

**TOWN OF MANCHESTER, CONNECTICUT
CHARTER REVISION COMMISSION
MEETING MINUTES
MARCH 27, 2008 – 7:00 P.M.
LINCOLN CENTER HEARING ROOM**

PRESENT: Chairman Stephen Penny, Vice-Chairman Robert Schneider, Commission Members John Backer, William Bayer, Joseph Diminico, Margaret Hackett, Edward Joy, Lewellyn Pelletier and James Stevenson

ALSO: Town Attorney Geoffrey Naab and Budget and Research Officer Julian Freund

MEETING CALLED TO ORDER

The March 27, 2008 meeting of the Charter Revision Commission was called to order at 7:05 p.m. by Chairman Penny.

COMMUNICATIONS

There were no communications brought before the Commission at this time.

DISCUSSION OF THE FOLLOWING RECOMMENDATIONS FOR CHARTER REVISION:

- a. **Consider increasing the terms of the Board of Directors; consider staggering the terms of the Board of Directors (BOD Recommendation #11).**
- b. **Consider providing for direct election of the position of Mayor on the Board of Directors (BOD Recommendation #11).**
- c. **Consider increasing the duties and responsibilities of the Mayor (BOD Recommendation #11).**

Chairman Penny opened the floor for public input on the three items listed on the agenda.

Joe Hachey is in favor of leaving the terms of the Board of Directors as is. He is opposed to increasing the powers of the Mayor. The Mayor should chair the Board of Directors; it is a ceremonial office. Mr. Hachey is open to the idea of a budget referendum, but wants to limit the number of referenda allowed as well as requiring a minimum turnout of voters to reject a budget.

Joe Brooks questioned why the Town has a Charter and feels it is disregarded. After Mr. Brooks related some detail about an issue between him and the Town, Mr. Penny suggested this is not the proper venue for this particular issue. Mr. Brooks submitted a letter with the details of his situation.

Josh Howroyd does not believe staggering the terms of the Board of Directors would serve the community well. He thinks being accountable to voters every two years is appropriate. Mr. Howroyd is in favor of the direct election of a Mayor, but would like certain parameters in place to avoid bullet voting. He believes the current system with the Mayor as the Chairman of the Board of Directors has served the community well for over 60 years. It provides stability and professional management of the Town. He does not think the Mayor should have more responsibility. Mr. Howroyd thinks Glastonbury's budget referendum process makes the most sense. It has a petition requirement, a minimum threshold turnout, and parameters limiting the number of times a referendum could be held.

Susan Holmes believes two-year terms require too much campaigning time and money and would like to see an alternative. She sees both sides of the direct election of the Mayor and doesn't have an opinion one way or the other. She would like to be able to vote for a nine members of the Board of Directors. Ms. Holmes supports the idea of a budget referendum using a percentage increase threshold. She suggested holding a spring referendum that could be tied into a referendum on capital projects and thought one voting district could save money.

Geoffrey King does not want to see any changes to Manchester's government. There have only been six General Managers in the past 60 years; very few communities have the continuity that we do. Mr. King supports the direct election of the Mayor and thinks that bullet voting is a definite possibility with the highest vote getter model. He supports a party designate.

Lou Spadaccini would like to leave the Board of Directors' terms at two years because it creates accountability. He agrees with conserving the Council-Manager form of government and is pleased to see an emerging consensus for the direct election of the Mayor. Besides the ceremonial aspect of the Mayor, he is also the spokesperson for the Town and people want to directly choose who will fill that role.

Cheri Pelletier thinks a two-year term for the Board of Directors is acceptable. With longer terms, there will be more member turnover. She wants to be careful to maintain a Board that is elected, not appointed. She advocates for a petition process exceeding a percentage barrier, to hold a budget referendum. Ms. Pelletier likes the Council-Manager form of government as well as the top vote getter becoming the Mayor regardless of which party he is in.

Mark Tweedie does not believe the Town needs a strong Mayor position. He believes the top vote getter should be the Mayor, next highest the Deputy Mayor and the third highest the Secretary. This may foster bipartisanship. Mr. Tweedie thinks the two-year terms provide accountability and even though campaigning is difficult and stressful he thinks it is important so that people are elected, not appointed.

Matt Peak thinks that the convenience of four-year terms to those running is not a good enough reason to support longer terms. He supports two-year terms because he values accountability more than convenience. He would like to see the direct election of the Mayor. Mr. Peak would

favor increased responsibilities of the Mayor, but not to the point of a strong Mayor. He supports a budget referendum with a 3% trigger, but is open to other options.

Lisa O'Neill is in favor of two-year terms for the Board of Directors. She is opposed to a budget referendum and a strong Mayor. Having the Mayor, Deputy Mayor and Secretary all in the majority party helps the meetings run more smoothly.

Jeff Beckman supports the direct election of the Mayor as the top vote getter. He does not support a strong Mayor. The current Council-Manager form of government is a good system. He thinks an extended term for the Board of Directors may be good to consider. Mr. Beckman supports a budget referendum with a 3% trigger for an automatic referendum.

MOTION: Mr. Joy moved to table items 3.a, 3.b, and 3.c. Ms. Hackett seconded the motion and all members voted in favor of tabling.

DISCUSSION OF AGENDA FOR SUBSEQUENT MEETINGS

Mr. Penny noted the schedule Mr. Freund had previously distributed to Committee members.

ANY OTHER BUSINESS TO PROPERLY COME BEFORE THE COMMISSION

There was no other business brought before the Commission at this time.

ADJOURNMENT

The meeting was adjourned until the April 10, 2008 meeting of the Charter Revision Commission in the Lincoln Center Hearing Room.

Adjournment: 9:18 p.m.

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APPROVED:

Stephen Penny, Chairperson