

East Windsor CT Charter Study Commission

Special Meeting Minutes for Meeting of January 23, 2018

Held at Scout Hall at 7:00 pm

East Windsor Charter Study Commission, January to July 2018

The Charter Study Commission held it's second meeting . John Matthews and Keith Yagaloff were present as Co-Chairmen. Also, present were commissioners Don Arcari, Betsy Burns, Bill Loos, Jack Mannette, and John Mazza. Absent were Cher Balch and Charlie Szymanski. There were no others present.

Future meetings will be held on 2nd and 4th Mondays of the month at 7:00 pm at Town Hall or Scout Hall (location needs to be confirmed), See Agenda to be published February 9th. Next meeting will be February 12, at 7:00 pm

The previous meeting minutes of January 9th were unanimously approved without comment.

Public Participation: No one was present from the public.

New Business:

A paper from Connecticut Conference of Municipalities (CCM) outlining the Three Basic forms of Connecticut's Local Governments was distributed at our previous meeting by Co-Chairman Matthews. The members discussed this publication. Discussion summary follows.

Consensus of commission members appears to be in favor of retaining our Selectman/ Town Meeting form of government. This is a *somewhat pure form of democracy* (because the Town Meeting is **THE** legislative body) versus a representative form that is characteristic of a Mayor/Council or Council/Town manager form of government where elected Councilman (representatives) make final decisions.

The Selectman/ Town Meeting form of government is utilized by more than 100 municipalities in Connecticut. As towns grow in population to greater than 25,000, a representative form of government seems to be preferred. These include our neighbor towns of Enfield, South Windsor, and Windsor.

Shortcomings of a Selectman/Town Meeting government include the potential for a small group of electors to make decisions at Town Meetings where turnout is low. When that happens, a few electors can approve important legislation with broad implications for the Town. To protect against this, our Charter provides for electors to petition with 200 signatures of electors, for a Town Meeting to be adjourned to a Town Referendum. Therefore, a petition can be used to force the vote at Referendum where the issue can be more thoroughly publicized and discussed before the vote.

The Charter Study Commission suggests retaining this provision but proposes reducing the requirement to perhaps 75 signatures. It was noted that 200 signatures is a daunting number to get in a very short period of time (less than 10 days). In fact, only one petition of 200 signatures has been presented in the past nine years. This was a partial reason for moving the Annual Budget approval process to automatic referendum in the 2009 Charter revision. The budget referendum improved the democratic process by getting more voters to vote by

increasing the hours to vote to all day rather than the small window of time that a town meeting vote allows for. Also, a referendum is frequently preferred for a contentious issue where people want their vote to be secret.

The cost of a referendum is approximately \$4500 dollars, which may be a reason to not want a referendum. However, when compared to our \$38,000,000 budget, \$4500 is small and the Referendum option offers greater voter participation and a more thorough democratic process.

The foregoing is item 23 of the brainstorm list below and will remain open for further discussion.

Under New Business Agenda item 7e, Review of the Jan. 16 Brainstorm List

The commission reviewed the preliminary list of 25 items shown at the end of this memo.

The items were categorized as Group A or Group B. Group A items would be items that the commission felt were higher priority and would be addressed first in an on-going discussion. Group B items would be on hold until all Group A items had been addressed or their Group B priority increased.

Group A – Higher Priority

Item numbers from Brainstorm List

Item #: Two (2): also related to Thirteen (13), Eighteen (18)

Four(4);

Five (5); also related to Six (6), Nine (9), Twelve (12), Nineteen (19)

Seven(7),also related to Eight(8), Fourteen(14), Twenty (20

Eleven (11)

Fifteen (15) also related to Seventeen (17)

Twenty One (21)

Twenty Two (22)

Twenty Three (23)

Twenty Four (24)

Group B – Lower Priority

One (1)

Three (3)

Sixteen (16)

Twenty Five (25)

Following is the List of ideas the commission brainstormed for Charter improvements, at it's first meeting. Discussion was started at this meeting and will continue at future meetings. The initial list is presented below.

This initial list was acquired as time permitted at our first meeting. Additional ideas will be sought at future meetings. This study group is intended to be a precursor to a full-fledged Charter Revision Commission to be sanctioned by the BOS and State Statute starting in May of this year.

Brainstorm for Current Charter Shortcomings, Problems, and Opportunities for Improvement.

Rules for Brainstorming: All ideas will be heard with minimal comment about the merits of the idea. Questions can be asked for the purpose of clarification. We will go around the room. Each person will be asked for one idea and then yield to the next person until all ideas have been offered.

Ideas 1) thru 25) offered at January 16 2018 Organizational Meeting.

- 1) Split Budget into two separate votes, Town and Education.
- 2) Reduce number of failed budget referendums to two from current three.
- 3) Streamline Government structure. ?????
- 4) After last budget vote, default to last year's budget, i.e. no increase.
- 5) Address ambiguities in Charter, clarify, and strengthen voter rights.
- 6) Put Charter in MUNIS.COM system to improve search capability.
- 7) Hire Town Administrator.
- 8) Hire Director of Finance, make BOF and CIP advisory.
- 9) Identify State Statutes # whenever CGS is referred to in Charter.
- 10) Consolidate Fire Departments to one Town FD.
- 11) Put checks and balance on Police Commission Authority.
- 12) Each department to provide narrative for budget increase request.
- 13) After last budget vote, default to last year plus COL
- 14) Establish Professional Administrator position
- 15) Define/clarify Town Attorney selection/term process.
- 16) Supplemental Appropriations to be line item votes.

- 17) New BOS to pick their Town Attorney.
- 18) Define how to allocate 2% default budget money.
- 19) Specify CGS # for establishment of Boards and Commissions.
- 20) Establish/define HR position.
- 21) Consolidate resources/expertise of Town and BOE.
- 22) Increase BOS to seven from current five.
- 23) Reduce # of petitioners to 50 from 200 to force a referendum.
- 24) Strengthen Procurement/Purchasing procedure.
- 25) Have one Fire Marshall with Deputies for entire town.

This list is a start of suggestions made by members after two times around the table. Time limited additional rounds so this list will be continued at future meetings. Also, expected at next meeting, will be a start of discussion of merit of each suggestion and an attempt to prioritize and whittle the list down.

Meeting of January 23rd adjourned at 9:10 pm

Submitted by Co-Chairman John Matthews, and Keith Yagaloff