

CITY OF STAMFORD 17TH CHARTER REVISION COMMISSION

Members

JOSH FEDELI

VINCENT J. FRECCIA, III

CLARENCE R. GREBEY III

JOANNA M. GWOZDZIOWSKI

MICHAEL C. JACHIMCZYK

BRIAN S. KRIFTCHER

DAVID LUCAS

Vincent J. Freccia, III, Co-Chair

Jay H. Sandak, Co-Chair

Susan A. Nabel, Clerk

Members

ROSANNE MCMANUS

SUSAN A. NABEL

GAIL S. OKUN

ROBERT S. ROBINS

RICH ROSEMAN

JAY H. SANDAK

DONALD B. SHERER

DUDLEY N. WILLIAMS, JR.

MINUTES OF MEETING

Wednesday, November 30, 2011

7:00 p.m. –Board of Finance Room

4th Floor, Government Center

888 Washington Boulevard, Stamford, CT 06904-2152

Co-Chair Sandak called the meeting to order at 7:00 p.m. Co-Chair Freccia attended via telephone. Also present were Commission Members Fedeli, Gwozdzowski, Grebey, Jachimczyk, Lucas, McManus, Nabel, Robins, Roseman, Sherer and Williams. Excused were Commission Members Kriftcher and Okun. Also present were BOR Annie Taylor; Paul Newman and Gloria Kelley.

Mr. Sandak stated that the next Regular Full Commission Meeting will be held on Thursday, December 8, 2011 (as opposed to the usual Wednesday meeting) at 7:00 p.m. in the Republican Caucus Room.

Review of Charter Revision Commission Process

Mr. Sandak distributed a chart (see [attached](#)) that contained all items submitted to the Commission for consideration to date. He asked that all commission members review this chart, and if anyone has an issue to add, they should email Val at the Board of Representative's Office so that she can include them in the master document. He asked that any new items be submitted by Tuesday afternoon.

Mr. Sandak described the process that he and Co-Chair Freccia envision:

- There will be three committees: Public Safety & Health/Ethics; General Government/Organization; and a Catch-All Committee that will include financial, budgetary and pension issues.
- Mr. Sandak explained that the idea is to balance the work of the committees, and the co-chairs felt that three committees of 5 members would work better than more committees with fewer members.
- During the month of December, each committee will be asked to review the list of items assigned to them. At the first January meeting, each committee will report on

1. which items the committee is not in favor of taking up. These items will be submitted to a vote of the full Commission, and if there is unanimous agreement, these items would be removed from the list.
 2. a listing of technical changes to be taken up by the full Commission; and
 3. 3) a listing of items it does not feel can be dealt with by the Committee but that would require a subcommittee.
- The process may take a couple of meetings per week in January and February.
 - The co-chairs are going to try and put together a template for handling each committee item so that all committees are evaluating each item using a similar format. They hope to have the same quality of results on each recommendation.
 - In mid February, the co-chairs plan to hold a commission meeting at which each committee will report back on its progress so that the co-chairs can get a feel for how everyone is doing. At that point, the time schedule can be reviewed, especially as to whether it is manageable and whether they need to go back to the BOR.
 - Subcommittees are encouraged to hold public hearings on issues if they want public input.
 - It will be important to understand the impact of the charter changes on other parts of the charter or city government. For example, in adding or deleting a position, it will take a fair amount of understanding to see how this reverberates throughout city government.
 - The Statute requires another public hearing when the Commission issues its draft report to the BOR. Then, the BOR can send the Report back to the Commission with comments. After reviewing the BOR feedback, a final report will be completed and submitted to the BOR.
 - This Commission is not creating any changes but is making recommendations to the BOR. The BOR can pass on any or all of the recommendations to the residents for a vote.

Commissioners generally agreed with the 3-committee plan. Ms. Gwozdzowski felt it would streamline the process; Mr. Grebey felt it would create the foundation of a consensus (with five members); Ms. McManus was in favor of people serving on only one committee as opposed to multiple committees.

Mr. Sandak stated that the responsibility is on this Commission to understand all of these issues better than anybody else. The Commission needs to take the time to make sure it really understands all of the issues. The public will be relying on this Commission for its in-depth analysis. While there is pressure with the time-line, quality should not be sacrificed to meet it.

Mr. Sandak stated that the co-chairs will make committee assignments. The Commission discussed several possible issues that could arise, including 1) having 5 people who feel strongly about an issue being on the same subcommittee and biasing

the outcome; and 2) the level of particular expertise that should be reflected in each committee.

Mr. Sandak stated that he and Mr. Freccia intend to make committee assignments with regard to a commissioner's expertise, knowledge of city government (or a particular area of city government) and without knowledge of anyone's position on a particular issue. He urged all commissioners to approach the work with an open mind. He also mentioned that there would be a need for people with a financial background to deal with the budget and pension issues. In response to a question from Mr. Grebey, the co-chairs will not take political affiliation into consideration when making committee assignments.

Mr. Freccia mentioned that if anyone feels they might have a conflict of interest in regard to a particular area, the co-chairs should be so advised.

Mr. Sandak continued:

- Just because an item is recommended by a Committee does not mean that the Commission will fully endorse it for submission to the BOR.
- The Commission's authority comes from the BOR, and the charge of the BOR includes a deadline. This Commission can go back to the BOR and seek extra time or other options, but the deadline is real. There is still an open question as to whether the Commission can submit a report on some of the issues by the deadline and then spend more time on other issues. He does not know if this would be allowed.

1. Review of Charter Issues Submitted for Discussion

Mr. Sandak referred to the chart of 118 items that was prepared by the BOR office. He noted that the descriptions are brief references, and commissioners should not get caught up in the language used in the chart.

In response to a question by Ms. Nabel, Mr. Sandak described "technical changes." These are generally procedural issues (such as the first day a newly elected BOR meets or the process for having an ordinance signed by the Mayor). Mr. Sandak stated that while some of these seem minor, once a committee starts discussing them, they will realize they can actually get quite complicated. Consideration will be given to separating these types of charges out from the master list and dealing with them by the full commission.

2. Committee Reports

a. Communications Committee

Mr. Grebey and Ms. McManus are the members of the Communications Committee. Mr. Grebey stated he has prepared a media list that can be used in the future after the Commission gets started on its work. He and Ms. McManus will set up some

editorial board meetings with the Stamford Times, the CT Post and the Stamford Advocate when the time is appropriate. They suggest that notices of meetings and minutes be sent on a regular basis to reporters that they have identified as having an interest in the process.

Mr. Grebey then addressed the issue of using social media (which was discussed at last week's meeting). Mr. Grebey was not in favor of using Facebook as it raises many FOI issues, especially related to comments. Instead, he recommends setting up an email account that accepts comments and generates an automatic response (similar to those used by elected officials). Mr. Sandak asked that this email be established.

Mr. Fedeli asked whether the use of polling or similar methods to gauge public opinion should be considered. Commission members discussed this and felt that since the work of the Commission is complicated, it would be difficult to expect the public to be well-informed on the issues.

The Commission then discussed whether a minority report(s) would be issued. Mr. Freccia stated that a minority report, in the event of 7-8 votes, might be useful. Chair Sandak stated that this matter will be put on next week's agenda for further review.

Mr. Williams mentioned that this is a unique undertaking, and perhaps local students might want to get involved. Mr. Sandak agreed to speak with contacts he has at UCONN and Sacred Heart University.

3. Approval of minutes of 11/21/11 Commission Meeting

Upon motion duly made and seconded, the minutes were approved by a unanimous voice vote. Mr. Sandak thanked the staff of the Board Office for all their work with the Charter Revision Commission.

4. Adjournment

The meeting was adjourned at 8:00 p.m.

Submitted by

Jay Sandak, Co-Chair

Vincent Freccia, Co-Chair