

Charter Revision Commission Minutes

Meeting on January 3, 2019

6:30PM - Call to order by Chairman Granfield

Pledge of Allegiance

Roll Call: John Brunetti present, Victoria Clifford present, Monique Bolt absent, Rohan Smith present, Silvana Apicella present, John Carrano present, Iris Diaz absent, David Riccio absent, Edward Granfield present

Motion to accept meeting minutes from December 20th, 2018 meeting by John Carrano.
Seconded by Rohan Smith. Passed.

Q&A session begins with Fred Messoro, Director of the West Haven Planning and Development Department.

Carrano: How does your department work with Planning and Zoning and different is it from how we are used to?

A: Planning and Zoning focuses on land use and this falls under the purview of the department. They are voluntarily staffed and appointed by the Mayor's Office. Property Maintenance is a special case in which there is only one person which runs it.

Carrano: With regards to the Community Development Administration (CDA), how does it get its funding?

A: There is federal funding and there are costs that the city inherits. The city has contributed some funding and has provided supplies to it.

Granfield: Does the CDA belong under the Planning and Zoning Department? It seems to be more of a financial arm.

A: The CDA does still belong under the department as it deals with funding for specific building projects such as a parking lot for a library.

Granfield: What do you think can or should be changed or improved upon structurally?

A: In general, it works great as it is now. Hasn't had much time in the department but has tried to make it as efficient as possible. The only thing needed is more staffing but this does not fall under the Charter Revision Commission's purview.

Carrano: With regards to Grants and Aid, they currently fall under the Planning and Development Department. Do you feel this should be the case? X

A: Recommends that this area should be under the Finance Department's purview, while maintaining the current amount of cross-over between the departments seen today. 5:11 PM 1/3/19

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Granfield: On the topic of credentials, does the current Board of Planning and Zoning require someone of a professional stature to sit on the board or to supervise it.

A: Either the Assistant Planner, the Director (Messore), or the Zoning Enforcement Officer are at each meeting of the commissions. They provide comments and guidance to the process with no voting ability.

Brunetti: These people are at these meetings because they are told to or because of rules instituted before your arrival in the department?

A: No, they get paid to attend these meetings and sometimes even Corporation Counsel has to attend. The professional staff has to be there to run them.

Granfield: Do you believe or feel that appointments should have minimum credentials? How long would it take for someone to become a contributing member of the board?

A: There is an alternate and a board member. A potential process could be first letting them be an alternate and then eventually take up a spot on the board once they have the experience. However, this all depends on the experience and background of the applicant.

Smith: Are you happy with how things are now?

A: Yes, everything is going great and as it should. One recommendation would be to increase terms from being two years to four years to have more time to get things done.

Apicella: Should anyone on the commission have a conflicting second job?

A: If they have a conflict and noted publicly, they can recuse themselves.

Apicella: What can be done to help with establishing new businesses?

A: Communication is key. If this becomes too much of an issue, call the department office and ask for Mr. Messore.

Granfield: The Redevelopment Agency, do they fall under the department's purview? Are they necessary anymore?

A: They are needed from time to time. They should remain active and under the department's purview.

City Council Chair Ronald Quagliani and City Council Majority Leader Robbin Hamilton join the audience.

Granfield to Quagliani: What does the annual budgeting process timeline look like for this year?

A: The council typically assesses and works on the budget from the 3rd Thursday in March to the 1st Thursday in May.

The Q&A session concludes.

Floor opens for discussion.

The Commission reviews their edits of the Bonds section language in the Charter.

Carrano: Points out and explains one addition made to the section – Emergency language. This language will allow the City Council to bypass the need for a referendum when creating bonds in response to an emergency situation. A two-thirds vote of the council will be required to pass the emergency bond.

The Commission review the Exclusion clause in the Charter.

Carrano: The state or federal government may mandate a bond. This clause will allow this to be done without need of a referendum.

The Commission review the Savings clause in the Charter.

Carrano: This clause is waiting on review by Corporation Counsel.

The Commission reviews their edits of the Vacancy of the Mayor section language in the Charter.

Smith: Inquires if there will be compensation for the person filling in the position temporarily.

Granfield: A two-step process will need to be developed for this section to ensure temporary and permanent fill-ins are properly compensated.

Carrano: States that the section on the City Council is still under legal review by Corporation Counsel. Thus, no progress can be made currently on this section.

Apicella: Inquires on how the filling in of a vacancy of the Mayor's position begins and proceeds.

Granfield: States that there is an automatic succession by either the Majority or Minority Leader of the City Council, depending on former mayor's political affiliation. No election is needed, and the council can vote who can fill in and carry out the current term to completion.

The Commission reviews their edits of the City Clerk section language in the Charter.

Brunetti: Inquires if the word "preferred" in reference to residency requirements is appropriate and if it should be changed or removed.

Granfield: States that there are tiers to the residency requirement and Corporation Counsel is reviewing the language of this section as well.

Carrano: Quickly points out that "preferred" is also in the city manager section.

The Commission reviews their edits of the Police Department section language in the Charter.

Carrano: Noted two additions to the section - a requirement for an employee contract and that the general statute prevails.

The Commission reviews their edits of the Organization for Civil Preparedness section language in the Charter.

Chairman Quagliani: It is called now the Office of Emergency Management.

The Commission reviews their edits of the Emergency Response System (ERS) section language in the Charter.

The Commission reviews their edits of the Board of Ethics and Compliance section language in the Charter.

Carrano: Stresses that members on this board are limited to one four year term. The board should also have the ability to take action if compliance is not adhered to.

Granfield: States that this section is currently under legal review by Corporation Counsel.

The Commission reviews the Water Pollution section language in the Charter.

Carrano: States that similar to the ERS, the Commission needs an outline of what this section of the government does from day to day.

Discussion concludes.

No New Business.

Motion to adjourn by John Carrano.

Seconded by Victoria Clifford.

Meeting adjourned at 8:13PM.