

Minutes of the 17th Charter Revision Commission
Government Committee Meeting Monday, April 16, 2012

Present: Vincent J. Freccia; Josh Fedeli, Susan Nabel. Dudley Williams arrived at 6:45 p.m.

Rich Roseman was excused. Rosanne McManus of the Commission attended.

Invited guests: Don Huppert, WPCA Board; Don Rullman, WPCA Board; Rudeen Bull, Prakash Chakravarti, WPCA staff; Laure Aubuchon, Director of Economic Development

Present by phone: Commission Counsel Richard Roberts

Visitors: Frank Vartuli; Representative John Zelinsky

The meeting was called to order at 6:11 p.m. by Chairman Freccia. Chair Freccia stated that the purpose of the meeting would be to further the Committee's investigation of C5-20-3 and to provide clarity in the Committee's deliberations regarding its charges (23, 25) to "determine if the WPCA is a city agency or an independent/self-sufficient entity."

Counsel Richards' research confirmed that the WPCA is by statute an independent agency. Counsel Richards stated that he felt there are conflicts between the ordinances and the charter provisions. The statute requires separation but not independence. He posed the choices to the committee as two: give the WPCA fiscal autonomy but make it clear that it must contract with the city for day-to-day services; alternatively, allow the WPCA to formulate its own plan (for sewerage, water cleaning, growth, etc.) but allow the city to determine its budget. The statute set up the WPCA as a separate entity so that Federal funding to environmental purposes would not be part of a municipality's general fund. The statute allows the municipality to recommend what municipal body can approve the WPCA budget.

Currently, the WPCA is out of the city tax base and the BOREps approves. Sewer usage fees cover the budget (which includes money for the services the city provides; pricing is done by an outside agency). The WPCA according to Board members and staff present could not afford to pay or contract with individuals to provide the services the City currently provides.

The City of Stamford owns the WPCA property and buildings.

The Committee may want to mandate a forced contractual relationship with the City. In the event of emergencies, the WPCA and the City act together. There is money in the WPCA budget to pay for repairs. Bonding is issued by the WPCA but is bundled with the City's general obligation bonds.

Chairman Freccia asked for recommendations from the WPCA Board members and staff present. The recommendations were:

- Take out the conflicting list of responsibilities in C5-30-2.
- Require a contractual relationship with the City for shared services (Payroll, IT, maintenance work).
- Ms. Bull said that she would provide the committee with a grid indicating what city agency or employee or department actually has

responsibility for (p. 28 in Charter) items 5, 7, 9, 11, 12, 13, 18. The Committee discussed the idea of an Emergency Exception clause for some of the items in the above list.

- Ms. Bull agreed to furnish the above list to the Committee by 4/20.
- WPCA Board members asked the Committee to examine the membership of the Director of Operations and the Director of Administration as voting members on the WPCA board.

The Committee agreed that the three fundamental issues concerning this charge are: (a) responsibilities; (b) ownership; and (c) relationship with the city: should it be in a contract or as contracted shared services.

The Committee was then joined by Laure Aubuchon, the Director of Economic Development of the City of Stamford. Ms. Aubuchon described the Mayor's office current plan to initiate a 311 system which will add a measure of accountability to the Citizens Service Bureau. The 311 system will allow citizens to submit questions and ask for services online as well as over the phone, and the 311 system will prioritize and send the received items to the appropriate departments. The Mayor will review the list of items sent to each department prior to his monthly Cabinet meetings, and the Mayor's office will monitor length of time for service and hold each department accountable for prompt and effective response to Citizens complaints.

The Committee explained to Ms. Aubuchon that its recommendation has been to have the Charter mandate a Citizens' Service Bureau. The Committee had also recommended that said office be part of the Mayor's office. Ms. Aubuchon felt that that would be adding an additional direct report to the Mayor, and that the new 311 system will eliminate problems with accountability and follow up on citizen complains. The new system is expected to be implemented by the end of summer 2012, and will be driven by the Citizens Service Bureau.

Further discussion on the Citizens Bill of Rights was tabled until the 4/23 committee meeting, which will be held at 7pm.

The minutes of the 4/2 Govt. Committee meeting were tabled. The minutes of the 4/19 GC committee meetings were accepted on a motion by Dudley Williams and second by Vincent Freccia.

On a motion by Dudley Williams, seconded by Josh Fedeli, approved unanimously, the meeting was adjourned at 8:08 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Susan Nabel

This meeting is on [video](#).