

**CITY OF BRIDGEPORT
CHARTER REVISION COMMISSION
SPECIAL MEETING
FEBRUARY 1, 2012**

ATTENDANCE: Cathleen Simpson, Chair; George Estrada, Vice Chair; Florisca Carter, Secretary; Harry Weichsel, Charles Valentino, Sr.; William Marshall, Ruben Felipe (5:55 p.m.)

OTHERS: Atty. Steven Mednick; Atty. Edward Bailey; Atty. Mark Anastasi, Council Member Angel dePara

CALL TO ORDER

Ms. Simpson called the meeting to order at 5:40 p.m. A quorum was present.

APPROVAL OF THE MINUTES OF JANUARY 24, 2012 MEETING

**** MR. VALENTINO MOVED TO APPROVE THE MINUTES OF THE JANUARY 24, 2012 MEETING.**

**** MR. ESTRADA SECONDED.**

**** THE MOTION APPROVE THE MINUTES OF THE JANUARY 24, 2012 MEETING AS SUBMITTED PASSED UNANIMOUSLY.**

COMMISSION CHARTER OR BY-LAWS DISCUSSION (ESTABLISHING RULE OF PROCEDURE AND GUIDELINES PERTAINING TO A COMMITTEE STRUCTURE FOR THE CONDUCT OF BUSINESS ON DISTINCT SUBJECT MATTERS; PUBLIC INTERACTIONS AND COMPLIANCE WITH FREEDOM OF INFORMATION LAWS.)

Atty. Mednick said that Atty. Anastasi had some opinions about holding workshops in light of FOIA. The meetings and workshops will be open to the public. Atty. Mednick said that this might be the reason to establish sub committees to discuss different aspects of Charter. Discussion followed about this. Any sub committees that are created are simply for advising the Commission on a particular issue and will operate in full conformity with FOIA.

Mr. Felipe joined the meeting at 5:55 p.m.

PUBLIC HEARING AFTERMATH AND DISCUSSION

Ms. Carter said that she wanted to make sure that everything would be done in an open and clear manner. She stressed community involvement and engagement. It would be important to have more public hearings. Mr. Estrada suggested that different venues be selected for the various meetings. It was suggested that perhaps the meetings be held at various schools.

Atty. Mednick then spoke briefly on education and pointed out that the Commission would need to have public input and expert testimony. He said that the Commission may want to investigate different models from different states. Discussion followed about whether it would be good to hear the experts first or the public first. It was noted that when the experts give their presentation, they may address some of the various concerns and issues. Remembering that the Commission is not charged with solving the various issues that come up, but charged with providing the administration with the tools to solve the various concerns will be key. The Charter will be structural system for the various departments. Atty. Mednick pointed out that when things are embedded in the Charter, such as a Welfare Departments, they cannot be removed unless the Charter is revised.

The discussion then moved back to the scheduling of the meetings every Tuesday and Thursdays night at 5:30 p.m.

**** MR. VALENTINO MOVED TO SCHEDULE THE MEETINGS EVERY TUESDAY AND THURSDAY, STARTING NEXT TUESDAY, THROUGH THE END OF APRIL, STARTING AT 5:30 P.M. AND LOCATED AT CITY HALL UNLESS OTHERWISE ANNOUNCED.**

**** MR. MARSHALL SECONDED.**

**** THE MOTION PASSED UNANIMOUSLY.**

The first three meetings will focus on red lining the actual Charter. The Mayor will be scheduled fairly soon.

The Commission then asked Council Member dePara if he knew when the best time to meet with the Commission. He replied that it would be best to wait until after the Council's Legislative Meeting.

Discussion then moved back to structuring the meetings and how to fit the interviews in while continuing to work on the Charter. It was agreed that the Department heads would come before the Commission on the 16th.

Atty. Anastasi joined the meeting at 6:22 p.m.

COMMISSION CHARTER OR BY-LAWS DISCUSSION CONT'D

Atty. Anastasi then reviewed the criteria for scheduling regular meetings and special meetings along with the requirements for posting the notice and minutes. He suggested that the Commission adopt Robert's Rules of Order formally. If it was decided that a meeting was to be a public hearing, it could be done within the framework of a regular meeting, but would need a public notice published. A discussion about having daytime meetings then followed. Atty.

Anastasi recommended that they appoint a sub committee, but have it noticed to the public and keep it open to the public.

Atty. Mednick asked Atty. Anastasi about having the City Attorney's office start to distill some issues that they have noticed and that may need review. Atty. Anastasi said that he felt the Mayor should handle this issue.

Atty. Bailey joined the meeting at 6:30 p.m.

The discussion then moved back to which experts would be contacted and how this would be determined. Atty. Mednick reminded everyone that there are some issues that are legal issues that may involve State Laws or collective bargaining agreements.

Mr. Estrada asked if it would be possible to have a draft of what topics would be covered over the next 32 meetings. Atty. Mednick agreed and said that the month of March would most likely be the fact finding month, since February would be involved with red-lining.

Ms. Simpson said that getting the agenda posted would be critical. The process for adding items to the agenda then was discussed. The basic elements will be approval of the minutes, red lining, and Other Business. Any time with department heads or officials will be included under Other Business and will be noticed in advance. Atty. Anastasi suggested that getting the suggestions and information from the Department heads be done in writing.

COMMENCE "RED-LINE", EDIT AND REVIEW PROCESS OF THE CURRENT CHARTER.

Atty. Mednick noted that there were common terms used throughout the document, such as "departments", "agencies", "bureaus" and others. It will be important to determine whether these have specific meanings or need to be changed to a more general term. It is also critical to have consistency of definition throughout. Having the defined terms in a glossary will be a major asset to transparency and clarity. Another issue is gender neutrality. Atty. Mednick said that he would send a list of the general terms that he had encountered in the past. He added that the Commission would not be confined to this list.

Atty. Anastasi pointed out that it was important to keep in mind that changes in the Charter will impact the Code of Ordinances.

Atty. Mednick said that it would be important to spell out how to create a Board and Commission in the Charter but have the actual Boards and Commission should be based in the Code of Ordinances. This allows for more flexibility. Commissions or Boards that become obsolete will be able to be removed and others created as the need arises.

Atty. Mednick commented that having "best practices" as a broad standard included in the Charter would be important. Leaving the actual standards to the Code of Ordinances would be best.

The Commission then began the review of the General Provisions. Atty. Mednick pointed out some of the capitalization issues. Mr. Felipe commented that there needed to be a Preamble, a Construction section, and a section on Definition. Atty. Bailey noted that the definition of the City of Bridgeport encompasses both the City and Town of Bridgeport.

The Commission concluded their review of the General Provisions and moved to Chapter 2. Discussion about the terms "elected officials" and "days" and whether this should be gender neutral followed. There will be a substantive change in 3A regarding the phrase "temporary absence".

Atty. Mednick said that he would attempt to create a section that deals with vacancies.

Mr. Valentino asked about Section 8 - Recalls. Atty. Mednick said that the State of Connecticut does not allow recalls with the exception of 5 municipalities that have Special Acts. Removal from office is a different matter.

There were two sections, one of which deals with subpoena powers that related directly to Boards and Commissions. These should be moved to the section on those entities.

Atty. Mednick said that one of the statements during the public hearing was whether the City wanted to have the Ethics Commission by ordinance. Atty. Anastasi pointed out that the Ethics Commission was governed by State Law and should be covered in the Code of Ordinances.

The Commission then moved on to review Chapter 4.

ADJOURNMENT

**** MR. WEICHSEL moved to adjourn.**

**** MS. CARTER MOVED TO ALLOW A MEMBER OF THE PUBLIC TO ADDRESS THE COMMISSION.**

**** MR., WEICHSEL SECONDED.**

**** THE MOTION PASSED UNANIMOUSLY.**

Mr. John Marshal Lee came forward and suggested that the Commission consider a one minute comment time for speakers. He added that there is no way for the public to get the materials that are given out to the public.

Mr. Estrada asked if it would be possible to have copies of the materials for the public to review. Atty. Mednick pointed out that it would be difficult to have extra copies since many of the documents are drafts. Atty. Anastasi said that it was not always practical but the best effort should be made. Ms. Simpson said that she was not sure that there was anyone available to perform that type of function. Discussion followed. It was suggested that possibly having a website for the Commission and posting the relevant documents there might be an answer.

It was pointed out that the Commission only had a page and half more to consider before completing Chapter 4.

**** MR. WEICHSEL WITHDREW HIS MOTION TO ADJOURN.**

The Commission then returned to page 11 of the Section 1-I. The discussion moved the fact that Section was redundant in the current location. This section will be moved to a more appropriate section.

Language regarding the swearing in ceremony for the newly elected Mayor will also be moved to the appropriate section.

ADJOURNMENT

**** MR. WEICHSEL MOVED TO ADJOURN.**

**** MR. FELIPE SECONDED.**

**** THE MOTION PASSED UNANIMOUSLY.**

The meeting adjourned at 7:50 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Sharon L. Soltes
Telesco Secretarial Services.