

**TOWN OF CROMWELL
CHARTER REVISION COMMISSION
REGULAR MEETING
MINUTES
June 29, 2022
7:00 p.m., Town Council Chambers
(Immediately following Public Hearing)**

Present: Chairperson Jennifer Lepore, Ann Grasso, Mike Cannata, Lou Menendez, Marie Roberto, Geoff Oryell, Phil Gagnon

A. CALL TO ORDER

Chairperson Lepore called the meeting to order at 8:27 p.m.

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Jul 06, 2022 02:38P
JoAnn Doyle
TOWN CLERK
CROMWELL, CT

B. APPROVAL OF MINUTES

Motion to approve the June 1, 2022 minutes made M. Roberto, seconded by G. Oryell. P. Gagnon abstained. *All in favor; motion passes.*

C. APPROVAL OF AGENDA

Motion to approve the agenda made M. Cannata, seconded by M. Roberto. *All in favor; motion passes.*

D. PUBLIC COMMENT

None

E. OLD BUSINESS

Chairperson Lepore asked Commission members if they sent final comments to Attorney Olson and the Commission members responded that they have. Chairperson Lepore will get a final draft of the Charter.

F. NEW BUSINESS

The Commission discussed the points that Mr. Ireland brought up in the Public Hearing, beginning with the last point on the CRC Highlights page (Attachment 1). One of the things Finance Director Marianne Sylvester had noted, is that she recommended that we may want to limit the projects (10% to referendum) to new facilities and new infrastructure.

Mr. Oryell brought up the point of a school remodel not being considered a new project, so that would never come to a referendum vote.

Mr. Gagnon stated that it is based on \$54 million. It's a good point that Marianne makes, limiting it to just new projects.

Chairperson Lepore said that if we do put the new language in there, it may leave out some important projects. But then again, people can always petition for referendum.

Ms. Roberto would think that people would come out to vote referendum for a new project.

Ms. Grasso mentioned the issue with the football field and it will come up in the July 13th Town Council meeting for a temporary fix, so they can play. That's going to cost a lot of money. The Town will come out to vote for that because it's sports.

Mr. Cannata said that he thinks we should leave this alone. The cost of a referendum vs. the cost of an \$6 or \$7 million repair, as a voter, I would like to have some sort of handle on that.

Chairperson Lepore thinks 10% is the right number. Ms. Roberto thinks 10% is a good number, too, but it should exclude emergency expenditures.

Chairperson Lepore asked if the Commission was in favor of exempting emergency expenditures from the 10%. The Commission agreed.

The Commission discussed Mr. Ireland's comments regarding the term of the Board of Finance changing from six years to four years. Chairperson Lepore asked if anyone's mind was changed based on Mr. Ireland's comments and the answer was none. The four-year term proposal will stay.

The Commission discussed Mr. Ireland's comments regarding changing the membership of the Board of Finance from six to five. Chairperson Lepore asked which Commission members wanted to keep the proposal of a five-member Board of Finance. The majority wants to keep the Board at five members, with the current number of alternates.

The Commission then discussed the one percent (1%) reallocation proposal. Chairperson Lepore asked if the majority of the Commission was in favor of keeping the 1% reallocation, based on Mr. Ireland's comments. Mr. Menendez mentioned possibly reducing the percentage to 3/4 percent (3/4%). The majority is in favor of some form of it and will discuss the percentage.

Mr. Gagnon talked about the percentage being indexed for inflation and he is open to changing the percentage, or just reducing the percentage, as Mr. Menendez had mentioned. Chairperson Lepore at the last meeting we were concerned about having a fixed number for the very point that you just identified. I thought that we had thought that if we were going to do this, it was going to be a percentage.

Mr. Menendez brought up the point of considering a half of a percent, which would be \$270,000, based on a \$54 million budget. Mr. Cannata pointed out that you don't want to make it too low. Ms. Roberto thinks it should be kept at 1% and people will pay attention to that. Mr. Gagnon stated that if the Board of Finance knows it's 1% and that's a big number, that's enough to get their attention.

Chairperson Lepore said that she still struggles with the reallocation provision in and of itself; she's not there yet. She takes what Mr. Ireland said and is not convinced yet that it's the most effective way to achieve our ends for increasing communication. It absolutely will increase communication, but for me, I can't get there. Mr. Cannata asked what is another way? Mr. Menendez mentioned that Mr. Ireland talked about mandating a meeting of the boards, but that doesn't force them to do anything.

Ms. Roberto stated to Chairperson Lepore that you can't legislate collaboration and cooperation by even putting to something that they must meet to discuss this. The only way you're going to get two parties

to come together is to put some teeth in it; it has to be money driven and people have stakes on both sides – that will force some kind of communication. If it doesn't, then the Town is in real, deep trouble because if people elected aren't able to do that, then as residents we need to look at who we're electing.

Mr. Cannata said that the Council can remove this proposed part, if they don't agree, when we present the final draft of the Charter. Ms. Grasso also said that the Council does have the opportunity to say no.

Mr. Menendez talked about Mr. Ireland mentioning mid-term expenses coming up. The Commission agreed to insert the word "annual" in the sentence regarding a change on amendment to the budget before adoption; reading "proposed annual budget."

The Commission then discussed the two-year vs. four-year term for the Town Council. Ms. Roberto is in favor of keeping the two-year term because she feels the candidates are not running on their own; they are running by the party running them for office. I am an unaffiliated voter and I see it on both sides. I am a minority vote on this.

Chairperson Lepore spoke for the Democrats and knows that the candidates spent hours and hours campaigning and it is very grueling; it is very hard work. Ms. Roberto said that she has seen that with other parties, too and that it should be grueling.

Ms. Grasso said the Town Council members on both sides, from everything that I've observed, spend almost a year campaigning and that takes them away from being able to look at the budget, or being able to do the work of the Town. That's the reason why I feel very strongly for four years.

Mr. Cannata agrees with Ms. Grasso and thinks the biggest advocate for four years should be the candidate, in terms of not having to campaign every two years. The four-year stint frees the candidate up to be able to possibly turn the leaf and do the work of the Town and not the work of the party.

Mr. Menendez agrees with either way, but would be happy to go with the general consensus of the Commission. Mr. Oryell said that two years and four years each have their pluses and minuses and he would go either way at this point.

Chairperson Lepore asked if all were in favor of having this presented to the Town Council and having it be a separate ballot question. All Commission Members are in favor.

Chairperson Lepore then asked if there were any other items on the CRC Highlights to be discussed. Ms. Grasso asked about the ballot question regarding the Tax Collector and Town Clerk being appointed positions, as being separate questions, as opposed to having one. Mr. Cannata asked Ms. Grasso why she would like the questions separated. She responded that she thinks there are people in the town who feel strongly about one person vs. the other. Mr. Cannata thinks that it should be one ballot question because it shouldn't be about personalities, it should be about the position. Ms. Grasso responded that it should be, but we live in a time where personalities are in place and so I would want to make sure that at least one of the people was approved.

Chairperson Lepore asked if all were in favor of separating the ballot questions for Tax Collector and Town Clerk being appointed. The majority is in favor of separate questions.

G. ADJOURNMENT

Chairperson Lepore adjourned the meeting at 9:30 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "JoAnn Doyle". The signature is written in black ink and is positioned above the printed name and title.

JoAnn Doyle
Recording Secretary