



Keith Chapman
Town Manager


TOWN OF NEWINGTON

200 Garfield Street
Newington, Connecticut 06111

Office of the Town Council

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Town Clerk

2022 Charter Revision Commission Meeting Minutes

June 1, 2022

This meeting was presented as a Zoom Webinar/Hybrid Meeting.

1. Call to Order

Chairman Harpie called the meeting to order at 6:30 p.m.

Roll Call

Joe Harpie

Kevin Borrup *(via Zoom)*

Nancy Cappello

Anthony Gonsalves *(via Zoom)*

Chris Miner *(via Zoom)*

Also in attendance:

Beth De!Buono, Mayor

James Krupienski, Town Clerk

2. Pledge of Allegiance

3. Public Participation on Agenda Items *(Via Zoom Application or Phone)*

(2 Minute Time Limit per Speaker) (888) 788-0099 or (877) 853-5247)

- Jay Bottalico, 37 Valley View Drive Chairman of the Parks & Recreation Board. Mr. Bottalico stated that they polled the board and agreed to a 7 member board with a 4-3 majority and two alternates from each party.
- Don Woods, 82 Ivy Lane, Vice Chairman of the Parks & Recreation Board. Mr. Woods stated that the board has always been eleven members, have been on board for over 30 years, and just over the past few years have developed a problem with quorum. With an eleven member board you need 6 people to meet. We started discussing options. One, make the board smaller with 7 member board. We rely on members to participate in all of our events. The idea was then to have 7 member – 4 majority, 3 minority and 2 alternates, one from each party. Eleven members worked well for many years; only the past three years the quorum became difficult.
- Mr. Bottalico stated that he is not sure if alternates would work. What is the point of showing up if you can't vote. A lot of the members work at the Extravaganza and other functions. Volunteerism is terrible now.
- Mr. Woods stated that there is no easier answer. The board is not political, bipartisan. It is a great board, proud to be on it. These are just suggestions. If you don't like it just keep it as it is.
- Chairman Harpie asked if it were kept at 11, how would you overcome the lack of quorum issues.
- Mr. Bottalico stated that we were able to solve that problem and people are attending meetings.
- Mr. Woods stated that there was a conversation amongst the groups and people understand the need to come to meetings. It shouldn't be considered political. Just want board to continue to do the work.
- Mr. Bottalico stated that the board was polled and we all agree.

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- Commissioner Cappello asked if you can do everything with just seven members.
 - Mr. Woods stated that it would be a stretch for the Extravaganza and the Water Fall Festival
 - Chairman Harpie stated that the council is looking at this and if it needs to be reduced it will be. We have one commission here this evening that hasn't had a quorum in over a year.
 - Mr. Woods stated that board serves a very important job, never political, just what is right for the town. Results speak for themselves.
 - Chairman Harpie stated that your comments will be noted in our report and recommendations to the council.
 - Jaime Trevethan, 19 Foster Street. Here as Director of the Newington Senior and Disabled Center. Was a town employee for 15 years and worked on the 2007 and 2012 Charter revisions; understand how this process works. Would like to discuss the membership on the Commission on Aging & Disabled. That is the body that oversees the operations of the Senior & Disabled Center. It is an appointed board of 9 members by the town council and they are apolitical. The commission sets the general tone of direction for the senior center; they set membership requirements and fees (or waive them if necessary); they have to approve purchases over \$500 which is a miniscule amount when you have to buy things you need to operate on a day-to-day basis. We have not had a quorum for our commission in 13 months; we have had only 4 active members in the past 13 months. Prior to that, as far as I can remember, there have never been 9 members appointed to our commission. Apologies for coming to you this late in the process. We have been trying to problem solve. Each month our meeting is cancelled, I send a detailed report of all of our operations to the 4 board members, the town council liaisons, and a plea to have people appointed to the commission. The town clerk has been helpful in trying to find solutions about a lack of quorum and the town manager is also aware. The problem is when this commission does not meet, we cannot do the things I outline in the memo, but we lose a critical line of communication to the town council and the public. Our department serves any senior over the age of 55 in Newington and any adult over the age of 18 in Newington. We operate fine without the commission, but it has become an issue now and it's starting to prevent us moving forward as a department.
 - Chairman Harpie as Ms. Trevethan how they work around this issue as a department.
 - Ms. Trevethan stated that during COVID we were able to delay a lot of purchases. I've recently had discussion with the town manager and finance director because we are at the point where we need this extra help in order to operate. We need to send out membership renewals and have a lot of decisions to make and they are helping us work around that, but the proper way to do it is through an appointed commission. We have been trying to problem solve on to operate within our commission. Volunteerism is down quite a bit in general. This has been going on for a long time and want to look for sustainable solutions. I would like to suggest that that the number of commissioners be reduced from nine to seven; but the members will need to be well qualified and dedicated. Had our number been seven, we would have had a quorum these past 13 months. Another consideration is to look at Section C-608, remove language of nine members and town council ordines chapter 109 for membership requirements which is easier to change than opening the Charter. Thank you for your consideration.
 - Chairman Harpie stated we will note your comments and possible resolution.
 - Commissioner Cappello stated that we are struggling with getting volunteers, do you have any suggestions?
 - Ms. Trevethan stated that we have volunteers that work at the Senior Center but do specific things; we network with other organizations.
 - Mayor DelBuono stated that we have heard about this and we definitely need to look at it. Appreciate your suggestion to look at the ordinance, in lieu of a Charter revision. Will
4. Comments by Commissioners
- None
5. Discussion of Items Charged for Review by the Town Council
- a. Continuing Discussion on Commission Charges

- Chairman Harpie stated that we have reviewed these a number of times. There were 13 items that the council asked us to review. We have also added additional charges – (1) Development Commission – ability to do more with statutory language and funding; (2) Town manager residency requirements; Commissioner Miner requested additional information; town clerk has issued findings; based on input from Chief of Police and Town Planner, they feel that the requirement is detrimental; no one isn't saying residency isn't important; if they lived in town that would be prefect; residency is not in Charter but in contract; Mr. Harpie read correspondence received from CCM
 - Councilor Miner asked if this was a state wide survey.
 - Town Clerk Krupienski stated that is was.
 - Chairman Harpie stated that that the last additional charge was on the Emergency Ordinance and the town council would have a public hearing within so many days, within 30 days after the announcement of the emergency.
- b. Discussion of Proposed Charter Language Amendments

- Mr. Harpie reviewed the proposed Charter language amendments as previously discussed.
- Council Charges
 - (1) Mandated review of Charter. Added language as requested.
 - (2) Review and update referendum limits; define special appropriation. Spoke with finance director regarding this.
 - (3) Review Article VI, look at number of members, specifically Parks & Recreation. Recommended membership is 7 with 5 majority party members and 2 minority party members.
 - (4) Review document for ambiguous terms like shall and may; have reviewed and terms are interchangeable.
 - (5) Review and clarify Article IX Personnel; who has control over BOE personnel. Complicated issue. Not making any recommendations at this time.
 - (6) Change time of Council Organizational meeting. Changed to 7 p.m. in order to be consistent with meeting times throughout the year.
 - (7) Specify how to remove board and commission members if they do not attend meetings. Added language to remove members.
 - (8) Review language in C-603 Library Trustees. Selected by town? Remove word town and replace with council.
 - (9) Look at all numbers in Charter related to dollar amounts. After discussion with finance director we will not be changing this.
 - (10) Review staggered terms for council, BOE and other town boards. Discussed with Registrar of Voters. Couldn't find that this made for a better government. Not making a recommendation at this time.
 - (11) Review residency requirements for Town Planner, Police Chief. Currently not in Charter; both currently live in town. Both spoke eloquently in opposition. No recommendation.
 - (12) Review language in C-410, Right of Referendum on Ordinances. Cleaned up language; borrowed from statutory requirements.
 - (13) Review language in C-609, Auditor; creating an Audit Committee that would work with the finance director and town manager.

- Non-Council Charges
 - (1) Development Commission – C-606. Add CGS 7-136 language regarding duties and powers of a DC.
 - (2) Town Manager Residency
 - (3) Emergency Ordinance C-409 add language regarding council holding a public hearing within 30 days
- Chairman Harpie made a motion to approve language on charge items for public comment. Seconded by Commissioner Cappella.
- Commissioner Miner stated he has a reservation regarding the residency requirements.
- Chairman Harpie stated that this vote will be only on the charge items. Voting on motion to adopt 13 items; Town Attorney has agreed to review this language. Mechanical instrument. Made some enhancements to Audit Committee and Development Commission. Staff has been invited to every meeting regarding their input. Volunteerism is an Achilles heel.

Roll call vote (on council charges)

Chairman Harpie: Yes
 Commissioner Gonsalves: Yes
 Commissioner Capella: Yes
 Commissioner Borrup: Yes
 Commissioner Miner: Yes

Motion passed 5-0

- Chairman Harpie made a motion to approve language on C-409 – Emergency Ordinance for public comment. Seconded by Commissioner Borrup.

Roll call vote (on C-409 – Emergency Ordinance)

Chairman Harpie: Yes
 Commissioner Gonsalves: Yes
 Commissioner Capella: Yes
 Commissioner Borrup: Yes
 Commissioner Miner: Yes

Motion passed 5-0

- Commissioner Cappello made a motion to approve language on C-501 Town Manager Residency for public comment. Seconded by Commissioner Gonsalves.

Roll call vote (on -501 Town Manager Residency)

Chairman Harpie: Yes
 Commissioner Gonsalves: Yes
 Commissioner Capella: Yes
 Commissioner Borrup: Yes
 Commissioner Miner: No

Motion passed 4-1

6. Scheduling of Public Hearing on Draft Report

- Town Clerk Krupienski stated with the commission approving language we now move into draft report phase. Prior to your submission to myself and prior to my turning it over to the council, you must hold one more public hearing to receive public comment on the draft report. If approved today, I can have it in the paper by Friday, with five clear day requirements, we could have public hearing on June 9th. That

is a Thursday, at 7:00 p.m.

- Chairman Harpie asked if there were any way to expand the public interest.
- Town Clerk Krupienski stated that we could hold it on Monday, June 13th or Thursday, June 16th.
- Chairman Harpie stated that we want to move this along. How does everyone feel about Monday the 13th? At 7:00 p.m.?
- Town Clerk Krupienski stated that we will schedule a public hearing with a special meeting following.
- Chairman Harpie asked that the town attorney review the language.
- Town Clerk Krupienski stated that we can schedule the public hearing at 7 with the special meeting immediately following.
- Motion by Commissioner Cappello to hold a public hearing and special meeting on Monday, June 13th. Seconded by Commissioner Gonsalves. Motion passed.

7. Public Participation on Agenda Items (*Via Zoom Application or Phone*)
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- None
- Mayor DelBuono thanked the commission for all their hard work.


8. Comments by Commissioners

- None

9. Adjournment

Motion to adjourn by Commissioner Borrup. Seconded by Commissioner Cappella. The meeting adjourned at 7:53 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,


Susan Gibbon
Recording Clerk