

Minutes of the Charter Revision Commission's  
Regular Meeting of January 20, 2021

**1. Call to order.**

Chair Jon FitzGerald called the meeting to order at 7:00 PM and read the call of the meeting.

**2. Introduction of Commissioners**

The commissioners introduced themselves. Present were: Jon FitzGerald, Laurie Scotti, Roman Czuchta, John Krampitz, Richard Carter and Kim Ploszaj.

Absent: John Lafreniere

**3. Discuss and approve the minutes of the public meeting held on December 10, 2020 and take any action as necessary.**

Chairman Jon Fitzgerald stated that a correction was made to the minutes to add the date of December 10, 2020.

On motion by Commissioner Krampitz and seconded by Commissioner Scotti, it was unanimously voted: to approve the minutes as amended.

**4. Public participation regarding revisions to the Charter.**

Dawn Leger, President of the Bristol Professional & Supervisors Association addressed the Committee to speak on the proposed change to the City Treasurer from an elected to an appointed position. She felt it is important to preserve the rights of voters to choose their elected officials. With so few elected positions currently, the removal of a key position compromises the balance of power among all the office holders. Her concern is that the voters will no longer control who holds the position and the power will be held by the Mayor and City Council and will be subject to political pressure.

Ms. Leger was also thankful to the Chairman for soliciting opinions of previous Mayors regarding the proposed changes concerning a city manager form of government and four year terms of government. Their opinions reinforced the idea that the current form is working well and should not be changed.

Mayor Ellen Zoppo-Sassu stated that she wanted to add items to the agenda. After going through an unanticipated retirement at the Fire Department, it made her review the Fire section of the Charter. Section 42(e) and (i) – Fire Department, regulation of promotion as written is cumbersome and hard to understand. Section (i) states that if an applicant applies for the position of Fire Chief and they are not selected, the rejected candidates shall not be eligible to take any future exams and she is suggesting some changes for best practices and practicality.

The Mayor stated that she has bi-partisan support for a four-year term of the Mayor. She supports the appointment of the Treasurer and an extension of the elected term for Registrar of Voters to a four-year term as well.

She also stated that she was asked if the City enforces the penalty section under Section 35(c) and thought that Rob Longo can speak to that.

Alex Carros, 203 Belridge Road stated that the Republican Town Committee had not voted on the terms of the Registrar of Voters and wanted to clarify that for the record. He, personally is against a four-year term for the Registrars. He is also against a four-year term for the Mayor. The City Manager was overwhelmingly shot down over ten years ago and he is against that as well.

Mr. Carros agrees with Ms. Leger's remarks about an appointed Treasurer versus an elected Treasurer. It was on the ballot two years ago and it was voted down. To have it on the ballot again is obscene. There are plenty of qualified people that could run for this position and the Town Committees should be able to find a suitable person to endorse out of the 60,000 people in Bristol.

Kevin McCauley, Democratic Registrar stated to the Committee that answers to some of the comments made were addressed in the documents which he and Sharon Krawiecki had submitted. Currently, there are 97 towns in Connecticut that have four-year terms and that is mainly due to the Public Act of 2015. The Act mandates that you need to be certified and that process takes up to two years. If you want an honest, fair and efficient election and if every two years the Registrars are also having to prepare for being on the ballot and also try to run that election, it becomes another conflict. Going to a four-year term would alleviate a lot of that.

Rob Longo, Superintendent of Water and Sewer commented on the section the Mayor brought up, which is item number 11 on the agenda. He stated there are certain aspects of that section that they may use at one point and there are definitely things they don't use and would like to address it when it comes up.

Jeff Caggiano, Republican Town Committee Chairman stated he personally is strongly in favor of a four-year term for the Mayor, although he is not speaking on behalf of the Republican Town Committee. He stated that the recall section needs to be addressed. We have never had a recall of a Mayor. We currently have 6 Democrats on the council and if we had a situation that warranted a change he thinks impeachment would be the better way to handle those things, such as we have seen on the national level.

He respected the opinions of the former Mayors saying that they endorsed a two-year term for Mayor, but they are not running for office again. As the Republican Town Committee chair, he was able to recruit 13 candidates to run for Mayor and City Council and 16 candidates 2 years ago. He would like to see more participation and make it easier for people to run for office and he feels that a four-year term for Mayor may open up the Mayoral candidate pool on both sides of the fence. Running for office every two years as a Mayor puts the emphasis of your job on getting re-elected more than running the City long term.

He stated for the record that the Republican Town Committee has not formally voted on any of these issues but they have been discussed. He agrees with Mr. Carros that the Town Committee is not in favor of a City Manager which has failed in the past.

**5. Discussion of possible revisions to the charter to recommend a city manager form of government and take any action as necessary.**

Commissioner Carter stated that the City Manager question has come up every decade since the 1950's and at some point it needs to be put to bed. The Commission should be looking at either a City Manager form of government or a 4 year term for the Mayor, not both.

On motion by Commissioner Czuchta and seconded by Commissioner Scotti, it was unanimously voted: to remove Item #5 from the agenda.

**6. Discussion of possible revisions to charter to recommend changing the term of the office of the Mayor from a two-year term to a four-year term and take any action as necessary.**

No recommendations at this time. No votes taken.

**7. Discussion of possible revisions to charter section 8 (Town elections. Town Clerk. Registrars) to recommend changing the term of the registrars of voters from a two-year term to a four-year term and take any action as necessary.**

On motion by Commissioner Czuchta and seconded by Commissioner Scotti, it was voted 5-0: to approve a four-year term for the Registrar of Voters. Chairman Jon Fitzgerald abstained.

**8. Discussion of possible revisions to charter section 8 (Town elections. Town Clerk. Registrars) and 17 (City clerk, town clerk; duties) as suggested by the town clerk and take any action as necessary.**

No recommendations at this time. No votes taken.

**9. Discussion of possible revisions to charter section 12 (city officers, elective) and section 18 (treasurer) to recommend replacing an elected city treasurer with an appointed city treasurer and take any action as necessary.**

On motion by Commissioner Ploszaj and seconded by Commissioner Scotti, it was unanimously voted: to approve to go from an elected position of the Treasurer to an appointed position.

**10. Discussion of possible revisions to charter section 25 (Board of Finance) and take any action as necessary.**

No recommendations at this time. No votes taken.

**11. Discussion of possible revisions to charter section 35(c) and take any action as necessary.**

Attorney Thomas Conlin addressed the Committee regarding the imprisonment clause in the Charter and said that this has never happened and the City doesn't have the authority to do so. He stated that all of the penalties are within the Code of Ordinances and he suggested that the Committee might want to consider doing something within the Ordinances to streamline it and make it conform with all the other penalties. Rob Longo concurred with Attorney Conlin. It was recommended to take out the reference to imprisonment and put the penalty language in the Code of Ordinances. No votes taken.

**12. Discussion of possible revisions to charter section 43 (Department of parks and recreation) and take any action as necessary.**

Attorney Thomas Conlin stated that he reviewed the Page and Rockwell Trusts and didn't find any issues with them but would like to do one more review.

Chairman Fitzgerald stated that when the language was brought to the Committee by the Superintendent of Parks and Recreation, old language of the Charter was used. He will ask Mr. Medeiros to use the current section and resubmit to the Committee. He also suggested that we add a new section that states what the definition of the Superintendent is to make it more streamlined. No votes taken.

**13. Discussion of possible revisions to charter sections 45 (Police department and board of police commissioners), 46A (Police department – Merit system) and 46B (Chief of police) and take any action as necessary.**

No recommendations at this time. No votes taken.

**14. Discussion of possible revisions to charter section 54 (Personnel Committee, Director of human resources) and take any action as necessary.**

No recommendations at this time. No votes taken.

**15. Discussion of possible revisions to charter sections 9, 21(g), 25(k), 43(m) and 48A(j) regarding publication by newspaper and take any action as necessary.**

Corporation Counsel, Wyland Dale Clift discussed the requirement of the words "published in a newspaper" and stated to the Committee that he found no conflict in taking it out as it is in line with the Statutes. If the Committee wanted to leave it in, that was fine too. He recommended not taking the publication language out of 43(m).

Kevin McCauley stated that there have been efforts from his office and through legislation to look at publishing requirements in a newspaper to change it to allow for electronic media.

Attorney Clift also suggested making a change to the term of office in that the Committee might want to change it to those officers whose term is expiring instead of a two-year or four-year term.

Keep this item on the agenda as 25(k) was not researched. No votes taken.

**16. Discuss comments and potential topics for charter revision raised during public participation and take any action as necessary.**

It was suggested to add the Fire Chief section to the next agenda. No votes taken.

**17. Discuss the charter and proposed charter revisions raised by the commissioners of the charter revision commission and to take any action as necessary.**

No recommendations at this time. No votes taken.

**18. Discuss meeting dates and agendas and take any action as necessary.**

The next meeting will be on February 9, 2021 at 7:00 in the First Floor Meeting Room.

**19. Old Business**

None.

**20. New Business**

Commissioner Krampitz brought up a comment the Mayor had said which involved hiring a company to rewrite the Charter. The Mayor responded that this might be appropriate and that the City just sent out an RFP to rewrite the Zoning Regulations. Laure Scotti agreed saying that it was difficult and daunting to go through the entire Charter. The Mayor stated that New Britain has done this in the past and they significantly reduced the amount of pages and streamlined it.

**21. Adjourn**

At 8:34 PM, on motion by Commissioner Scotti and seconded by Commissioner Krampitz, it was unanimously voted: to adjourn.

Respectfully Submitted:  
Noelle Bates  
Recording Secretary

