



## CHARTER REVISION COMMISSION

### PUBLIC HEARING MINUTES

February 6, 2008

Auditorium at City Hall

7:00 P.M.

**Commissioners Present:** Jack Bashar  
Steve Bellis  
Susan Coyle  
Paul DiMauro  
Chris Gallo  
Bob Lally  
Ken Nappi

**Commissioners Absent:** Steve Bellis  
Irene Smith

#### **CALL TO ORDER**

Chairman Paul DiMauro called the Public Hearing of the Charter Revision Commission to order at 7:05 P.M.

#### **PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE**

The Pledge of Allegiance was recited.

#### **PUBLIC PORTION**

*Chris Panek  
19 Meghan Lane  
Shelton, CT*

*Good evening members of the CRC. I appreciate you taking the time to listen to my comments regarding the charter revision. I am speaking tonight as the current Chairman of the Charter Action Review Effort, also known as CARE.*

*Recently several of the original CARE members decided to reform the group and follow along with the charter revision process as we have done during the previous revisions.*

*For those of you who were members of the last charter revision you may recall that the CARE Group was made up of residents of Shelton who have a concern that the revisions to our charter are in the best interests of the entire community. Our group has no political motivations. Our membership consists of Republicans, Democrats, Citizens United and Independent residents as we did during our previous review of the Charter back two or three years ago. We spent a good portion of the year meeting twice a month and we went through the entire Charter end to end and we came up with a rather detailed of over 40 recommendations.*

*It is sometimes difficult for the average citizen to attend city meetings on a regular basis so our intent is to keep our community involved and aware of the charter revision process so that they can make an educated and informed decision when they vote on the charter revision in November. I can tell you from my personal experience on the Board of Alderman for 2 years that the charter is the single most important document that affects the day to day and overall operation of our city.*

*The members of CARE have already become concerned based on the initial discussions of the Charter Revision Commission that only grammatical corrections and items required by state statute will be revised. According to the minutes from your organizational meeting of January 22<sup>nd</sup> 2008 under item #4 General Discussion it is stated "the commission discussed that after the public hearing, the meetings would consist of strictly grammatical corrections to the original Charter of 1994". Does this mean that all other changes from the last charter revision are being abandoned and that the charter will remain as it is today except for grammar and State Statute required items?*

Chairman DiMauro asked to interrupt a moment to clarify so that there is no confusion. That comment was made for one purpose only and that is as you are aware because you were watching us and the process the whole way through, there were a lot of issues that were brought up during the Charter discussion that had to do with either grammar, typos from the original, language that was in the last Charter that are no longer necessary or pertinent such as after the election of 1995 and there were also items that deal with State Statutes such as they are no longer Sherriff's, they are Constables, or we no longer have a Welfare Commission, so those issues that were changed by State Statute and my intention that night was to say I would put them together the best I could from the last document and keep them as one question. Not to say that was the only thing we were going to discuss, but that's just one question so that we could get those housekeeping items done as one action, out it in front of the whole group, discuss it, make sure there aren't any more or less of them, put that aside and then start to delve into issues of the Charter. Does that help you?

Mr. Panel responded: Yes, so items such as an elected Inland Wetlands? Chairman DiMauro responded, we could talk about anything else afterwards. This Commission is empowered to talk about anything. What I wanted to say what that this is the first thing to get out of the way. Rather than handling this as we go through each section, I thought it would be more productive, because we have a tight timeframe, as you can appreciate. These items are going to be concise. This item is not going to be voted on tonight. I'm asking for input from the Commission members for additional items that I might have missed. We are also waiting back for a response from Corporation Counsel if there have been any other changes in State Statutes since the last Charter Revision so that we can incorporate them in this first change which will be one vote for just the typos, grammar, etc. Then we will delve in chapter by chapter of the Charter to discuss any changes that might be recommended. I'm sorry for interrupting you but that is why I did.

Mr. Panel continued:

*We hope that some of the positive changes that were in the 2005 revision remain.*

*I would like to present to the commission a summarized list of recommendations that the CARE committee presented to the last CRC for consideration. We hope this commission will give thought and discussion into our recommendations in an effort to propose a final charter for the voters that we can all support.*

*Finally, I would also request that the minutes from all of your meetings be taken verbatim so that the public can follow along on the city website and have a clear understanding of the discussion.*

Chairman DiMauro responded the motions will be verbatim; we will not have the minutes done verbatim. If we come to a consensus on an item we would put that into the minutes so that the public can see that we've come to a consensus. For instance, if an issue comes up, to get a feeling if we're going in the right direction, then we discuss it and then if there is a consensus, then it would read there was a consensus of and we'll list the item. Hopefully, any changes in language will be put out ahead of time.

Mr. Panek continued:

*I definitely think it would be helpful to the public if they were taken verbatim. I'd like to request that, as Mr. Nappi knows I serve with him on the Blasting Committee which is a very important committee and all the minutes are long and detailed, if you miss a meeting.*

Chairman DiMauro responded that there will be as much in the minutes as much as Sophia could possibly do, but I am not going to commit that they are going to be minutes done by a court stenographer or something of that nature. We will not do that. That's not fair to one individual for what it would take to do that when you have multiple conversations, but they will be done as well as can be and they will be posted on line as fast as possible. I see that we have three members of the press here tonight, as far as your concern of the average citizen gets it, I'm hoping that we're going to have a good

dialogue with the press this time around and when something comes up they will be able to get something out in the press on a regular basis so that everyone is made aware of it.

*Mr. Panek concluded:*

*Thank you again for your time and would be happy to answer any questions. Here are the CARE Summary of Recommendations 2008:*

### **CARE SUMMARY OF RECOMMENDATIONS 2008**

Charter Revision Commission Public Hearing  
February 6, 2008

1. Standardize the composition of all elected/appointed board & commission be requiring a minimum of 5 members on each.
2. Abolish alternates on elected & appointed boards/commissions.
3. Eliminate “staggered” terms on all boards & commissions.
4. Standardize all terms of elected/appointed office by making them all 2 years.
5. Increase P&Z to 8 members (Sec. 5.1.4).
6. Decrease from 15% to 10% the requirement for Powers of Initiative (Sec. 4.11).
7. Restore full fiscal authority to the Board of Apportionment & Taxation.
8. Change the Inland Wetlands Commission to an elected position (Sec. 5.2.6).
9. Increase Board of Ethics to 5 members and make it an elected position (Sec. 5.4).
10. No elected or appointed officials shall hold more than one office with the city (Sec.5.5).
11. Require new/revised ordinances to go before a BOA Committee prior to going to a public hearing (Sec. 4.7.1).
12. Add the position of City Planner.
13. Implementation of term limits for land use boards.

*Irving Steiner  
23 Partridge Lane  
Shelton, CT*

*Good evening ladies and gentlemen. I will only compliment the words of our esteemed ex-alderman Chris Panek who, as CARE Chairman, I wholeheartedly agree with, I will only reiterate that, left as is, without the necessary upgrading, the Charter Revision remains a bitter pill for the public to again try to swallow. Possibly, you could sugar coat it or give it to us in a more palatable form.*

*There was an article written by the Huntington Herald in April 2004 and I paraphrase, John Anglace who said he wonders if it is worth a third try. I say, if it was not enough then – what are the items under State Statute that require revision to make the effort a requirement? Now, that has been answered apparently satisfactorily to Chris. Mr. Anglace, at least your commission did not fight you so hard this time when you insisted on the revision being on the November ballot.*

*Paraphrasing again from that article, Mr. Anglace questioned the point of having a new commission put time and effort into conducting meetings and discussing the Charter when groups come out in the last hour to defeat it. CARE's attendance at the CRC meeting was much higher than your own commission members who missed meetings more than one third of the time. CARE kept the CRC totally aware of our opinion of your progress and expressed it critically at the last review so who was last minute on that? I regret that John Anglace is not here. We didn't blindsided the CRC at the end, they tried to blindsided the public with smoke and mirrors and it didn't work.*

*It is my personal opinion that almost every member of the Commission would have conflicts of interest for this effort, regardless of their political affiliation. Why don't you draw straws to make up the Commission from a randomly selected group of upstanding electorate? Scary thought, isn't it? CARE wants to negotiate and improve the Charter. With such negotiations, meaningful progress can be made.*

*One more brief quote before closing. The Connecticut Post had a "Thumbs down" article on 6-18-05 page A10 which read: Thumbs down to Shelton's CRC for seemingly ignoring all of the recommendations put forth by CARE. The group made 46 recommendations to the panel, and, according to Irving Steiner, a member of the group, the recommendations were "basically and systematically ignored." I go on to quote the editor's words: "The opinion of the people of Shelton should be the first priority of the members of the Charter Revision Commission. After all, voters have the final say on revisions and in recent years they've rejected the commission's work. It is of great importance that the charter panel gather and utilize the opinion of citizen groups like CARE so revisions truly reflect the will of the people. CARE has made several excellent suggestions. They should be embraced by the Charter Revision Commission – not ignored."*

*I thank you for your time.*

Commissioner Coyle stated that she would like to talk to Mr. Steiner for a moment. I remember when that article was in the Post, and I'm speaking only for myself. But many, many things that you recommend we went along with. You're saying that there's 46 items you recommended and all were ignored? Chris just stated that we went along with many of them and they were good.

*Mr. Steiner responded:  
You modified them to some degree*

Chairman DiMauro interjected, let me stop this, I don't think that we're going to get into a debate here across the table. Number one I think your comments are somewhat out of line in the fact that we're asking for comments about the Charter, not about past history and what the editor of a newspaper said or didn't say. This is not John Anglace's Commission. I beg your pardon. I have served don more Charter Commissions than anyone in this room. I was appointed by more different Mayors and Board of Aldermen, not just by John Anglace. I have served on many and served on the one that was passed in 1994 and the one before that. I take exception to that and no we will not negotiate with one group. Let us know, where were you for the past two years when you could have gone for petitions to make these changes that you think are so great? We made a lot of good changes in here and I will not sit here and debate. I appreciate what Chris gave to me here tonight and we're going to go through every one of the items and discuss them and I do appreciate that Chris. You gave us something that we could put our teeth on and discuss. Thank you very much Mr. Steiner.

*Mr. Steiner stated:  
Paul, three years ago I was here and you said where have you been all year?*

Commissioner Nappi requested a point of order. First of all, it's a public hearing and I don't believe that we should have debates. I would be willing to have an item on the agenda so that the members could then have some type of comments concerning the public hearing at the next meeting. Chairman DiMauro responded that there will not be a public hearing before every meeting. Commissioner Nappi stated that he was referring to comments from the Commission regarding the Public Hearing. Chairman DiMauro agreed with that.

*Mr. Steiner added:  
I hope and pray for your ability to have a better track record.*

Chairman DiMauro responded I would hope so and I hope a clearer record gets put forth. I thank you Mr. Steiner for your comments. I would like you to continue working with Mr. Panek and put forward the items in a manner like this so that we could look at them.

*Richard Widomski  
49 Christine Drive  
Shelton, CT*

*I have to compliment Kenny over there for stopping the dialogue that was taking place here. This is not a place to act the way both parties were in Irving and you Paul being antagonistic in trying to defend something that is really indefensible because I too was involved within the past number of years. I saw were CARE was pretty much ignored and Susan says there were a number of things but the big things, the term limits and some of the things to do with Planning and Zoning were pretty much ignored. The other thing is that Irving Steiner, and I was part of this, we got some 2100 names for a petition three years ago. I believe it was three years ago and at that time it was ignored and again Jon Anglace, and whether you like it or not, that's who is in the newspaper. You don't see any of your names except for John Anglace. So John Anglace appears to be spearheading the Charter Revision Commission period.*

*Now there was a petition that was forwarded three years ago, the Board of Aldermen decided to ignore the petition and start a Charter Revision. All it was was a manner in which to circumvent that petition by starting the Charter Revision Commission and the term limits were totally ignored.*

*Ok, now I'd like to speak about term limits for just a second and what I see in the national politics is that everyone is looking for change. Now you see the Democrats talking about change, you see the Republicans talking about change. There's no change here unless you start looking at term limits. That's the way the country is going, people are sick and tired of the same ole same ole.*

*Now my second item I'd like to speak about is the Planner. I've spoken with this Commission some years ago, about the Planner and I was told that perhaps it doesn't belong here. The Planner in the past was in the Charter. The Planner was in the Charter under the Kelly administration. If everyone remembers what happened then, there was a problem between the administration and the Planner, the Planner was fired, suddenly the Planner disappeared from the Charter. I don't know what the circumstances of what happened but that was in the Charter. Alright, and you Paul at one time mentioned that maybe it doesn't belong in the Charter that it belongs in an ordinance. I spoke with the Mayor and I spoke with the Board of Aldermen and it's on record, I believe it might have been last March, they said guess what maybe it does belong in the Charter. Maybe it belongs in the Charter. I don't care where it goes Paul; I don't care if you put it in the Charter or whether the Board of Aldermen put it by ordinance, that's a position that is sorely needed in this town. I'll address that at a later date with the Board of Aldermen because there is a lot of information that goes along with that and I'm not prepared tonight. If you need information on the Charter all you need to do is go to the secretary of the board of Aldermen or any members of the Board of Aldermen, and even the Mayor, they have a packet probably an inch thick on the*

*reasons for a City Planner. It's dollars, it's cents, it's common sense. There are an awful lot of reasons why we need a Planner.*

*Thirdly, where was everyone? Where was everyone the past two years? Paul, two years ago I put my name for Charter Revision and I failed to do it this time because it was in the newspaper again about John Anglace, the person that appears to be running the show, and says guess what, we're going to have the same people. So you know what? I didn't bother. Why should I? Why should anyone bother? It was cut and dry. I certainly hope that this Commission is more receptive than it has been in the past and it sounds like it's going to be that way based on what Paul said earlier that you're going to look through all the chapters again and that you're looking for some guidance and help. I think that's all the people are asking for. Nothing more and nothing less. Thank you.*

**Commissioner Lally motioned to close the Public Portion of the Charter Revision Public Hearing. Commissioner Bashar seconded the motion.**

**A voice vote was taken; motion passed unanimously.**

Chairman DiMauro closed the Public Portion of the Charter Revision Public Hearing at 7:27 P.M.

### **APPROVAL OF MINUTES**

**Commissioner Coyle motioned to approve the minutes of the Organizational Meeting of the Charter Revision Commission of January 22, 2008. Commissioner Bashar seconded the motion.**

**A voice vote was taken; motion passed unanimously.**

### **CORRECTIONS, MISCELLANEOUS CLARIFICATIONS**

Chairman DiMauro stated that what was put together in Commissioner's packet was what he had found so far regarding changes in grammar, typos, the current Charter and State Statutes. Member of the Commission will look through and give to the clerk so that she can put all the changes together and have this one document regarding only these changes, be brought forth to be voted on. These are not material changes to the Charter, it is cleaning the grammar necessary and the typos that are in the current Charter of 1994, along with the unnecessary positions such as Jury Commission, Welfare Commission, etc. The important change is to the wards that was passed by the Aldermen in 2005 and puts the redistricting back into the Charter in the proper area.



Chairman DiMauro wanted to express that the strikethrough copy that the Commission has is only a guide. The Commission will be working off of the original Charter of 1994. The procedure he would like to enforce would be that once all the grammatical and typos are completed, then the Commission could start going over the Charter chapter by chapter. There cannot be a timeline for each one. Many chapters will be easy and many will be much more detailed. He would like to come to a consensus but not vote on anything until the Commission hears all the input from the public.

There was another correspondence that was sent to the Charter Revision Commission. Chairman DiMauro read into the minutes a letter from Fire Marshal, Jim Tortora:

*Dear Chairman DiMauro:*

*May I please make request for your Commission to seriously consider some changes to the Fire Department section of the City Charter as follows:*

*Under Section 6.9.3.: I suggest that this section establishing a Board of Fire Commissioners be abolished.*

*Reason: It seems all too often that this Board not only wants to control personnel but oversteps its bounds regularly by attempting to run the operations of the Fire Department. Should this Commission be abolished the administration and operations of the Fire Department could and should be under the direction of the Fire Chief and his assistants. The Fire Chief should only answer to the Mayor or his designee. The present structure of the Board provides for no leadership amongst themselves because, as written, they are all equal in rank. Due to this lack of leadership and differences of opinions amongst themselves, important items do not get addressed appropriately in a timely fashion or at all. It is only an avenue fore the creation of animosity and political agendas amongst the volunteer membership, not to mention the interference with department operations. Whether you Commission considers my request or not I look forward to meeting with your committee, should you wish, to discuss other changes that should be made to the Fire Department. I thank you for your time and attention to this matter. Should anyone have any questions please feel free to contact me.*

*James Tortora  
Fire Marshal*

## **ADJOURNMENT**

**Commissioner Coyle motioned to adjourn the Charter Revision Meeting of February 6, 2008. Commissioner Gallo seconded the motion.**

**A voice vote was taken; motion passed unanimously.**

Chairman DiMauro adjourned the meeting at 7:41 P.M.

The next meeting of the Charter Revision Commission is scheduled for Wednesday, February 13, 2007 at 7:00 P.M. in Room 204 at City Hall.

Respectfully submitted,

*Sophia V. Belade*

Sophia V. Belade  
Charter Revision Clerk

**TAPE IS AVAILABLE IN THE TOWN CLERK'S OFFICE**

**ATTACHMENTS ARE NOT INCLUDED ON THE CITY WEBSITE BUT ARE FOR PUBLIC REVIEW IN THE CITY/TOWN CLERK'S OFFICE.**