. Mr. Barton concurred, noting a meeting is scheduled for tomorrow. He reiterated his suggestion that the Charter become involved. He noted that some towns have Special Services Districts; an example is Manchester who has a special taxing district for businesses. Mr. Barton suggested Route 5 could have its own taxing district to give the businesses a break on their taxes.

Jim Strepfer, 221 North Road: Mr. Strepfer suggested it takes money to spend money. He cited the need to repair a 30 year old fire truck; Mr. Strepfer suggested that's a business decision. So when we ask the referendum question of the taxpayer they'll just say no. A Town Administrator will look at the accountability of that decision.

Mr. Strepfer also cited that when he and his brother were starting Fleetmasters they wanted to buy property in East Windsor. East Windsor didn't want to have large truck repair so they looked at Windsor Locks and found the process so easy. Mr. Strepfer felt when you go to Town Hall in East Windsor they won't help you start a business.

11. SUGGESTIONS FOR NEXT MEETING AGENDA:

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Co-Chairman Matthews noted the results of the survey included over 300 comments; many of the concerns raised can't be handled by the Charter. The Commission will be reviewing the comments and reducing the list to 15 recommendations that will go to the voters in November, 2019.

12. ADJOURNMENT:

MOTION: To ADJOURN this Meeting at 9:10 p.m.

Safford moved/Yosky seconded/VOTE: In Favor: Unanimous

Respectfully submitted,

Peg Hoffman, Recording Secretary for the 2018 Charter Revision Commission