

**TOWN OF MANCHESTER, CONNECTICUT
CHARTER REVISION COMMISSION
MEETING MINUTES
APRIL 10, 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, and Lewellyn Pelletier

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

ABSENT: Commission Member James Stevenson

MEETING CALLED TO ORDER

The April 10, 2008 meeting of the Charter Revision Commission was called to order at 7:07 p.m. by Chairman Penny.

COMMUNICATIONS

Mr. Penny noted a communication from Mr. William G. Brown of 216 Woodland Street in support of a Budget Referendum.

ADOPTION OF MINUTES OF PRIOR MEETINGS

a. February 28, 2008

MOTION: A motion was made and seconded to adopt the minutes of February 28, 2008. Eight voted in favor.

b. March 6, 2008

MOTION: A motion was made and seconded to adopt the minutes of March 6, 2008. Eight voted in favor.

PUBLIC HEARING ON ITEMS INCLUDED ON THE AGENDA FOR DISCUSSION

Jeff Beckman spoke about the terms of the Board of Directors and would not be opposed to having more time to serve between campaigns. Regarding the referendum, he voiced his support to a referendum trigger, linked to a 3% tax increase. When campaigning, he heard that the citizens of Manchester supported the 3% trigger as well.

Horace Brown, 24 East Maple Street, opposes a budget referendum. Smaller towns than Manchester with much simpler budgets have had multiple referenda. Manchester is a complicated, multi-million dollar budget and a yes or no vote worries him. A bond issue is different because it is usually a vote on one issue that has been publicized.

Lou Spadaccini said that he is an advocate of a budget referendum, allowing the taxpayer direct input on the budget. He advocates for a referendum with a tax levy increase greater than the

consumer price index, but would be happy with any sort of referendum. Mr. Spadaccini is not in favor of a minimum turnout to accept or reject and would limit to one referendum only. If the budget is rejected in referendum, the Board of Directors would then have to pass a budget within the parameters of the consumer price index. He is open to a petition process, although he has concerns with the timeline, threshold, and staff verification of signatures.

Scott Aiken is in favor of leaving the terms of the Board of Directors at two years without staggering them. He would like the Board of Directors to select its own Chairperson. Mr. Aiken is not in favor of increasing the duties of a Mayor; the Council-Manager form of government is clear. He thinks Department Heads are doing their best to make best use of taxpayer funds. He is not necessarily in favor of a Referendum. He questioned why retain a Town Treasurer position if the duties have been taken away. Mr. Aiken is an independent voter and would like to see more independent minded people run for the Board of Directors. He would like to see an easier way for unaffiliated or third party candidates to get on the ballot.

Cheri Pelletier related the findings of some research she did in which some municipalities provide alternatives when a budget is voted down. Ms. Pelletier favors the petition method for a special referendum.

DISCUSSION OF THE FOLLOWING RECOMMENDATIONS FOR CHARTER REVISION:

Mr. Penny had asked various members of Town staff to be present to give input on the timing of a budget referendum. He suggested the Commission cover item 4.d for the convenience of those present for that issue.

Mr. Freund reviewed two hypothetical summary timelines, the first allows the tax bills to be sent out on time. The second adds the petition process, certification process, and the referendum on to the current schedule, which extends the date that tax bills go out. Both have room for movement in the dates.

- a. **Consider increasing the terms of the Board of Directors; consider staggering the terms of the Board of Directors (BOD Recommendation #11)**

MOTION: Mr. Joy moved to make no change to either item. Mr. Bayer seconded the motion and all members present voted in favor.

- b. **Consider providing for direct election of the position of Mayor on the Board of Directors (BOD Recommendation #11)**

MOTION: Mr. Bayer moved that the top vote getter become Mayor. Mr. Backer seconded the motion. Seven members voted in favor, Ms. Hackett opposed.

- c. **Consider increasing the duties and responsibilities of the Mayor (BOD Recommendation #11)**

MOTION: Mr. Joy moved to make no change to the Charter concerning the duties and responsibilities of the Mayor. Mr. Bayer seconded the motion and all members voted in favor.

- d. **Review the Town Charter for consideration of adding a provision requiring a referendum regarding the adoption of the Town's annual budget (BOD Recommendation #14)**

MOTION: Mr. Joy made a motion to table this item. Mr. Schneider seconded the motion and all members voted in favor.

- e. **Review the positions of Town Treasurer, Section 5-13 of the Town Charter, and Assistant Town Treasurer, Section 5-14 of the Town Charter, for possible elimination of both positions (BOD Recommendation #3)**

MOTION: Mr. Joy moved to remove the positions of Town Treasurer and Assistant Town Treasurer. Ms. Hackett seconded the motion and all members voted in favor.

- f. **Consider providing for non-partisan municipal elections (BOD Recommendation #11)**

MOTION: Mr. Joy made a motion to make no change. Mr. Bayer seconded the motion and all members voted in favor.

DISCUSSION OF AGENDA FOR SUBSEQUENT MEETINGS

The meeting on April 24, 2008 will be devoted entirely to the consideration of a budget referendum. A meeting will be added for May 1, 2008.

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 24, 2008 meeting of the Charter Revision Commission in the Lincoln Center Hearing Room.

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APPROVED:

Stephen Penny, Chairperson