CHARTER REVISION COMMISSION
CITY HALL
253 Main Street
Ansonia, Connecticut 06401
Telephone (203) 736-5930 FAX (203) 735-5422

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Elizabeth L. Lynch
TOWN AND CITY CLERK
ANSONIA, CONNECTICUT

Christopher Lisi
Chairman
William Luneski
Vice Chairman

MINUTES

SPECIAL MEETING, WEDNESDAY, May 21, 2014
ALDERMANIC CHAMBERS 7:00 PM

The Charter Revision Commission held a special meeting on Wednesday, May 21, 2014. The meeting began at 7:00 P.M.

Roll call:

Matthew Edo	absent
Dan King	present
Horace Behrle	present
Beverly Tidmarsh	present
Joseph Jeanette	absent
William Luneski	present
Christopher Lisi	present
Lorrie Vaccaro	present
Joseph Jaumann	absent

6 present, 3 absent
A quorum was present.

Mr. Lisi opened the meeting at 7:05. The meeting began with the pledge of allegiance to the flag.

Mr. Lisi then entertained motions to approve the minutes of the last meeting. Ms. Tidmarsh made a motion to approve the minutes. The motion was seconded by Mr. Luneski. All were in favor of the motion.

Mr. Lisi asked if there was any correspondence. He was told that where was none.

Mr. Lisi then opened the meeting to the public for any comments or concerns they may have.

Mr. Randy Carroll, 40 Fourth Street, Unit #10, stated that he is curious, he asked if the Board of Aldermen gave the commission a set of things that they would like the commission to address during this session and if so what were they.

Mr. Lisi stated that the Commission has asked for their input, but as of yet they haven't received any correspondence from them.

Atty. Marini stated that there were just two main areas that the Board of Aldermen wanted the Commission to review. They wanted the Commission to review the budget process and the finance system overall.

Mr. Lisi asked if there was anyone else that wished to address the Commission.

Ken Plavnicky, 15 Mountain View Road, stated that he would like to have the wards condensed. He stated that having seven wards are too many. Shelton has only four wards and they are twice as big as Ansonia.

Mr. Lisi asked if there was anyone else that wished to address the Commission. There was no one else from the public that wished to address the public. Mr. Lisi then closed the public session. He then asked if there was any unfinished business. Ms. Tidmarsh stated that she believed that Atty. Marini was going to get a price on having his firm, Berchem Moses and Devlin review and update the Charter. Atty. Marini stated that they would charge the city between $5,000 and $6, 000 for a full and thorough review. He further stated that they advised that looking at the "important areas" would make more sense than doing a complete review. They have done this type of project in the past. Mr. Lisi then asked where the Commission would get the funds to pay for this project. He was told that they should go to the Board of Appropriation and Taxation. Mr. King suggested that this board request that this item is placed on BOAT's agenda for their next meeting. By doing that, they could set aside the funds to pay for it. They could add a line item for the future so they can add fund things that they may have to fund in the future. As of this moment, there is no budget for this Commission. Mr. Behrle stated that the next step would be for Atty. Marini's office to issue a request for x number of dollars to cover the cost of reviewing the Charter. That would then be submitted to BOAT and they would have to vote on it. Mr. King stated that once the funds are approved and establish a line item, then approval from the Board of Aldermen would need to be obtained.

Mr. Behrle made a motion to approve to have Berchem Moses and Devlin review and revise the Charter for a cost not to exceed $10, 000. The motion was seconded by Ms. Tidmarsh. All were in favor of the motion.

Mr. Lisi asked Atty. Marini if they go to BOAT once they have the official quote. He was told that he was correct. Mr. King stated that it is customary to have a member of the Commission attend the meeting of BOAT when this item is reviewed. The next meeting of BOAT will be Monday, June 23rd. Mr. Behrle and Atty. Marini stated that they would be willing to attend the meeting.

The next piece of unfinished business is the directive from the Board of Aldermen. Mr. Lisi stated that they felt that they would have gotten an official document regarding what they would like the Commission to address. Atty. Marini stated that he believes that this is on file with the Town Clerk. He believes that they are requesting that the Commission review the budget process and finance, primarily to look at BOAT. Atty. Marini stated that he was also tasked to look at the other financial systems of other similar towns. He further explained that he contacted CCM (Connecticut Council of Municipalities) and they really don't have anything like that on file. He was able to put together a summary that he was able to garner from websites and other resources. He then handed out his report to the members. (a copy of this report is attached to these minutes.) He explained that the towns and cities are widely varied. Mr. Vaccaro stated that when he had been on Charter Revision last year, he reviewed BOAT and he stated that it is an "antiquated system for setting out budget". He explained that having BOAT was adapted from the Charter of New York City that was created in the early 1900's. He then explained that BOAT has been blamed in the past for tax increases. He suggests that the Commission adopt a new system for setting the budget. He proposed that

the Finance Committee of the Board of Aldermen and the Comptroller have monthly meetings to review potential budgets. The Mayor would present his budget to the full Board of Aldermen for their review and then submit it to the Finance Committee. Once the budget is tentatively approved, it is then submitted to the entire Board of Aldermen to pass the budget no later than the May meeting. The mayor would then have the ability to veto the budget within 5 days. The Board of Aldermen would then have the ability to overturn the veto with a two thirds majority vote.

Mr. Lisi stated that he feels that the Commission needs to focus on three specific items to resolve such as having a law firm remove the older parts of the Charter that are no longer effective, "do something about BOAT" then look at one additional item, possibly look at reducing the number of wards. He then stated that they should just look at one more issue. He asked the members what they felt would be the third issue.

Mr. King stated that he felt that one of the purposes of bringing in the law firm was to relieve them of that issue that they need to address as a Commission. Mr. Lisi then stated that he believes that doing something about BOAT and the finance system is a large undertaking. He then asked what other issue the members would like to focus on. Mr. Vaccaro stated that the City's pensions need to be funded. He was told that some of them haven't been funded for approximately ten years. He further stated that we are approximately 4 million dollars in arrears for funding pensions. Ms. Tidmarsh stated that in regard to the Board of Education, the pensions that have not been funded are the noncertified staff (clerical staff). The Board of Education does not contribute to that. It is done on their own. Mr. King stated that the Police Department is still underfunded in regard to their pensions. Ms. Tidmarsh asked if this was something that Charter Revision could address. Atty. Marini stated that the Commission could actually pass an Ordinance to require the pensions to be funded. Mr. Lisi asked where in the Charter are pensions discussed. He was told that there is a City Pension established in the Charter, but there is no requirement to have it funded. In this case the Commission would be drafting new items rather than revising the Charter. Atty. Marini stated that there are calculations as to how much the City is supposed to be contributing annually. Nothing has been put into the City pension in the last decade. Most of the employees that were to get the City pension were transferred to MERF which is the state pension. Mr. King what has happened is that people were being added to the City Pension plan after they thought that the pension was no longer being used. He then stated that we may need to add language that would make it a specific persons' responsibility that before anyone enters retirement officially, we should have oversight of it. He then explained that currently there is nothing in place. Various departments add people to the pensions upon retirement. There's no documentation. No formal process in place advising the employees of what they are entitled to or what is available to them as far as benefits are concerned. It would be a good idea to have someone in charge of this process. Ms. Tidmarsh asked if there was a retirement board. She was told that there is. Mr. King then stated that they are not consulted. That is part of the problem.

Mr. Lisi stated that the Commission will be looking at BOAT and the financial system for the City. In terms of the pension, what should they do for the next meeting to be prepared to really discuss this problem in depth? It was suggested that Richard Bshara and Bill Nimons will be invited to attend the next meeting so the Commission can have a better idea of how this can work. He then asked if there was something else that the Commission can address.

Mr. Luneski stated that the idea of ward consolidation was suggested at the last meeting as well as this meeting. The suggestion of having a Purchasing Agent was also discussed. Mr. Lisi stated that the Ward issue keeps coming up from more than just a few people. The Purchasing Agent concept would actually be a large cost saving device.

Ms. Tidmarsh stated that Ward consolidation would determine the number of Aldermen that would be elected. She was told that she was correct. Mr. Lisi asked how it is based on. Is it geographic or population based? Atty. Marini stated that he believes that it's geographic. Consolidating the wards would save the City funds such as the cost to hold elections.

Mr. Luneski then stated that another issue that was suggested was to make the position of Town and City Clerk become an appointed position rather than an elected one.

Mr. King stated that when it comes to the Purchasing Agent position, he feels that rather than creating a new position, they should just have the Assistant Finance Director handle the responsibilities of a Purchasing Agent. Mr. Luneski then stated that essentially the Pension funding and the Purchasing Agent would be rolled into the same topics. Mr. Lisi then stated that in that case, they don't have to address those issues.

Ms. Tidmarsh stated that she felt that Ward Consolidation is a large issue on its own. Mr. King stated that he feels that we would have a lot of people would be concerned about that issue more than any other.

Mr. Lisi asked if there was any other unfinished business to discuss. There was none. He then asked if there was any new business to come before the board. There was none.

Mr. Behrle made a motion to adjourn the meeting. The motion was seconded by Ms. Tidmarsh. All were in favor of the motion.

The meeting ended at 7:55.

Respectfully submitted,

Carol Sardinha
Secretary