

Government Committee of the Charter Revision Commission

Minutes of the Monday, March 26 Meeting

Present: Vincent Freccia, Chair; Rich Roseman, Josh Fedeli, Susan Nabel of the Committee; Gail Okun, Ted Robbins, Rosanne McManus, George Sessa and Jay Sandakof of the Commission. Dudley Williams was excused.

Guests: Mr. Frank Vartuli, Ms. Cynthia Reeder, Ms. Carmen Domonkos were present.

Mayor Michael Pavia and Mr. Frank Fedeli were present as invited guests.

The meeting was called to order by Chair Freccia at 6:04 p.m.

Mayor Pavia as asked to give the Committee background on recommendation (Charge 91) to have the Charter institute an Office of Planning and Development that would be headed by a Cabinet-level position in some ways similar to the one titled currently Director of Economic Development. The Director's functions would be much broader than the current position; the proposed Director would oversee a department which would combine all land use functions, from Planning and Zoning through Urban Renewal and Economic Development, possibly also including Transportation. The department would include all land use functions except the "bricks and mortar" functions, which would remain under the Director of Operations. All approval processes would remain the same, and the Land Use Bureau Chief would remain a classified position. The role of the Director of this new department would be to coordinate the various departments and orchestrate new projects to be dealt with in a streamlined, collaborative way by all land use departments rather than have developers have to pick their way through various departments operating independently and without knowledge of what other departments are doing. Mayor Pavia commented that the three largest cities in the state are organized along these lines, with a Director of Economic Development who interacts with all the land use agencies. The Mayor stated that while the proposed reorganization might not be completely budget neutral, it might result in a salary rank increase for the Director position of between \$6,000 and \$10,000 and it would absorb the current Director of Economic Development salary.

The Committee asked the Mayor several questions and some discussion of the proposal followed. Further discussion on the charge was tabled.

The Committee's second invited guest was Mr. Frank Fedeli, Director of the City of Stamford Customer Service Bureau. Mr. Fedeli spoke about the history of his department, which had originally reported to the Mayor's Office and is now housed in the Department of Operations and has been downsized as well as having absorbed the Cashiering & Permitting functions. Mr. Fedeli explained the number and nature of the types of citizens' complaints and concerns he processes and said that they range from potholes and sidewalks to health, social

service and transportation issues. Mr. Fedeli felt that the critical issue for his office and for the Citizens' Bill of Rights is the enforceability of requests made to different departments to remedy citizens' problems. Although the personality of the Head of the Citizens' Service bureau is a factor in the efficacy of the department, Mr. Fedeli also felt that his office was more properly housed in the Mayor's office, as the Mayor has the ultimate authority to enforce requests made on city employees. His recommendation was that the rights enumerated by the Citizens' Bill of Rights be Charter mandated and that the chain of command for enforcing them be clearly defined.

The Committee agreed to consider this testimony in its next draft of the Citizens' Bill of Rights.

The Committee at this point also discussed Charge 119, the creation of a Historic Board or Commission. It was reaffirmed from the prior discussion that any such Commission be advisory and not create an additional step in the land use approval process. Input from this Commission would be useful to the Planning Board and should be solicited early in the consideration of new developments. Cynthia Reeder presented the Committee with information on the fact that the city of Stamford is, in fact, a "Certified Local Government" with approval from the National Historic Trust to create such a Commission. Information on the implications of this act for the creation of the commission was distributed to Committee Members. The item (Charge 119) will be discussed further at the next Committee meeting.

Approval of the minutes of the 3/19 meeting were tabled due to lack of a quorum.

The next meeting of the Committee will take place on Monday, 4/2 at 7:00 p.m.

Chair Freccia adjourned this meeting at 8:20 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,
Susan Nabel

This meeting is on [video](#) – [Part 1](#) and [Part 2](#)