



**CHARTER REVISION  
PUBLIC FORUM**  
November 1, 2012  
AUDITORIUM  
7:00 PM

Present: Jack Bashar  
Ruth Ann Dunford  
Ken Nappi

Also Present: Chief Fran Jones

**PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE**

The Pledge of Allegiance was recited.

Mr. Nappi stated that here tonight are some members of the Charter Revision Commission and also present here is Chief Fran Jones, Chief of the Shelton Fire Department. The Charter Revision Commission was a bi-partisan board and was appointed by the Board of Aldermen. We had deliberated for 6 months; we held meetings every month, in fact sometimes we met 3 times a month. We've held three public hearings, 7 public sections at meetings and have sent letters to all Boards and Commissions in the City of Shelton. We've received very little input from any Boards or Commissions and very little public input.

We believe there are substantial changes to the Charter which was first passed in 1994 which is the revision that we're working on. We've made our recommendations to the Board of Aldermen who unanimously adopted it without any changes to go before the electorate in this upcoming election and we urge the citizens to vote in favor of it.

Guy Beardsley  
276 Leavenworth Road

I certainly want to congratulate the Commission of what I think is an excellent job, not only with the Charter Revision but if you had anything to do with the other questions that will be on the ballot. I have been very

much in favor of the Charter in the way that you're written it but one thing that I would like you to consider is the Citizens Advisory Board which is an unofficial at this moment group of people who are not identified here. Jim Oram is now the Chairman and has been for years but I think that the Citizens Advisory Board is able to put into letters to the Board of Aldermen.

Mr. Nappi interjected, Mr. Beardsley the Citizens Advisory Board that you're talking about is the Shelton Economic Development, which Board are you talking about.

Mr. Beardsley continued, well the Citizens Advisory Board works with the Shelton Economic development but is not the Economic Development Commission. There are members that are on the Economic Development Board. They have not made any overtures; I just thought it would be interesting for your Commission to consider what advantages there are. We have had some input into the City grants. As the City gets grants and is considered for grants, the Citizens Advisory Board is often able to make comments. I think it's important for this Commission to consider that. Beyond that I am very much in favor of what you guys have done here. I'd like to congratulate you. I don't know if it's because of the situation we have with Sandy, if that's why there are no people here.

Mr. Nappi stated we appreciate it. At this point with the Charter Revision, we can't make any changes, however if you look into section of the Economic Development we clarified for the first time what's expected. I wouldn't mind as a Board to propose to the Board of Aldermen to either pass an ordinance or a resolution which would empower the Citizens Advisory Board, what we couldn't do by Charter that may be a way to get the Advisory Board with some leverage. I would urge that the Economic Development also send a letter in support of that. It's too bad we didn't have this prior to the submission to the Board of Aldermen I'm sure that the Commission would have taken that into consideration.

Mr. Beardsley stated it's not always been a viable organization depending on who is the Chairman and we have a very good Chairman who is very interested and very capable. He is tremendously interested in this as we all are. As it currently exists there are members from most of the Commissions of the City that are members of the Boards. Parks and Rec for example, we do not have a member of the Planning & Zoning. We do have Planning & Zoning members visit on invitation. Mr. Nappi stated that may be because of the Charter. The Land Use Boards cannot be members of any other Boards or Commissions within the town. Mr. Beardsley stated but they do come to visit by invitation, for instance Ruth Parkins always comes when invited as well as Rick Schultz.

Mr. Nappi stated that I am on the Inland Wetlands Commission and would be more than happy to attend when you need someone from that Commission.

Mr. Beardsley stated as you may know or not know I am the Farmer's Market Master. I think the market has done very well. We get tremendous support in every respect. I thank you very much for your time. I'd like to say that when the Pavilion is open, the Market should be open for bathroom facilities and I have seen to that. It's a great facility.

Mr. Nappi thanked Mr. Beardsley for coming. Mr. Nappi asked if Chief Jones had any questions or comments.

Chief Jones stated that my perspective of the Charter as the Chief is that I am very happy with the Charter and the final product

Mr. Nappi stated all I can do is thank the Commission. The Commission worked in a bi-partisan manner and tried to make a working document and to make it the most transparent document and I think that we have accomplished that. Unfortunately there were some comments made that were not in keeping with the Charter as proposed and anybody could have a difference of opinion as to the truth of what the Charter contains and spelled out and not some fantasy thing.

Mr. Bashar stated I just have one comment; I was disappointed in reading the Huntington Herald and disappointed in the action taken by the Democratic Town Committee and comments made by its Town Chairman. Rather than reading into the record tonight I would like to include for the record my views and my comments in response to some of those comments. I would like to submit that to the Secretary and have her make it part of our record. Mr. Nappi suggested that it be submitted to the Valley Independent and possibly the Shelton Patch. I have seven pages of proposed changes but there is no sense reading it to ourselves so again I just want to say thank you to the Commission and the Clerk. I'd also like to thank Chief Jones for his contributions as well as the Department contributions. It's a great document.

Respectfully submitted,

*Sophia V. Belade*

Sophia V. Belade  
Charter Revision Clerk

Mr. Chairman:

I would like to take this opportunity to publicly address an article that appeared in today's Shelton Herald. I cannot emphasize enough my grave disappointment in reading that the Shelton Democratic Town Committee has decided to urge citizens of the City to vote "no" on the proposed Charter Revision.

As a member of the Charter Revision Commission I feel obliged to comment on their action. I would ask that my comments be made part of our record. First, I would point out that this Charter Revision Commission held three public hearings, many public workshops and public meetings, which included public portions to solicit input from City residents. During the six months of the Commission's deliberation not one official representative of the Democratic Town Committee saw fit to appear and speak at any of our meetings to share their vision or their ideas with the Commission. Nor did they see fit to attend our meetings so that they could listen to the discussions of why changes were being made or what the rationale was for proposed changes by the Commission.

As you know, during our deliberations the Commission was very concerned with transparency of the Charter Revisions. I think that all of us agreed that transparency was one of the most important aspects of reaching a final draft of this important document. All throughout our process proposed changes were continually being posted on the City website for all Shelton citizens to see. The Commission also solicited written comments from individuals for suggestions, comments and areas of concern. In fact, the Commission adopted in one form or another several of the suggestions that were proposed by citizens who did appear during the public portions or public hearings.

On the other hand, Mr. Gioello, the Chairman of the Democratic Town Committee never appeared at any of our meetings. Nor did the Commission ever receive any correspondence or input from Mr. Gioello as to his vision or the vision of the Democratic Town Committee for proposed revisions to the City Charter. Therefore, I find it offensive for him to now take such an obstructionist position. Also his timing to express a negative view and report that the Democratic Town Committee voted to urge citizens to vote no to the charter revisions borders on being cowardly at best. Mr. Gioello's article appears in the paper less than one week before the elections. Since this is the first time that the Commission has even heard from him, it seems patently unfair that he has timed his article so that the Commission cannot even have the opportunity to properly respond to him.

Since Mr. Gioello has not taken the time to come to our meetings to personally hear the Commission's rationale and basis for the proposed changes, I believe that his comments are irresponsible. Thus, without the benefit of knowing the Commission's rationale and basis for the proposed changes, the position taken to urge the citizens to vote no on Election Day is without valid foundation. Moreover, he is very much misinformed about the proposed changes. As such his comments that appeared in the paper are totally misleading.

This is very unfortunate, because I believe that this Commission was totally apolitical and worked together in a bi-partisan effort to produce a viable document for the City and its

citizens. This Commission was comprised of very dedicated residents of the City who had no personal agenda and who all worked together to propose a Charter Revision that is in the best interest of the City. Again, I repeat that a common theme throughout our deliberation was that the changes and revisions should reflect transparency in government. I believe that we achieved that goal.

I am not naïve to think that we can make everyone happy with the proposed changes, but the members of the Commission have vetted the revisions that have been proposed. The Commission members listened to members of the public and adopted changes from many sources, all for the benefit of the future operation of the City.

Now, Mr. Gioello claims that the majority of changes were “grammatical” rather than substantive. Granted, the Commission cleaned up many needed grammatical changes during its deliberations, but that was merely housekeeping. Those changes were simply made as we went through the old City Charter. I would hope that Mr. Gioello is not suggesting that we should have ignored the grammatical errors that presently exist.

Let’s look at the highlights of the changes that were suggested and proposed by the Commission and unanimously approved by the Board of Aldermen.

First: Keeping in mind that the Charter has not been revised since 1994, the Commission had to make many changes to comply with Connecticut General Statutes. Since 1994, the State Legislature has adopted many statutory changes. As such, some of those changes affected language and provisions in our City charter. Thus, the Commission made revisions to the Charter to comply with those statutory changes. I would suggest that those changes are substantive in nature and not merely grammatical.

Second: An area of concern that Mr. Gioello refers to is the proposed changes to the Board of Ethics. I believe that the changes suggested by the Commission are substantive and are clearly in the best interest of the City. The Commission felt that the appointment and makeup of the Board of Ethics was an important issue. The Commission discussed at length the need for this Board to be transparent and as independent as possible. As such, the Commission has proposed to increase the number of members from 3 to 5 and required that no more than 2 members be from either major party. The fifth member would by rule be from a minor party or be an unaffiliated voter. Thus, the Board will now have more balance than it presently has. Moreover, no major party will have political control over the Board. Under the present Charter, the Board of Ethics consists of only 3 members who are appointed by the Mayor. Thus, under the present Charter two members could be appointed from one party leaving the third member from the other party as a minority member of the Board with little or no influence. As a result of the present status of the Charter, one party could potentially dominate the Board of Ethics. This scenario would be eliminated by the proposed revisions. The Charter Revision has also taken away the appointing power from the Mayor. The Board of Aldermen will appoint the members of the Board of Ethics under the proposed changes. These changes are substantive and are in the best interest of the City. It accomplishes the goal of the Charter Revision Commission of more transparency and strives for independence without the perception of political influence. Finally, Mr. Gioello suggests that the selection process is flawed. He suggests that the members of

the Board of Ethics should be made by election or by appointment of the town committee of each party. There are many reasons why an election of this Board is not feasible. Suffice it to say that there are many boards and commissions that are appointed and not elected. Moreover, the appointments are being made by elected officials (the Board of Aldermen) who are the elected representative of the citizens of each ward within the City. Finally, his suggestion that the independent member could be “self appointed” is simply ludicrous and demonstrates the lack of vision and thought that Mr. Gioello has put into his comments. How realistic is such a process? It simply does not make any sense. What would happen if more than one unaffiliated voter declared that he/she self-appoints themselves to the Board of Ethics. How would it be determined which self-appointed voter would be seated as a member of the Board of Ethics. This suggestion would lead to a chaotic result that would probably end up in protracted litigation. Such a suggestion is just not feasible.

Third: Mr. Gioello raises the issue that the revisions lack financial oversight. As an example he cites the unfortunate situation that recently occurred in the Finance Department. Shame on Mr. Gioello for playing the alleged embezzlement card. First, let us remember that under our constitution everyone is innocent until proven guilty. To date, no such guilty plea or guilty finding has been made. Moreover, there is no language that could be included in the City Charter that would prevent such alleged actions. With that said, the Commission has, in fact, addressed several financial issues in the proposed Charter Revision which are improvements over the present charter:

- The Commission at the suggestion of a Shelton resident who made the proposal at one of the public hearings adopted one of the more important changes that are proposed in the Charter Revision. (I guess it pays to come to the Commission meetings.) Under the new proposed Charter the Finance Director will be required to prepare a financial report as to the state of the General Fund Budget. This report will be submitted to both the Mayor and the Board of Alderman. The report will be prepared twice a year in October and February and will be a forecast of the City’s financial condition compared to the approved budget and will forecast any anticipated changes. This will allow the administration and the Board of Aldermen to better monitor the financial condition of the City.
- Another financial change deals with the bidding process. The minimum purchase amount requiring the bidding process to be implemented has been raised to bring it in line with the 21<sup>st</sup> century. This will allow departments to purchase smaller items without the burden of going through the lengthy and sometime arduous bidding process.
- The City Purchasing Agent will be responsible for establishing procedures for the purchase of items by City Departments that are below the bidding threshold.
- Any purchase between \$2,000 and \$7,500 will require three written proposals rather than the formal bidding process.
- The City Purchasing Agent will now be responsible for the opening and awarding contracts for bids that are required under the proposed Charter revisions.
- It will be his responsibility to determine the lowest responsible bidder. These changes will allow the streamlining of purchases by the City, while still retaining important controls over the financial condition of the City.
- Additional responsibilities have been assigned to the Finance Director to assure more oversight of the City’s day-to-day financial operations.

- The Budget process time line has been extended to allow the Boards more time to adopt the City Budget each year.
- Subsequent Appropriations are tied to a percentage of the fiscal year budget.
- Bonding requirements are also tied into a percentage of the fiscal year budget rather than a percentage of the Grand List before it has to go to City referendum. This gives the citizens of the City more control over large expenditures proposed by the administration.

There have been many other substantive changes for the betterment of the City. Keeping in line with the Commission's goal of governing with transparency and efficiency, here are a few of the additional proposals that the Commission has proposed for the Revised Charter:

- The Assistant Corporation Counsel's office will now be under the supervision of the Corporation Counsel so that the City will receive a unified and consistent representation of legal services.
- The ordinance process has been revised so that any proposed ordinance must be acted upon by the Board of Aldermen and cannot die in committee. If referred to a committee, the committee must report back to the Board and the full Board of Aldermen must act on the proposed ordinance.
- Certain public information will now be required to be posted on the City Website so that residents may be informed as to the City's business.
- Two alternate members have been added to the Inland-Wetland Commission so that business will not be delayed if members are not available to attend scheduled meetings.
- Vacancies of appointed positions shall now be filled within a time certain. If it is a Mayoral appointment and the Mayor fails to fill the vacancy, the Board of Aldermen will be able to make the appointment after a certain time period has passed. If it is a Board of Aldermen appointment and the Board fails to appoint, than the Mayor may make the appointment after a certain time period has passed. This will assure that vacancies will be filled.

Finally, and more importantly, the Proposed Revised Charter makes major organizational and definitional changes to the City's Volunteer Fire Organization. The duties and the responsibilities of the City's fire companies, the Office of the Fire Chief, the Board of Fire Commissioners, the Officer's Council, Deputy Fire Chiefs, Assistant Fire Chiefs, Captains, Lieutenants, the Fire Marshal and the Deputy Fire Marshal and the Fire Marshal's Office has been fully defined. These changes could not have been achieved without the major efforts and cooperation of the Charter Revision Commission, the Fire Chief, the members of the Officer's Council, the members of the Board of Fire Commissioners and all the officials of our volunteer fire department. Their bipartisan efforts have resulted in a living document, which will assure the citizens of the City of Shelton that those who volunteer their time and put their lives on the line to protect us will be able to continue to do so for many years to come. I believe that these changes establish a clearly defined organization for the City's volunteer fire department, which is in the best interest of the residents of the City.

Although there are other changes that I just cannot detail here, I felt it was necessary to point out and highlight some of the many substantive changes that the Commission proposes in the Revised Charter. I submit that Mr. Gioello's comments are clearly erroneous and misleading. I believe that the Commission has proposed a viable and improved Charter that will serve the City well for

many years to come. Therefore, I urge every citizen to **vote yes** on November 6, 2012 to accept the Revised Charter. Thank you.

John P. Bashar  
Commissioner  
Charter Revision Commission



To the Citizens of the City of Shelton:

We the undersigned members of the Shelton Charter Revision Commission strongly urge you to vote "YES" on November 6, 2012 to approve the proposed Charter Revision for the City of Shelton. We believe that the proposed Revised Charter will improve the operation of the City and will be a viable governing document for years to come.

The following is a highlight of just some of the changes proposed by the Commission:

- As you may know, the City Charter has not been revised since 1994 and many changes had to be made to comply with statutory changes in the law.
- The Board of Ethics has been increased from 3 members to 5 with no more than 2 members from any political party, which will assure a more balanced and independent board.
- The Board of Ethics will no longer be appointed by the Mayor, but will be appointed by the Board of Aldermen.
- The Finance Director will be required to prepare and present a report twice a year to advise the Mayor and the Board of Aldermen as to the state of the City's finances compared to the adopted budget.
- The City's bidding process has been modified to streamline the purchasing process for the City Departments while retaining the safeguards of municipal bidding requirements.
- The Assistant Corporation Counsel's office will now be under the supervision of the Corporation Counsel so that the City will receive a unified and consistent representation of legal services.
- The ordinance process has been revised so that any proposed ordinance must be acted upon by the Board of Aldermen and cannot die in committee. If referred to a committee, the committee must report back to the Board and the full Board of Aldermen must act on the proposed ordinance.
- Certain public information will now be required to be posted on the City Website so that residents may be informed as to the City's business.
- Two alternate members have been added to the Inland-Wetland Commission so that business will not be delayed if members are not available to attend scheduled meetings.
- Vacancies of appointed positions shall now be filled within a time certain. If it is a Mayoral appointment and the Mayor fails to fill the vacancy, the Board of Aldermen will be able to make the appointment after a certain time period has passed. If it is a Board of Aldermen appointment and the Board fails to appoint, then the Mayor may make the appointment after a certain time period has passed. This will assure that vacancies will be filled.
- Finally, and more importantly, the Proposed Revised Charter makes major organizational and definitional changes to the City's Volunteer Fire Organization. The duties and the responsibilities of the City's fire companies, the Office of the Fire Chief, the Board of Fire Commissioners, the Officer's Council, Deputy Fire Chiefs, Assistant Fire Chiefs, Captains, Lieutenants, the Fire Marshal and the Deputy Fire Marshal and the Fire Marshal's Office has been fully defined.

With regard to the fire department changes, they could not have been achieved without the major efforts and cooperation of the Charter Revision Commission, the Fire Chief, the members of the Officer's Council, the members of the Board of Fire Commissioners and all the officials of our volunteer fire department. Their bipartisan efforts have resulted in a living document, which will assure the citizens of the City of Shelton that those who volunteer their time and put their lives on the line to protect us will be able to continue to do so for many years to come. The Commission

believes that these changes establish a clearly defined organization for the City's volunteer fire department, which is in the best interest of the residents of the City.

The Charter Revision Commission believes that it has proposed a viable and improved Charter that will serve the City well for many years to come. Therefore, we urge every citizen to **VOTE YES** on November 6, 2012 to accept the Revised Charter. Thank you.

Members of the Shelton Charter Revision Commission