Commissioners Present: Dan Debicella
Gary DeFilippo
Ruth Ann Dunford
Ruth Parkins
David Presutto
Darliissa Ritter
Donald Sheehy

• CALL TO ORDER

Chairman Debicella called the meeting to order at 6:32 pm.

• PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE

• ATTENDANCE

Chairman Debecella read into record the Charter Revision Public Hearing Rules:

1. Each member of the public shall be able to address the Commission for a total of five minutes. People shall sign up with the clerk at the start of the meeting, and shall be called in the order they sign up. The Clerk shall time each person’s remarks, and give a one minute warning before their time is up.
2. Members of the public may also submit written statements of any length to the Clerk of the Commission. These shall become part of the record of the meeting, but shall not be read out loud unless the person is present in which case they may speak for five minutes as per above.
3. Commissioners may ask questions of the public if they so choose at the conclusion of any individuals remarks. Length of time of questioning and answers is at the Chairman’s discretion.
4. All comments should be civil and pertain to ideas for changes to the Charter. No personal or ad hominem attacks shall be allowed, and the Chairman may rule out of order any comments not related to Charter changes.


A voice vote was taken; motion passed unanimously.

• PUBLIC PORTION

Ginny Harger  
26 Meadowridge Drive

Good evening members of the Commission. I’m here about the Planning & Zoning Commission and my comments tonight are being done in that capacity. I would like to ask the Commission to look into, under Chapter 2, Section 2.4 (f) where it talks about the Planning & Zoning Commission which consists of (6) members and talks about how members are appointed and are on staggered terms now since 2013 because I guess before then we weren’t in conformity with State Statutes and the terms are (4) years, but the curious thing and if you could look into why language following that says “the Planning & Zoning Commission shall also consist of (2) alternates elected for a term of (2) years”, I thought that needed to be looked at as why the regular members are for (4) years and the alternates are only for (2) years.

Then there is another section that I was looking at and it has to do with Duties of the Board, Planning & Zoning Commission and I thought there was something that referred when the head of the Planning & Zoning office is vacant and a new administrator is being appointed that the Planning & Zoning recommends to the Mayor who should be hired, to me that means that people on the Commission would have to be part of the hiring process with interviews and along those lines. To me that’s a Human Resource, that doesn’t fall under our purview, so unless there’s a valid reason for that I would think that is something that stays in a jar, if it is going to stay in then maybe all the other departments that have administrators, they need to be looked at just so everything is candid. That’s it.
Chairman Dibecella thanks Mrs. Harger. He asked the Commission is there were any questions for Mrs. Harger. Commissioner DeFilippo asked if that was in State Statute. (too many speaking at once). Mrs. Harger responded I don’t know which but based on the last revision and what I was told and that’s why in 2013 we had (2) commissioners ran for (4) year terms, (2) commissioners on the Republican side ran for (2) year terms and then in 2015, (2) commissioners ran for (4) year terms on the Republican side not sure on the Democrat side. The alternates, their terms are only (2) years, why is that? That’s all.

Commissioner Parkins stated is in 5.1.4, “The Commission shall have such duties as are provided by the Connecticut General Statutes relating to planning and zoning, and, subject to the approval of the Mayor, shall appoint and may remove zoning and planning officers and such professional and other personnel as may be necessary or convenient to the operation of the commission.” Mrs. Harger responded that’s it.

Commissioner DeFilippo asked but the (4) years is in Statute also? Mrs. Harger responded I’m not sure.

Chairman Debicella stated, that’s appoint to look up. Thank you Mrs. Harger.

Kevin Kosty
137 Howe Ave, Unit #2

Hello Commission. Today I’m here to speak to you a little bit about considering and recommending a change to how we select our members to the Board of Ethics. So currently in the Charter in Section 5.3.5 establishes a Board of Ethics, “(5) members of whom no more than (2) shall be from the same party and will be appointed by the Board of Aldermen for a term of (3) years”. If I remember at the last Charter Revision there was a recommendation to change this due to some difficulties we had with Ethics here on the City of Shelton. So there are some organizations that you could go to for some advice about how a Board of Ethics should be established and how it should proceed. There is the Connecticut Conference of Municipalities, where Shelton is a member of if you want help and there is also a non-profit called City Ethics a model Ethics Commission project. I brought copies of their language for establishing a Board of Ethics which does make things in our current Charter it already does, it calls for (5) members, no more than (2) from the same party
and also bans elected officials, city employees and members of other boards, elected or appointed from serving as Ethics Commission members. Subsection 4 of that model is what I think we should consider with our past issues. The Board of Aldermen, it still has them making the appointments but they’re not free to choose from anyone that they want to choose from including political allies. So it recommends that we have a non-partisan, non-political civically position so a list of recommended candidates for the Board of Ethics instead and the Board of Aldermen to choose from that list and appoint from that list for the members of the Board of Ethics. So the recommendation here is that they call out, possibly using League Women of Voters, we don’t currently have one active in Shelton, the Bridgeport chapter might be willing to help us and we also have other non-partisan organizations that could help us out as well, also the Valley Chamber of Commerce, United Way, Shelton Rotary there are a list of people that we could lean on to get some recommended Board of Ethics Commissioners. The idea of having one more partisan civic organization to select a City’s Ethics Commission is unusual but there are no better alternatives to prevent such a commission from being or hearing political or to ensure that either party did not block a member of his own party from being disciplined or being reprimanded if there is ethics violation.

An Ethics Commission should be non-partisan and without it’s own conflicts as possible. Only a non-partisan body can ensure this. So as I said in the last commission for the Charter Revision did make some improvements to this commission or rather board but the appointments are still made by officials from anyone that they want to choose from, so this I feel will be the next step to improving Shelton’s ethics and making sure that the public has all confidence in the public officials and have proper oversight. I have copies of the City Ethics sections that I talked about and would like to give you a copy. Thank you very much.

*(attachments follow end of minutes)*

Chairman Debicella asked if there are any questions. There were none, the Public Hearing continued.
Dave Gioiello  
65 Walnut Tree Hill Road

Good evening, I didn’t come as prepared as Kevin did but I wanted to speak about the Board of Education and the length of term for the board. Currently they are (2) year terms and I’d like to recommend to the Commission that we consider changing that to staggered (4) year terms. This year we were in the midst of teacher/union contract negotiations, the (2) members of the board that were on the team unfortunately did not get re-elected which placed a burden on the incoming board. The teachers contract is the only one that has mandated deadlines built in by State Statutes. Fortunately we were able to quickly get reorganized and negotiated but having not it could have been binding in arbitration. So if we go to (4) year terms this potential problem would be eliminated.

The other thing I’d like to also, by doing this with this year 2/3 of the board being replaced, we lost a lot of institutional knowledge. I can’t speak for Darlissa but I know it took me a year to get up to speed and you start right off in the budget process and without knowing what’s been going on it’s good to have more senior members there to help you understand the budget process so again having (4) year terms would help reduce that.

The last comment I’m going to make it that there have been a lot of rumors going around about changing the structure of the Board of Education, reducing the numbers and reducing the minority representation. I would encourage you not to do that. The Board of Education oversees the largest part of the City’s budget and by having as close to a non-partisan board as possible it forces people to work together. If you had a 7-2 board the board could easily override the needs of the students.

Chairman Debicella asked the Commission if they had questions. There were non, the Public Hearing continued.

Kate Kutash  
275 Beardsley Road

Good evening, I think you’ll find that a lot of what I have to say is going to agree with Dave. As with anything in the City there are all kinds of rumors as to the reason why the Charter Revision Commission has been formed. Many
say there is an ulterior motive or a hidden agenda originating from City Hall. Whatever the reason, it has been many years since the last commission, it’s been (8) years. As tonight I am a current member of the Board of Education, and as mentioned the Mayor wants to see the balance on the Board of Ed change to reflect his party. The 5-4 has been in effect for decades and has worked well. However, the Shelton Board of Education should be working together in a non-partisan manner as independent thinkers to promote better educational opportunities for students in the school with no hidden agenda. I’m in favor of a Board of Education made up of members who are not x # of Republican and x # of Democrats but more of (9) members who are elected with no regard to party of their commitment to provide the quality of education to the students of Shelton. There are several cities around town that elect a Board of Education without regard to party affiliation. Local Boards of Education are under State government and not the town. It should be independent with their thinking as much as possible without having to answer to any agenda of a local political party who is in control. The State Code of Ethics for Board of Education states that “I will be a staunch advocate for children.” Waving the Board of Education heavily in any (1) direction would severely hinder the ability of the members to work in the best interest of the students.

Furthermore, lessening the total number of members on the Board of Ed is not wise either, the burden committees, of negotiations and attempts is quite cumbersome and not all of us can handle the duties all of the time. Another point I want to make is in regards to term limits which was one of the first things to pop up on social media when this Commission was formed. While I do feel that the Mayor has been in power quite a while and might be due for a change, I caution the Commission, be careful what you wish for, craft such a notion carefully. In Stratford where I teach, Board of Ed members are subject to term limits. They are elected for (1) four year term, hence no accountability to the voters with an election on the horizon. Once they build knowledge and history there is no second term to fully utilize their experience.

Personally I would like to see Shelton consider a (4) year term as Dave mentioned for the members of the Board of Education with terms that are staggered so that on any given year the whole board is not new from an election. This can maintain a history and experience on the board. It has been a difficult situation this year with only (3) experienced members on the Board of Ed with many not having knowledge of the school system. I thank you for listening, I question you to make wise decisions with your heads not covered by influences other than common sense to the City and their students.
Chairman Debicella asked the Commission if they had questions. Commissioner DeFilippo asked I know the Republican party puts up x amount of people and the Democratic party puts up x amount of people, for years each party put up (5) members for the Board of Ed, so you really think that’s elected or appointed? Are we giving the public the choice? Or are we allowing the political parties to pick because if we can only run (10) people and you’re electing (9) the public is only picking (1) person. Mrs. Kutash responded this year, in the first year in a while that there was a true choice but again is was not by that 5-4 requirement. Commissioner DeFilippo asked but are we giving the public the choice? Mrs. Kutash replied this is where a non-partisan board would be a public choice, there would be no R’s or D’s by any name. Commissioner DeFilippo said then it would be elected, I’m not sure you could do that, you have to run on a line. Mrs. Kutash stated there are towns that do that, I know for a fact Pomfret and New Fairfield. I could try to find out others.

Chairman Debicella asked if there were any more questions. There being none, the Public Hearing continued.

Tom Harbinson
15 Soundcrest

Greetings Commissioners, I have (5) items that I would like to discuss.

1. Chapter 5.2 regarding appointments – it talks about all the commissions that are appointed by the Mayor. They all have staggered terms but the Board of Zoning Appeals has no term, so technically once your appointed to the Zoning Board of Appeals you serve until you’re removed for some sort of malfeasance or you want to leave by your own you serve for life. I think that should be looked at. Also if there is any chance of bringing all of the different terms to (2), (4) (5) year terms it would be beneficial.

2. Regarding vacancies in appointed offices, currently if there is an office that the Mayor has appointed and the person reaches the end of their term, if the Mayor doesn’t act and appoint somebody after (60) days it falls to the Board of Aldermen, and if the Aldermen don’t do it within (30) days it just kind of continues. So I know that there are several commissions that don’t have a full active appointment, speaking for the Conservation Commission we have (5) people our of (7) that are currently past their term and didn’t get re-appointed so there should be some provision that if the Mayor has not done the re-
appointment and it falls to the Aldermen and they have not done it, maybe there could be sort of automatic re-appointment or some sort of acknowledging for that current appointment.

3. General provisions of 5.4 (c) – “Members shall hold no more than (1) one elected municipal office and/or two (2) other appointed offices with the City”. Unless otherwise provided for in the Charter and if you look at 5.1 at Board of A&T, Board of Education, Planning & Zoning Commission they all talk about that the member shall hold no other elected or appointed office in the City. The only one that states is the Library Board stating that the member shall hold no other elected office within the City. So the general provisions I’m talking about no more than (1) other elected minicipal office and (2) appointed offices and then every single position varies in that. So maybe there can be some corrections or cleaning up of the language in general provisions.

4. There’s been change in society since the Charter was prepared, the P&Z commission is the only elected body that has alternates so that a regular is unable to attend or participate in a meeting there is an alternate that steps in to take over in the hearing of the application. It’s placent in the world of commerce to have a teleconference if they couldn’t be present and P&Z has done that to some extent, but another example last night what occurred, the consultant was calling in from Florida and one of our regular members was calling in as well but the applicant presented some drawings and a presentation and video that was just done that night so there was no opportunity to get that information to the (2) people that weren’t physically present. It was a full detriment to fully understand if they were present. You could see the passion of someone speaking at a public presentation, you could see the audience in the auditorium, there’s inflections that you get when you are present instead of just calling in by phone. If the City wants to establish some kind of meaning of what present means and provides teleconference equipment that would be fine but currently we’re doing kind of a bandaid set up, and I know that the Board of Aldermen, Stan Kudej wasn’t able to attend last meeting and said he was calling in. I think that there could be some definition as to what present means as to all the boards.

5. Board of Aldermen action. Section 4.3.2 Five (5) members shall constitute a quorum and that no action except on a vote to adjourn shall take place unless it is adopted by (5) members. I wrote an email to the Charter in 2002, 18 years ago and I have all of my emails going back to that and back then it came up that there was a sewer issue on Lane Street and there was (6) votes cast by the
Board of Aldermen and (1) person was absent, there was an issue with the sewers failing and needed to be corrected. Tom Sym had gone out and got bids and because only large contractors bid on it he went back to them afterwards and asked what their bid process was and what their pricing was. (2) of the Aldermen took offense of that process, the bidding process, and so they voted to abstain. So you didn’t have (5) affirmative votes and then the asphalt plants closed and these (2) people had to live with failing septic systems for the entire winter. So I would think that the Board of Aldermen could operate in harmony with Robert’s Rule of Order. That also affected the purchase of property at Tall Farm. It really affects when you’re trying to take action.

Chairman Debicella asked if there were any questions. Commissioner DeFilippo asked, with regards to phoning in are you in favor of that? Mr. Harbinson answered, in talking about members and not consultant of a commission, I believe that if teleconference is provided then someone could use it if they’re not here presently and they can visually see what’s going on. We have it here tonight, it being broadcasted live on FaceBook. There’s no reason why we can’t have some sort of facility for someone that’s not physically present to see what’s being presented on screen. I don’t have a problem with someone not being physically there if the correct tools are being provided and a definition is provided across all boards.

Chairman Debicella asked if there are any other questions. There being none, the Public Hearing continued.

Michele Laubin
6 Corn Hill Road

I’m going to pass out copies of my material. Good evening and thank you for taking on this work, this is a very important task that you have in front of you. I’m going to make (3) points this evening. There are many others that I’m sure you’ve heard from other folks already and many others that could be made but I’m going to keep it to (3).

The first one is that we think that any Charter Revision in Shelton needs to grapple with a need for minority representation on the Board of Aldermen. We currently have an all Republican Board of Aldermen, (8) members all Republicans, no minority representation. When we had (1) Democrat on the Board of Aldermen, which was the face for many years, he couldn’t put a
motion on the floor for debate because he couldn’t get anyone to second his motion. This is not, in my eyes, what democracy looks like. If you have been to a Board of Aldermen meeting recently or have seen the videos online you are aware that there is little debate, no debate or any explanation provided publicly for any of the motions presented or voted upon. The motions are read, their second, there’s a vote, all those in favor and then passed. All of the work is being done outside of the public eye. There is no attempt made to question or to provide information to the public before it goes to the legislative consult of our City. This is not what a healthy democracy looks like.

There are many models readily available for minority representation. I would be making this argument even if the Board of Aldermen were all democrats. This is not what we should be doing here in Shelton. I would urge the Commission to look into the models that are available. I pulled one for you that is in your packet which I think is Newtown. They don’t use exactly this model but one that could be used as a possibility of adding in a provision for a certain number of Aldermen at large, which would serve the community as a server rather than being elected as an individual from any ward and that some of those held need to be held by a minority party. You could limit the seats in each ward, so the example in Newtown is that the legislative counsel specifically no more than (3) of the board members, they have a much larger legislative counsel, no more than (3) of the board members from each district may come from the same party, it guarantees that (1) member from each ward will be from a minority party. We would have to change the number of seats on the Board of Aldermen if you have something like that work in Shelton, but we would urge you to consider providing for some version of minority representation and I think that probably electing some folks from the at-large rather than by individual wards would serve that purpose.

The second point that I’d like to make to you tonight is dealing in the Charter with the Board of Apportionment and Taxation. I believe that this needs to be revised to make this a functioning and robust board that provides for actual bipartisan oversight of the City budget. Right now we have (3) Democrats and (3) Republicans on the Board of A&T, we require the Mayor to come and break the tie every year for who’s elected for Chair of the Board of A&T, you’ll see from the example that I provided that not every City or Town provides for that. On many other boards and commissions there are odd numbers of people on the board so you can actually break a tie yourself. That would be useful. More substantively Seymour has some language pertaining to the need for managing and monitoring of the budget for the current fiscal year in collaboration with
the Finance Director and the Board of Selectman and specifically references the access that the board has to the records and the books of the accounts of the Town. Derby has a similar reference in its Charter. These provisions are absent from our Charter.

Our current Board of A&T is not meeting because as I understand the Mayor has not authorized the meeting of the Board of A&T. We are currently in a stalemate on whether or not the Board will even meet. We do not have a robust Board of Finance in the City of Shelton that is providing actual bipartisan oversight of the finances of the city. That’s what needs to be changed.

The Fairfield Charter references the ability of the Board of Finance to order audits of the town finances upon demonstrated need. We in Shelton have had a demonstrated need for operational audit for several years and no action has been taken. We need more provisions in our Charter. The Fairfield Charter which you have in front of you also calls for an appointment of a clerk to the Board of Finance who is an accountant or somewhat of a similar expertise who can assist the board in fulfilling its responsibilities to the towns taxpayers. This would be extremely useful in Shelton. I will tell you that currently, to the best of my knowledge, nobody on our board is an accountant or has similar expertise and the Finance Director typically does not attend those meetings. There are probably other models available that could be useful for Shelton and I would urge the Commission to seek those out. If we find more useful language we will certainly forward it to the members of the commission.

The third point I’d like to make this evening that we need to revise the Charter to include the establishment of a true reserve fund. We do not have a reserve fund in Shelton. What we have is a system where the Mayor or the Board of Aldermen sort of park money in certain departments and it had an agreement not to touch that money and so it sits there and gets returned to the City for use in the next years budget. That’s not a healthy reserve fund. I think we see the implications in that last year when Shelton’s bond rating was lowered because we did not have these reserve funds in the budget. So currently Shelton has no such rules in place. We need the establishment of a real reserve fund that has rules associated with how much money must be maintained in the reserve and how and when the money can be spent. The fact that we have no such rules in place might be damaging our bond rating will ultimately cost the taxpayers of Shelton more money when we have to borrow money which we have a need for every single year.
The Stratford Charter language that I’ve provided to you is presented for your consideration. Stratford requires a reserve fund of 10% of the prior years’ general fund expenditure and calls for it to be extended only in case of emergency for which no other funding has been budgeted or is available and it requires the affirmative vote of the town council. I think a similar model would be a good start in the City of Shelton. Thank you.

Chairman Debicella asked if there are any questions. Commissioner Sheehy asked if in a perfect world if you have a strong administrative arms that is preparing the budget. (cannot hear clearly) Mrs. Laubin responded that as I understand the need for a Board of Finance or Board of Apportionment & Taxation is so you have separate from the legislative body of the City and a body that is solely concentrating on the finances and whether or not taxpayer money is unfortunately being spent correctly and responsibly. If you separate those things out and have (1) body that concentrates on ordinances and resources in other ways and separate body looking at is the money being spent responsibly. Is the mill rate being apportioned correctly.

(very difficult to hear Commissioner Sheehy)

Mrs. Laubin stated it sounds like you’re in favor of eliminating the Board of A&T. Commissioner Sheehy stated no I don’t want you think that, absolutely not, believe me. I understand the budget is a brutal process. Mrs. Laubin continued I think, again check and balancing is about democracy without making sure that no one person or interest has complete control with what’s happening with the finances of the City. Right now I think that the process that we’re using where the Board of A&T actually runs the budget hearings has been useful because we have a different set of eyes and ears for who is coming to the table and asking questions that don’t get asked the rest of the year. I would really hate to see that part go away. I would like to see the role of the Board of A&T actually strengthen so that we have more access to good information from the City about the health or lack thereof. We’d like to have your access to the Department Heads to actually meet with them and ask them questions and understand why the money is or is not being spent the way the original budget was laid out. Currently what’s happening is when the Board actually meets, most of the year all that’s happening is the Board of A&T is approving line item transfers within departments from one line item to another. So we have a little bit of a window sometimes in what’s happening in the departments that drives the need for those transfers. But it is very limited. If there were a better, if the Board of Finance or the Board of A&T was more
integrated into as you said that organic process, then we’d have contact with the Finance Director and more contact with the Board of Aldermen with a healthier discussion we could get better results for the taxpayers than we can currently. I think that right now the way things are functioning or not functioning our hands are tied. We were supposed to have a meeting right after the elections, we havn;t even had (1) meeting yet, we havn;t elected a Chair yet and haven’t been able to act on any overexpenditures that are apparent in the budget and that’s from the last Board of Aldermen Finance Committee. It’s very troubling to me right now is the number of that board where we won’t be able to act and not able to do the work that we were elected to do. I certainly don’t want to see the Board be eliminated, I think that if we were able to do more in conjunction with the other boards.

Commissioner DeFilippo asked I’m going to ask you the same question I asked of the Board of Education, the A&T Board is basically appointed board by each political party. You’re really not elected. Mrs. Laubin responded they’ve each out up (3) candidates and because of the composition of the board, there’s (3) Republican and (3) Democrats. Commissioner DeFilippo stated I’m part of the Republican Party Town Committee and we have 40-50 members from which to nominate, I don’t know how much the Democrats have. Maybe 40, so 90 people picked our Finance Committee not the public. Mrs. Laubin responded I’m in favor, I think I suggested to the Board that we could expand the membership of the Board of A&T. I think that there is a misconception generally that most people believe that you have to be a current member of the Town Committee in order to vote for the members of the Town Committee and there’s very little public participation in election of membership in the Town Committee. I think we need more public participation in who chooses the Town Committee and we need more participation in terms on who’s choosing the nominees. I would be in favor in expanding the membership for the composition of the Boiard of A&T so that you an actually get a majority of one party to be elected by the public. Right now, that is the only way that we are gettig any bipartisan participation ion the City of Shelton.

Commissioner DeFilippo continued but our Board of Aldermen are elected, do you have a problem with that? Mrs. Laubin responded they’re elected in the same way that you’re talking about so they were nominated and on the ballot and you get to choose (2) from each ward. I live in the fourth ward, both of the candidates were Republican, if I vote for (2), I’m voting for (2) Republicans, so they were nominated and appointed by the Republican Twon Committee. Commissioner DeFilippo stated and the Democratic Town Committee chose not
to put anyone up. Mrs. Laubin stated yes, that’s the same principle, the Republican Town Committee chose those folks, they’re the only ones on the ballot. Commissioner DeFilippo interjected but if the Democratic Town Committee put up (2) candidates then it would be a real election. You really don’t have that in A&T. Mrs. Laubin responded and we could do that, but you could change that if needed in the Charter. That kind of stuff I don’t have an issue with. What I do have an issue with is the idea that we would take away the real bipartisan participation that we actually have. I’m an attorney, our system of government in part is based on our system of justice in this country, it’s based on an adversarily based system. We have a great Country and have a great system, we think that when we put somebody forward to challenge what is being said you get a better result. You get good questions asked and hopefully you get good answers and you get to the truth. Right now the Board of Aldermen does not have that at all. There are no questions being asked, there are no questions being answered there is no discussion and there is no debate. It’s very difficult to do that and have all of the members coming from one party. Commissioner DeFilippo stated but they are elected by the public. That’s what I’m saying, not a small group, not appointed people, the public is electing these officials. Both parties had that ability to nominate individuals, if one party doesn’t do that is that the other party’s fault? Mrs. Laubin replied no, I think that answers the question, there’s a reason why we in Shelton, we have minority representation rules for some of the other boards and commissions and I think and I hope it’s for the exact reason of what I just talked about. We believe that when we get opposing points of view and have the opportunity to ask and answer challenging questions that ultimately you get a better result and the taxpayers benefit from that. We don’t have that currently on this legislative body and I think we are worst for it. I would like to keep that on the Board of A&T, I think it makes sense to alter the number of members so that you don’t have the issue of breaking ties by the Mayor’s vote. I do believe that it would make some sense, there are a lot of other examples out there, Newtown is only one example of other towns and cities that have minority representation on the Board of Aldermen. Commissioner DeFilippo stated but when you’re electing by district there is no need for that.

END SIDE A, TAPE 1

Commissioner DeFilippo stated I’ll read your comments.
Chairman DebiCella asked any more questions. There were none. Chairman DebiCella thanked everyone that came out as we start this process and would like to declare the Public Hearing adjourned.

Dairman DebiCella adjourned the meeting at 7:14 pm.

Respectfully submitted,

Sophia V Belade

Sophia V. Belade
Charter Revision Clerk
Ethics Commissions

Tue, 2005-11-29 07:43

This is the place to discuss the establishment and the role of an Ethics Commission. The most important issue here is an Ethics Commission’s independence: how important it is and how best a municipality can achieve it. With respect to EC independence and competence, please share your thoughts or experiences regarding regional and state Ethics Commissions vs. municipal ECs. Other important issues include: who can (or cannot) sit on an EC; what limits should be placed on EC members’ political activities; terms of office and term limits; and the removal of EC members for misconduct.

203 Ethics Commission: Establishment; Qualifications of Members; Appointment of Members; Term of Office.
1. There is hereby established an Ethics Commission consisting of five members, plus two alternate members. All members and alternate members must be residents of the city.
2. No member of the Ethics Commission may be, or have been within the three years prior to appointment, an appointed official or employee* of the city. Nor may a member of the Ethics Commission hold office in a political party or be employed or act as a lobbyist. An Ethics Commission member may make campaign contributions but may not participate in any election campaign.
3. Of the regular membership of the Board, no more than two may be registered in the same political party, and at least one must be registered as unaffiliated. The alternate members may not be registered in the same political party.
4. Within sixty days after the effective date of this code, and no later than December 31 each year thereafter, the city’s legislative body will appoint the members of the Ethics Commission from a list of nominees prepared by the local branch of the League of Women Voters.

Comment: Subsection 1: Five is not a magic number for an ethics commission. In large cities, if there is a lot of activity, it would be best to have a larger number of members, and then allow, say, five-member panels for proceedings, and three-member panels for advisory opinions. When there is little activity, it is often difficult to get a quorum at ethics commission meetings, so it is best to keep the number of members low. This is especially important since an ethics commission may only act by the majority vote of its total membership, not just those members who attend a meeting.

Subsection 2: There are constitutional problems with excluding elected officials from ethics commissions. This is a terrible idea to have an elected or appointed official on a commission that is supposed to be independent and without its own conflicts of interest. It undermines the spirit of the ethics code.

Subsection 3: The restriction on political make-up of the board aims to strengthen both the perception and the reality of a board that is not partisan. Ethics commissions must not
become political footballs, because this will undermine trust in them and cause people not to file complaints or seek advisory opinions, nor to have faith in their determinations. For the same reason, this code restricts the political activities of ethics commission members.

Subsection 4: The idea of having one or more nonpartisan civic organizations select a city's ethics commission is unusual, but there are no better alternatives to preventing such a commission from being (and appearing) political or to ensuring that either party cannot block a member of its party from being disciplined or from getting no more than a reprimand. Another alternative is to require that each member be selected by unanimous vote of the legislative body, but this would still allow the parties to trade votes and make the same selections the two party committees would have made (or in fact did make). An ethics commission should be as nonpartisan, and without its own conflicts, as possible, and answerable to no one. Only a nonpartisan body can ensure this, at least on a city level (that is, without having a regional or state commission handle city ethics matters; see the next comment for more on this). In any event, instead of politicians (or even nonpartisan civic organizations) selecting only people they know, a vacancy on an ethics commission should be widely publicized, and citizens who are not politically involved should be encouraged to apply.

Smaller municipalities may form joint or regional ethics commissions. Since, in towns, most politically active residents have personal biases and relationships with those most likely to be brought before an ethics commission, a regional ethics commission can provide a truly neutral, independent solution. The decisions of a regional ethics commission will demand much more respect and make people more certain that ethical matters are not being decided based on local loyalties. In addition, towns lack the resources to educate ethics commission members pursuant to 241, and they have too few matters brought before them to allow members to gain the necessary experience. Another alternative, which several states employ, is to have a state ethics commission deal with municipal as well as state matters (the commission can be the same one, or a separate one that focuses on municipal matters, but has access to the same staff expertise). I would like to hear people's feelings about regional and state ethics commissions, as well as their experiences with them.

5. The term of office of Ethics Commission members is three years and runs from January 1 through December 31, except that, of the regular members first appointed, one member will serve until December 31 of the year in which the Board is established, two regular members and one alternate member will serve until the second December 31, and two regular members and one alternate member will serve until the third December 31.

6. An Ethics Commission member will serve until his or her successor has been appointed, in the same manner as the original appointments. Consecutive service on the Ethics Commission may not exceed two full terms, except that a one-term alternate member may thereafter serve two terms as a regular member, and a two-term alternate member may thereafter serve one term as a regular member.

7. Members of the Ethics Commission will not receive compensation but will be reimbursed for reasonable expenses incurred in the performance of their official duties.

8. The unexcused absence of any member from three consecutive meetings, unless the Ethics Commission has excused the absence for good and sufficient reason, shall constitute a resignation.

Comment: Subsection 5: The terms of office of members should be staggered, to provide continuity in the work and philosophy of the board. Municipalities may wish to increase or decrease the length of the term of office or establish a different year of service than the calendar year. However, terms of office should be sufficiently long to ensure that the members acquire expertise, but not so long as to discourage people from serving on the commission. In addition, ethics commission members should not be allowed to become
Charter Revision Commission 1/30/20
Michelle C. Laubin

Three main points to be made this evening:

(1) Any Charter revision in Shelton must grapple with the need for minority representation on the Board of Aldermen. We currently have an all Republican Board of Aldermen, with no minority representation. When we had one Democrat on the Board of Aldermen, which was the case for many years, he could not even put a motion on the floor for debate, because no one would second his motion. This is not what a democracy looks like. If you’ve been to a meeting of the Board of Aldermen recently (or seen the videos online), you are aware that there is no debate or even explanation provided publicly for any of the motions presented and voted upon. The motions are read, seconded, and there is a vote with all votes being cast in favor of almost every motion raised. All of the work is being done outside of the public eye and there is no attempt made to question or provide information to the public supporting the votes of the legislative council. Again, this is not what a healthy democracy looks like.

There are many models available for minority representation, and I would urge the Commission to look into them. One possibility is electing a certain number of aldermen “at large” who would serve the needs of the community as a whole, and guarantee a certain number of minority representation seats, in addition to the aldermen elected from each ward. So, for example, each ward could elect one alderman from the ward, and then have the other four elected “at large” and guarantee three seats to the minority party. Or, you could limit the number of seats in each ward held by the minority party. The example of Newtown is that for the Legislative Council specifically, no more than 3 of the 4 members from each district may come from the same party, guaranteeing that one member from each ward will be from the minority party.

(2) The section of the charter dealing with the Board of Apportionment and Taxation needs to be revised to make this Board a functional and robust board that provides actual bipartisan oversight of the City budget. Seymour’s charter has some language pertaining to the need for “management and monitoring” of the budget for the current fiscal year, in collaboration with the Finance Director and the board of selectmen, and it specifically references the access that the board has to the records and books of account of the town. Derby also has a similar reference in its charter. These provisions are absent from our charter.

The Fairfield charter references the ability of the board of finance to order audits of the town finances upon a demonstrated need. We in Shelton have had a demonstrated need for an operational audit for several years and no action has been taken. We need a similar provision in our charter.
The Fairfield charter also calls for the appointment of a clerk to the board of finance who is an accountant or other similar person with substantive expertise who can assist the board in fulfilling its responsibilities to the town taxpayers. This would be extremely useful in Shelton.

There are probably other models available that would be useful models for Shelton, and I would urge the Commission to seek those out. If we find useful language, we will certainly forward it to the members of the Commission.

(3) We need to revise the Charter to include the establishment of a real reserve fund that has rules associated with how much money must be maintained in the reserve and when and how the money may be spent. Currently Shelton has no such rules in place, and it is damaging to our bond rating, which ultimately costs the taxpayers of Shelton more money when we have to borrow money, which we seem to have a need for every year. The Stratford charter language is presented for your consideration. Stratford requires a reserve fund of 10% of the prior year's general fund expenditures, and calls for it to be expended only in the case of an emergency for which no other funding has been budgeted or is available, requiring the affirmative vote of 8 members of the town council. A similar model would be a good start in Shelton, and would pave the way for fiscal responsibility.
Chapter 14. Finances

Article XII. Reserve for Emergencies Fund

[Adopted 4-11-1994; amended in its entirety 10-11-2005 by Ord. No. 05-27]


The general fund balance of the Town of Stratford, which is the difference between the assets and liabilities of the Town, shall have included in its fund balance reserve a section titled “Reserved Fund Balance - Reserve for Emergencies Fund.” The Finance Department shall calculate and recommend amounts to be included in each annual budget and the Chief Executive Officer shall include an amount in each annual budget to fund and maintain the Reserve for Emergencies Fund at a level approximating 10% of the prior year’s general fund expenditures. Sources of funding the Reserve for Emergencies Fund may include, without limitation, 50% of the excess of revenues over expenditures for any fiscal year, 50% of the year-to-year reduction in the aggregate principal and interest payments on the Town’s general obligation indebtedness and 50% of unbudgeted or unplanned revenues from the sale of capital assets, recoveries from lawsuits, increases in unrestricted state grants and revenues, and other sources.

§ 14-40. Use of funds.

Amounts on deposit in the Reserve for Emergencies Fund may be maintained on deposit to support or enhance the Town’s general obligation credit rating, or used to finance expenditures designated by the Town Council to be an emergency for which no other funding has been budgeted or is available. Such designation shall require the affirmative vote of eight members of the Town Council.
Chapter 14. Finances

Article X. Risk Management Fund

[Adopted 8-9-1993]

§ 14-35. Creation; purpose.

There is hereby created within the financial accounts of the Town of Stratford an internal service fund, known as the "Risk Management Fund." The Risk Management Fund shall provide for the funding of all claims against the Town, including but not limited to property, crime, liability and employee benefits, as well as establish reserves for future potential losses.

§ 14-36. Disclosure statement; financial activities.

The Risk Management Fund shall disclose and report all activities of the fund at the end of each fiscal year. The Risk Management Fund shall have the authority to charge other funds for services performed, including payment for claims or establishment of reserves for potential losses. All financial activities of the Risk Management Fund shall be conducted in accordance with pronouncements and/or regulations of the Government Accounting Standards Board (GASB).
Chapter 14. Finances

Article XIII. Tax Relief Account

[Adopted 4-11-1994; amended 5-20-1996 by Ord. No. 96-10]

§ 14-41. Transfer of funds to account; percentage to offset tax levy.

[Amended 11-13-2007 by Ord. No. 07-09]
Any funds in the Town of Stratford’s general fund balance that are not reserved or designated for specific purposes shall be transferred to the unreserved fund balance in an account titled “Designated for Subsequent Year Tax Relief.” In each fiscal year, the Town Council of the Town of Stratford may apply an amount of 40% to 60% of the balance in the Designated for Subsequent Year Tax Relief Account to offset the tax levy required to fund the adopted budget for the ensuing fiscal year, but only if the unreserved fund balance will remain greater than 10% of the operating budget for the ensuing year after such amount is so applied.
Chapter 14. Finances

Article XXII. Department of Finance Publications

[Adopted 6-13-2016 by Ord. No. 16-01]

§ 14-61. Nonpayroll disbursements.

The Department of Finance shall publish on the Town of Stratford’s website a list or database of the nonpayroll disbursements for the Town of Stratford and its enterprise funds and shall update such lists or databases monthly.


The Department of Finance shall publish on the Town of Stratford’s website a report of the fiscal year-to-date revenues and expenditures by budget line item for the Town of Stratford and its enterprise funds and shall update such reports monthly.
CHARTER
Newtown Police Department, the Chief of Police, or any other **Town Body**.

(5) Board of Fire Commissioners: Eligibility to serve on the Fire Commission is described in Subsection 2-235(b).

(6) Building Appeals Board: Members shall be qualified by training and experience on matters pertaining to building construction. Subsection 2-05(a) shall not apply.

(7) Public Building and Site Commission: Members shall include those who are qualified by training and experience on matters pertaining to building design, construction or contractual instruments.

**2-10 Minority Representation**

(a) Except as specifically provided in this section, the maximum number of members of a **Town Body**, whether elected or appointed, who are members of the same political party shall be determined in accordance with the provisions of Section 9-167a of the **General Statutes**. In addition, the maximum number of alternate members for any given board or commission shall also conform to the provisions of 9-167a.

**To Wit:**

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more than 9: 2/3rds of total membership

(b) Exceptions are as follows:

(1) Legislative Council: The number of members of any one political party who may serve on the Legislative Council
shall not exceed 3 of the 4 members elected from each
Legislative Council District.

(2) Board of Education: The number of members of any one
political party who may serve on the Board of Education
shall not exceed 4.

(3) Police Commission: The number of members of any one
political party who may serve on the Police Commission
shall not exceed 3.

(4) Board of Managers of the Edmond Town Hall: At each
regular Town Election, 2 members of the Board of
Managers of the Edmond Town Hall shall be elected,
neither of whom may be members of the same political
party.

(5) Board of Fire Commissioners: Provided members are
appointed as set forth in this Charter, the Board of Fire
Commissioners shall be exempt from the provisions for
minority representation.

(6) Board of Ethics: At no time shall more than 3 regular
members and one alternate member of the Board of
Ethics be of the same political party.

(7) Public Building and Site Commission: The Public Building
and Site Commission shall have no more than 4 members
and one alternate member from one political party.

(8) Justices of the Peace: The political affiliation of Justices of
the Peace shall be determined as provided in the General
Statutes [see Section 9-183a, et seq.].

(c) As provided in Section 9-167a of the General Statutes,
minority representation limitations in Subsection 2-10(a)
shall not apply to regional bodies.

2-15 Terms and Term Limits

(a) The term lengths and term limits, if any, for every elected
official, elected or appointed member of Town Bodies are
set forth in sections establishing said office or Town Body.

(b) The terms of office of all elected officials shall commence on
the December 1st following their election unless otherwise
the city; and such powers and duties which, on the effective date of this Charter were conferred by law. The form of all ordinances shall be as follows: "Be it ordained by the Board of Aldermen/Aldermen of the City of Derby." No such ordinance shall take effect until the same has been published as may be required by, Connecticut General Statutes §7-157, as the same may be amended from time to time.

Board of Apportionment and Taxation.

Sec. 27. Generally.
The Board of Apportionment and Taxation shall consist of ten members who shall be elected and hold office as hereinafter provided. The Mayor of said city shall, ex officio, be a member of said Board of Apportionment and Taxation and shall preside at the meetings of the Board. Said Board shall elect one of its members as Chairperson to act in the absence of the Mayor. Seven members of the Board, exclusive of the Mayor, shall constitute a quorum, and the concurrence of seven votes shall be necessary for the transaction of business. The meetings of said Board shall be called by the Town/City Clerk on request of the Mayor or, in his/her absence, on request of the Chairperson of the Board. The Town/City Clerk shall be Clerk of said Board and shall make and keep true records of all the votes and proceedings of said Board, which shall at all reasonable times be open to public inspection and be preserved with the records of the city. No more than six persons of the ten persons elected as members of the Board of Apportionment and Taxation shall belong to the same political party. In such election, the winners shall be determined as under existing law with the following exception: The Town/City Clerk shall prepare a list of the candidates ranked from top to bottom according to the number of votes each receives; when the number of members of any one political party who would be elected exceeds six, only the candidates of such political party with the highest number of votes up to the limit of such maximum of six members shall be elected, and the names of the remaining candidates of such political party shall be stricken from the list. The remaining four members of said Board shall be elected from the next highest ranking candidates remaining on said list. Nothing contained herein shall be construed so as to prevent any elector from writing upon the ballot, in the space provided by law, the name of any person for such office.
Sec. 28. Powers and duties.
Said Board shall have authority to require different city officers to furnish all the information which they may possess and to exhibit all books, contracts, reports, papers and documents in their respective departments or in their possession requisite, in the opinion of said Board, to enable it to discharge the duties imposed upon it by this act. Said Board shall lay such taxes as may be required upon the grand list of the city which shall have been made according to law next before the laying of such tax. Each Board of the city government and each officer of the city under whose control money is expended shall, on or before the first day of April in each year, submit to said Board an estimate of the amount of money required by such Board or such officer for the next ensuing year, giving details as far as practicable. Said Board, at a meeting thereof to be held in May in each year, shall prepare an estimate of the amounts required by each department of the city government for the ensuing year, giving particulars as far as possible, and recommending appropriations for all the city expenses for said year and shall cause such estimates forthwith to be published in a newspaper published in New Haven County and having a circulation in said city. Said Board shall hold a meeting in May in each year, and may adjourn the same from time to time to a day not later than the last business day of May and at said meeting or any adjournment thereof, it shall hear all parties who may desire to be heard relative to any alterations in such estimates and appropriations, and may make any alterations in such estimates and appropriations, and may make such additional appropriations as it shall deem proper. Said Board, having made such alterations as it may determine, shall prepare a statement of appropriations and tax rates which it proposes to make and levy. Said Board is authorized to make appropriations and lay taxes for all city purposes and for all other purposes required by law and may fix the time when any tax laid by it shall become due and payable. The Board of Apportionment and Taxation shall have no authority to make appropriations in excess of the revenues of the city for any year, and in no case shall the expenses of the city exceed its revenue for any year, except in cases and for purposes for which the city is authorized by special act of the General Assembly to issue bonds and when bonds are in fact so issued.

No money other than that appropriated as aforesaid shall be expended for any purpose unless a special appropriation therefor shall first be approved by seven votes taken by yeas and nays of the members thereof but said Board shall have no authority to make any such special appropriation unless the unappropriated revenues of the city are
sufficient for the purpose. If a special appropriation in excess of the unappropriated revenues of the city is required for any purpose, an estimate of the same shall be prepared by the Mayor and submitted to the Board of Apportionment and Taxation at a special meeting called for that purpose; and said Board, at said meeting, or any adjournment thereof, shall have authority to make any such appropriation and to lay a special tax to meet the same; but no such appropriation shall be made unless a special tax is laid sufficient to cover the amount by which such appropriation exceeds the unappropriated revenues of the city. Any appropriation, regular or special, so made, for any specific purpose shall not be expended for any other purpose, and, if unexpended shall be returned to the City Treasurer within fifteen days after the expiration of the fiscal year for which it is made. All appropriations thus made shall remain on the said City's books to the credit of the specific purposes respectively for which they are made, not exceeding fifteen days after the expiration of the fiscal year for which they are so made for the purpose of paying bills lawfully contracted during such fiscal year and which are properly chargeable to said appropriations, and said appropriation shall remain applicable to such specific purposes and to be applied thereto, during said period.

**Sec. 29. Annual appropriation for certain charities.**

Said Board of Apportionment and Taxation shall annually appropriate the sum of one thousand dollars for the Griffin Hospital of said city and shall annually appropriate the sum of five hundred dollars for the Derby Neck Library Association, and may appropriate for any charitable or civic purposes such sum as it may determine.

**Sec. 30. Disposition of unused appropriations.**

When any appropriation shall have been made and for any reason such appropriation, or any part thereof, shall not be used, excepting any appropriation made for any school purpose, such appropriation, or any unused part thereof, as the case may be, shall, upon the unanimous vote of the entire Board of Aldermen/Alderwomen and of the entire Board of Apportionment and Taxation and with the approval of the Mayor, become unappropriated revenue of the city.

**Sec. 31. Liability of city officials for expenses beyond appropriations.**

No official of said city shall, either directly or indirectly, incur any expense or obligation on behalf of the city in excess of the amount appropriated for the use of the department.
for which such official is charged; and in case any official said city shall contract any 
debt or obligation in the name of the city in excess of the appropriation made to be 
expired by such official, such official shall be liable upon his/her bond for the excess 
beyond the appropriation properly applicable thereto, and said city shall not in any case 
be liable for such excess.

Finance Director

Sec. 31. Generally.
The Mayor shall appoint a Finance Director, subject to the approval of the Board of 
Aldermen/Aldermen. The Finance Director shall be paid an annual salary that is 
appropriate based upon qualifications, experience and performance, as adopted by the 
Board of Aldermen/Aldermen. At a minimum, the Finance Director shall possess the 
following qualifications:

(a) A bachelor’s of science degree in the field of business, accounting, finance or such 
other related field, and either (1) at least seven years’ experience in the field of finance 
or (2) at least five years experience as a licensed Certified Public Accountant;
or
(b) A master’s degree in business administration or such other related field, and at least 
five years’ experience in the field of finance;

The Mayor may appoint an Assistant Finance Clerk who shall assist the Finance 
Director, and at the request of the Finance Director, perform the duties and exercise the 
authority of the Finance Director. In case of a vacancy in the office of the Finance 
Director, the Assistant Finance Clerk shall perform all necessary duties as the Finance 
Director until the Mayor shall fill such vacancy.

Sec. 33. Duties in General
The Finance Director shall be the chief fiscal officer of the City, and the head of the 
Finance Department. The Finance Director shall keep, in books provided for that 
purpose, accounts of each of the city departments with such city officers as may be 
designated by the Mayor, and such other accounts as the ordinances may provide for.
Said Finance Director shall prescribe the form of all accounts and shall keep a separate 
account of each item of the appropriations and shall require all orders to state
Section 7.1. - Board of Finance.

There shall be a Board of Finance consisting of seven (7) members who shall be elected for a term of four (4) years. Except as otherwise specifically provided by this Charter, the Board of Finance shall have such powers and duties as are or may be imposed or vested by the Connecticut General Statutes upon Boards of Finance and shall perform all acts required of said Board by the Town or necessary to carry into effect the powers and duties imposed upon said Board of Finance by law. No regular member of the Board of Finance shall be employed by the Town of Seymour or serve on any other elected or permanent appointed board. A limit of one Board of Finance member may serve on each temporary appointed committee.

No less than four (4) members shall constitute a quorum and a majority, and a minimum of three (3) affirmative votes is necessary to pass a motion.

Section 7.2. - General powers and duties.

The Board of Finance shall be the budget making authority of the Town and shall be responsible for:

(a) The preparation of the budget for the following fiscal year and/or years.

(b) The management and monitoring of the budget for the current fiscal year. The Board shall coordinate its efforts with the Finance Director, the Finance Department and the Board of Selectmen. The Board of Finance shall have access at all reasonable times to the records and books of account of the Town, Town-aided organizations, and of the Board of Education.

(c) In conjunction with all other boards of the Town and with the direct assistance from the Finance Director, as well as the Board of Selectmen, the development of a long range financial plan for the Town.
(4) Give a receipt for all money received to the person from whom it was received.

C. Staffing. All expenses of the Town Clerk's office, including necessary clerical assistance and Assistant Town Clerks, shall be paid by the Town within the limit of the appropriation therefor.

D. Assistant Town Clerks. The Town Clerk may appoint Assistant Town Clerks. Assistant Town Clerks shall be under the supervision of the Town Clerk and shall perform such duties as the Town Clerk specifies.

E. Compensation. In lieu of all fees and other compensation, the Town Clerk shall receive a salary fixed by the Board of Finance.

F. Ordinances and votes. The Town Clerk shall publish notice of action concerning ordinances in accordance with this Charter. All ordinances and RTM votes shall be recorded by the Town Clerk in books kept for the purpose.

G. Reports to Assessor and Tax Collector. The Town Clerk shall promptly file with the Assessor and Tax Collector a complete abstract of all deeds and conveyances of land or of personal property, or of certificates of intention to transfer personal property, placed in the custody of the Town Clerk for record.

H. Vacancy. A vacancy in the office of Town Clerk shall be filled by the Board of Selectmen from a member of the same political party until the next election where the vacancy can be filled.

§ 7.2. Other elected officers.

A. Establishment and election. There shall be seven Constables and 45 Justices of the Peace elected or nominated in the manner and for the terms prescribed in Section 2.2.

B. Powers and duties. Constables and Justices of the Peace shall have the powers and duties prescribed by the General Statutes for their respective offices.

C. Vacancies. Vacancies in the offices of Constable and Justice of the Peace shall be filled in the manner prescribed in Chapter 146 of the General Statutes (C.G.S. § 9-164 et seq.).

ARTICLE VIII
Elected Boards and Commissions
§ 8.1. In general.

A. Establishment and election. There shall be a board of education, a board of finance, a board of assessment appeals, a town plan and zoning commission, and a zoning board of appeals. The members of each board and commission shall be elected at the times and for the terms set forth in Section 2.3 of this Charter.

B. Meetings.

(1) All elected boards and commissions, except the Board of Assessment Appeals, shall hold at least 10 regular stated meetings a year and shall give annual notice of such meetings as required by the General Statutes. Officers of each board and commission, except the Board of Selectmen, shall be elected annually at an organization meeting so noticed by the Town Clerk held in the month of December.

(2) Each elected board and commission shall keep an accurate record of all its official acts, votes, meetings, and proceedings and shall designate one of its members or its clerk to keep such record. The minutes and records of boards and commissions shall be public records and shall be open for public inspection at the office of the Town Clerk, or in the office, if any, of the department involved, during regular business hours.

(3) All regular meetings of elected boards and commissions shall be open to the public except for executive sessions permitted by the General Statutes, and all elected boards and commissions shall comply with state freedom of information laws.

(4) Robert’s Rules of Order shall regulate the conduct of all meetings of elected boards and commissions unless a particular board or commission otherwise specifies.

C. Vacancies. A vacancy in the membership of any elected board or commission shall be filled in the manner prescribed in Section 2.5 of this Charter.

§ 8.2. Board of Education.

A. Composition. The Board of Education shall consist of nine members, no more than six of whom shall be registered with the same political party.

B. Powers and duties. The Board of Education shall have all the powers and duties conferred on boards of education generally by Chapter 170 of the General Statutes.

§ 8.3. Board of Finance.
A. Composition. The Board of Finance shall consist of nine voting members, no more than six of whom shall be registered with the same political party, and the Board of Selectmen and the Fiscal Officer, ex officio, without vote.

B. Powers and duties. The Board of Finance shall appoint the outside auditors and shall have all of the powers and duties conferred by this Charter, by ordinance, and upon boards of finance generally by Chapter 106 of the General Statutes.

C. Clerk of the Board of Finance. The Board of Finance shall appoint a clerk and fix the clerk's salary. The clerk shall hold office at the pleasure of the Board of Finance. The clerk may be part time. The clerk shall:

1. Keep minutes of Board meetings and be the custodian of its books, papers, and data relating to the conduct of its business;

2. Be a certified or a licensed public accountant or otherwise have experience in the financial field; and

3. Have the right to call upon all Town departments, boards, commissions, committees, authorities, and officers for such information as the clerk may reasonably require in connection with the duties of the clerk and responsibilities of the Board of Finance.

D. Assessment system. The Board of Finance shall install and shall modernize from time to time a system by which equitable and just values of taxable property within the Town may be ascertained. The system shall provide, among other things, for the collection of data relating to each parcel of land and to each building within the Town and for the arrangement of such data in convenient and practical form for the use of the Assessor. The system may provide for the preparation and upkeep of tax maps and land maps, in the discretion of the Board of Finance.

E. Approval of budgets. The Board of Finance shall approve the Town budget in the manner set forth in Article XII of this Charter.

§ 8.4. Board of Assessment Appeals.

A. Composition. The Board of Assessment Appeals shall consist of five members, to be elected in accordance with Chapter 146 of the General Statutes (C.G.S. § 9-164 et seq.).

B. Powers and duties. The Board of Assessment Appeals shall have all the powers and duties conferred on boards of assessment appeals generally by §§ 12-110 to 12-117 of Chapter 203 of the General Statutes.