



CITY OF SHELTON
CHARTER REVISION COMMISSION
WORKSHOP MINUTES
February 18, 2020
Room 104, City Hall

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

- CALL TO ORDER

Chairman Debicella called the Workshop of the Charter Revision Commission to order at 7:04 pm.

- GENERAL DISCUSSION

Commission was forward all correspondence that has been submitted via email. (attached)

Commission discussed certain sections of the Charter that were either brought up at the Public Hearing of January 30 or from correspondence received after a letter that was sent to all Boards and Commissions. Chairman Debicella handed out a spreadsheet with highlighted sections from submitted considerations. (attached)

The Commission will continue to accept and consider any suggestions regarding changes to the Charter either through email at SheltonCharter2020@gmail.com or the public can submit in writing at any time in the Mayor's Office.

The next Workshop is scheduled for Monday, March 2, 2020 at 7:00 pm in Room 104 at City Hall.

Commissioner Parkins motioned to adjourn. Commission Ritter seconded the motion.

A voice vote was taken; motion passed unanimously.

Chairman Debicella adjourned the meeting at 9:07 pm.

Respectfully submitted,

Sophia V Belade

Sophia V. Belade
Charter Revision Clerk

Gene Sullivan

To: sheltoncharter2020@gmail.com
Subject: Some suggestions for Revision 2020

Chairman Debicella,

We have not met but look forward toward that time.

I have been the Purchasing Agent for the past 13 years for the City of Shelton, and have enjoyed working with the various departments in their procurement needs, procedures, and in answering questions along the lines of State Statutes when needed. I have enjoy working with everyone at the City and there are times where it has been challenging.

Per your email asking for idea's for the Revision of the City Charter 2020 below are a few. It seems like yesterday that the City went thru a revision in 2012.

First and foremost, I like to suggest that the board consider upping the limits for the procurement of goods or services. We did increase the limits for both quotes and bidding last time around.

Those limits are:

Purchase Orders/(Contracts if applicable) are needed for all purchases from 100.00 dollars and up.

Quoting limits are from 2,000 to 7,500 dollars and need a purchase order/contract(if applicable). No quotes are needed for purchases under 2,000 dollars but do need a purchase order/(contract if applicable).

I am asking you and your committee to grant my request in an effort to expedite, and to adjust for inflation. I am suggesting to move the dollar amount to 100 dollars to 4,999 no quotes, and from 5,000 dollars up to 15,000 (3) quotes. 15,000 + go out to bid. There has been no adjustments or increases since 2012.

As you can see, Ansonia's and Seymour's requirement for bidding is 25,000, and Derby's is 15,000. Shelton is by far larger in population, larger in office staff, progressive in its business friendly approach, larger in its infrastructure and these adjustments can save time and costs.

I asked some surrounding towns of their thresholds and they all are different. For example:

Trumbull 0-1,000 need purchase order or contract if applicable, no quotes
1,000 to 10,000 need three quotes, purchase order or contract if applicable
10,000 + require bidding, need purchase order or contract if applicable
And will be asking for an increase

Fairfield 0-3000 need purchase orders or contract if applicable, no quotes
3,000 – 15,000 need quotes, and purchase order and contract if applicable
15,000 + require bidding, purchase order or contract if applicable
Most likely will be asking for an increase

Stratford 0-7,999 three quotes
7,500 + out to bid
Going to ask for an increase

Town Clerk

From: Dan Debicella <sheltoncharter2020@gmail.com>
Sent: Monday, February 17, 2020 8:31 PM
To: Town Clerk
Subject: Fwd: Charter Suggestions

----- Forwarded message -----

From: **Joseph Knapik** <josknapik56@gmail.com>
Date: Tue, Feb 11, 2020 at 12:17 PM
Subject: Charter Suggestions
To: <sheltoncharter2020@gmail.com>

general-1-Have a+t responsibilities be on a par with other communities. 2-Retain political organization of a+t. timeliness and transparency-3-All departmental budget requests go forthwith to a+t.4-On all a+T meeting cancellations to the city clerk, the finance director will state that no further requests are pending.5- All a+t mtg. materials will be supplied 48 hours in advance to a+t members.6- Dept. heads will appear before a+t to support transfers. The city must support a+t efforts. Joe Knapik- member a+t.

Town Clerk

From: Dan Debicella <sheltoncharter2020@gmail.com>
Sent: Monday, February 17, 2020 8:31 PM
To: Town Clerk
Subject: Fwd: Charter Suggestion

----- Forwarded message -----

From: **Fran Jones** <f.jones@cityofshelton.org>
Date: Thu, Feb 13, 2020 at 12:45 PM
Subject: Charter Suggestion
To: sheltoncharter2020@gmail.com <sheltoncharter2020@gmail.com>

Chairman Debicella,

I would first like to congratulate you and the committee for your appointment and commitment to our community through your service to improving our cities governing document.

As the Fire Chief of the Shelton Fire Department, and a resident of the community I would like to ask that I may be included in any deliberations or discussions to the sections of the City Charter which pertain to the fire department or emergency services specifically Section 6.9 Public Safety and subsections 6.9.3 Fire Department 6.9.3.1, 6.9.3.2, 6.9.3.3, 6.9.3.3.1, 6.9.3.4, 6.9.3.5, 6.9.4, 6.9.4.1, 6.9.4.2, 6.9.4.3, 6.9.5, 6.9.5.1, 6.9.5.2, 6.9.6 which may be recommended for amendments. In order to provide the committee some history or insight during your deliberations.

I have one recommendation as it pertains to Section 6.9.3.2 Board of Fire Commissioners.

It appears there could be a potential conflict in the future with language contained with Section 5.4 General Provisions of Boards and Commissions. Although, this section discusses only Boards and Commissions contained in Chapter 5 and the BOFC's does not fall within that section. The BOFC's generally abide by this section.

The area of concern is found in Section 6.9.3.2 contained in the third sentence. "Company Commissioners shall be elected by the members of each independent company in such a manner as may be provided in the bylaws thereof"

Although, it has yet to occur, but depending on how the individual company bylaws are written, in which they are separate from city oversight in how the bylaws are written or may be amended can create a conflict within the charter.

One such conflict would be a member which resides outside of the City of Shelton and not an elector of the City could be voted in as a Fire Commissioner. Since, the Commissioners have broad oversight of long range, capital improvement and the department budget. I believe that the Fire Commissioners should be an elector(s) of the City. As found in Section 5.4 General Provisions Subsection (b) "Members shall be elector of the City".

Thank you again for your service and consideration of my requests.

Fran
Francis T. Jones III
Fire Chief
Shelton Fire Department

Town Clerk

From: Dan Debicella <sheltoncharter2020@gmail.com>
Sent: Monday, February 17, 2020 8:32 PM
To: Town Clerk
Subject: Fwd: Charter revision

----- Forwarded message -----

From: **Diana Meyer** <dimeyer@sheltonpublicschools.org>
Date: Sun, Feb 16, 2020 at 2:55 PM
Subject: Charter revision
To: <sheltoncharter2020@gmail.com>

Thank you for your letter inviting me, as an elected official, to contact you regarding the charter revision. First I would like to point out that the spelling of my first name was wrong on your correspondence. It is Diana and you had it as Diane. If you could correct in any future correspondence I would appreciate it.

I would echo the concerns of the citizens that spoke at the public hearing in front of the charter commission. There is no balance in town. It is one party calling all the shots and there is no healthy discussion when decisions are made. We need more than one viewpoint. And we also need the proper checks and balances in place with a robust A&T committee.

Also troubling me today is the article in the Middletown Press:

https://www.middletownpress.com/news/article/Dan-Haar-Across-towns-cash-funds-reveal-15058144.php?fbclid=IwAR2LvK4J6Anh_F0zCW0MLDkA9dailceWoWNFXQGiCbECaXzGgMLskkmnmkk

We have no rainy day fund. We are playing it too close to the edge. I am hoping the charter revision commission can implement some controls so we don't have this as an ongoing issue.

Sincerely,
Diana Meyer

The Board of Education complies with all applicable federal, state and local laws prohibiting the exclusion of any person from any of its educational programs or activities because of race, color, religious creed, gender, age, national origin, ancestry, marital status, orientation, gender identity or expression, disability, past or present history of mental disorder, physical disability, genetic information, or any other basis prohibited by Connecticut state and/or general nondiscrimination laws.

Shelton Charter Revision 2020

Full List of Ideas

Appointments

Idea	Relevant Charter Section(s)	Early Commission Discussion
1) The Board of Ethics should consist of people chosen from a pool approved by civic organizations (e.g., Chamber of Commerce, LWV, United Way)	Section 5.3.5	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Unfavorable disposition • Not likely a workable solution due to undemocratic nature of organizations, geographic issues (most are not purely Shelton-based), and lack of proof they would be any better at finding good candidates than normal process
2) Boards should have the power to fill vacancies in the event the Mayor or Aldermen fail to do so in a reasonable time (e.g. 60 or 90 days).	Section 9.6.2(b)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • No disposition • How much on an issue is this? • Possibility of interim appointments?
3) P&Z and Inland Wetlands should not be involved with Administrator selection, which should be left to the Mayor.	Section 5.1.4(a) Section 5.2.5	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • No disposition • Options could include the Commissions making recommendations to Mayor, but him having the final ability to choose whomever he wants • Do state statutes proscribe this? And does 2018 State Supreme Court ruling make that irrelevant?
4) For all appointed Boards and Commissions, the Mayor shall nominate and the Board of Aldermen shall confirm all members.	Section 5	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Favorable disposition • Need to understand if there is a logic to why the Mayor appoints some and the BOA appoints some (e.g., financial responsibility)?

Term Lengths

Idea	Relevant Charter Section(s)	Early Commission Discussion
1) P&Z Alternatives should be 4 year terms rather than 2 years.	Section 2.4.1(f)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • No disposition • Do state statutes proscribe this? And does 2018 State Supreme Court ruling make that irrelevant?
2) Board of Education terms should be 4 years staggered.	Section 2.2.1	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • No disposition • Need to discuss in the context of structural suggestions for the Board of Education
3) ZBA has no terms, and should.	Section 5.2.2	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Favorable disposition
4) Terms of various appointed boards should be standardized (e.g., 2 years or 4 years)	Section 5.2	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Favorable disposition • However, need to understand if there is a logic to why there are different term lengths. In absence of logic, we will standardize – but if there is good reason for different terms we will maintain as-is
5) Should we consider any term limits?	Various (depends on position)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Unfavorable disposition • Feeling that frequent elections serve as the best term limits
6) Change the term of the Mayor from 2 to 4 years	Section 2.4.1	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Unfavorable disposition • Feeling that accountability to voters more important than longer-term stability benefits
7) Library Board terms should be reduced from 6 years to 2 or 4 years	TBD	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • New Item

Voting

Idea	Relevant Charter Section(s)	Early Commission Discussion
1) We should clarify whether Board members need to be present to vote, or can vote over the phone.	New (Probably Section 5.4)	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Favorable disposition• Need to discuss if there is “minimum technology level” or leave that vague• Need to have a minimum of people physically present (two-thirds? Three-fourths?)
2) Charter should define what consists a quorum for various Boards and Commissions	New (Probably Section 5.4)	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Favorable disposition• Need to discuss specifically what this would look like.
3) Board of Aldermen should be able to pass with majority of those present and voting, not absolute majority	Section 4.3.2	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• No disposition• Should make this align with any quorum definition we have for all Boards
4) Voters may choose up to 5 candidates for the Board of Education (rather than current up to 9). Note: Need to check if this violates state statute	Section 2.2.1	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• No disposition (mixed views)• What do other towns do?• Do state statutes proscribe this? And does 2018 State Supreme Court ruling make that irrelevant?

Budget

Idea	Relevant Charter Section(s)	Early Commission Discussion
1) We should have a formal reserve requirement.	New (Probably Section 7)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Unfavorable disposition • Should not be mandated by Charter, but up to elected officials to decide • Non-dedicated reserves are not always needed because of low revenue volatility and ability to borrow/bond. An artificial tax increase.
2) The Board of Aldermen may establish standards for budget submissions that all departments (including Board of Education) must adhere to.	Section 7.1(a)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Favorable disposition • Creates standardization in the budget process
3) Increase the amount before Purchasing Agent must go out to bid (based on inflation and benchmarking other towns) Possibly \$5k-\$15k get three quotes, and \$15k+ go out to bid	Section 7.14	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Favorable disposition • Want more information on what other towns do • Want to discuss with the Purchasing Agent
4) Is 2% the right level to trigger a referendum to approve bonding (want to benchmark other towns)?	Section 7.15	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Favorable disposition • Want more information on what other towns do • Want to discuss with the Finance Director
5) Separate out bonding trigger for roads versus anything else	Section 7.15	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • No disposition • Do any other towns do this? • Needs further discussion

<p>6) Allow the Board of Education more time to submit their budget (as most complex)</p>	<p>Section 7.1(a)</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Favorable disposition • Need to determine what is workable within the budget timeline
<p>7) Shift the City's fiscal year start to later in the year (Oct or Jan), and shift budgeting process until after General Assembly finalizes state budget</p>	<p>TBD</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • No disposition • Need to determine what is required by State Statutes
<p>8) Board of A&T Operations:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • All departmental budget requests go forthwith to A&T. • On all A&T meeting cancellations to the city clerk, the finance director will state that no further requests are pending. • All A&T mtg. materials will be supplied 48 hours in advance to a+t members. • Dept. heads will appear before A&T to support transfer 	<p>Section 7.10</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Unfavorable disposition • Linked to structural discussions on A&T (see next section)

Board Structure & Composition

Idea	Relevant Charter Section(s)	Early Commission Discussion
1) The Board of Aldermen should have minority representation and either be increased from 8 to 12 (no more than 2 from one party per Ward) or have At-Large aldermen.	Section 2.2.1 Section 2.2.4(f) Section 4	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • No disposition • Requires further discussion and analysis
2) We should increase the number of wards to 5, and increase the number of Aldermen to 10.	Section 2.2.1 Section 4	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • No disposition • Requires further discussion and analysis
3) We should have both geographic wards and at-large Aldermen	Section 2.2.1 Section 4	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • No disposition • Requires further discussion and analysis
4) The Board of Education should be elected in a non-partisan manner (no parties listed).	Section 5.1.2	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • No disposition • Requires further discussion and analysis
5) The Board of Education should have a maximum of 6 members from any political party.	Section 5.1.2	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • No disposition • Requires further discussion and analysis
6) The Board of Education should be elected by Ward, with 2 from each Ward and one at-large. (All from any party)	Section 5.1.2	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • No disposition • Requires further discussion and analysis
7) The Board of Education should be expanded to 12, with 3 elected by Ward (no more than 2 from any party)	Section 5.1.2	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • No disposition • Requires further discussion and analysis

8) The Board of Planning and Zoning should be changed from six members to an odd number (5 or 7).	Section 2.2.1 Section 5.1.4	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Favorable disposition • Right now requires 2/3 vote to get anything passed—too high a requirement
9) Eliminate the Board of A&T (and transfer line-item transfer power to the Finance Committee of the Board of Aldermen)	Section 2.2.1 Section 5.1.1 (Various others where Board of A&T is mentioned)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Favorable disposition • Want to vest all financial authority in democratically elected Board of Aldermen
10) Give the Board A&T more budgetary authority (similar to a Board of Finance) and expand to seven members	Section 2.2.1 Section 5.1.1	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Unfavorable disposition • Want to vest all financial authority in democratically elected Board of Aldermen
11) Add requirement that Fire Commissioners be electors of the City of Shelton. (Says it in Section 5 for other Boards and Commissions)	Section 6.9.3.2	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Favorable disposition

General

Idea	Relevant Charter Section(s)	Early Commission Discussion
1) The Aldermen shall call another Charter revision no later than April 1, 2030.	Section 2.8	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Favorable disposition
2) Change “Administrative Assistant” to “Chief Administrative Officer”	Section 6.1	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Favorable disposition to change the title, but need to think harder about what to change it to.
3) Can there be a limitation of certain types of development by Ward?	New Section	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Unfavorable disposition• Probably illegal under State Statute.• Not interested in putting this in chart even if legal (leave it up to elected officials to decide)