

**CITY OF BRIDGEPORT
CHARTER REVISION COMMISSION
REGULAR MEETING
APRIL 17, 2012**

ATTENDANCE: Cathleen Simpson, Chair; George Estrada, Vice Chair; Charles Valentino; Florisca Carter; Ruben Felipe; Harry Weichsel (5:50 p.m.); Rev. William Marshall (5:52 p.m.)

OTHERS: Atty. Ed Maley

CALL TO ORDER.

Commissioner Simpson called the meeting to order at 5:40 p.m. She noted that the commission will not limit the time a speaker can talk unless a lot more people come in at which time they will set a limit.

Commissioner Simpson introduced written testimony submitted by Mary Pat Healy, Executive Director of the Bridgeport Child Advocacy Coalition (BCAC). She reiterated their (BCAC) position that “mayoral control of the Board of Education is a complicated issue.” The Coalition urged support for the following: There must be a system of checks and balances in place to ensure transparency and accountability; There must be a truly independent audit commission as well as a data and evaluation commission; there should be clear and enforceable language in the charter regarding ethics and conflicts of interest; There should be a diversity of representation on the Board of Education reflecting racial and ethnic makeup of the city, and representing the views of differing political parties; Whether appointed or elected an independent vetting process should be in place to identify the best candidates for the school board and best practices should be studied and considered for adoption.

Commissioner Valentino asked if she was speaking on behalf of BCAC or these were her own opinions. Commissioner Simpson said she thought these were her personal opinions detailed on BCAC letterhead.

Commissioner Simpson called the first speaker to the podium.

John Marshall Lee, resident of City of Bridgeport, made his presentation. He referred to himself as a fiscal watchdog and referenced his op-ed piece in the CT Post on Sunday April 15 calling on the Mayor for a more “Open, Accountable and Transparent” fiscal administration. He noted that this Commission’s task, as described by the Mayor, was to review the current Charter and find the best way to provide him (Mayor) with more power over BOE activities. He does not believe the mayor being open, accountable and transparent for a number of reasons:

Chapter 9 Section 7 requires the Mayor submit a monthly financial report to the City Council. The city fails to do this; City Organizational Charts show an Internal Audit Staff which is not in existence; no City body holds a specific public meeting to review the Comprehensive Annual Financial Report (CAFR) and allow opportunity for comments or questions to be asked, past CAFR's are not available online for review – not archived; Charter indicates a minimum of 1 public meeting per year for review of fiscal matters. The City needs to do more;

Commissioner H. Weichsel joined the meeting at 5:50 p.m.

Commissioner Estrada asked Mr. Lee to repeat the 'archive comment'.

Commissioner Rev. W. Marshall joined the meeting at 5:52 p.m.

Mr. Lee stated that other cities – Hartford, New Haven, for example – post, or archive, the CAFR's from previous years on their websites for the public to access at any time. This is an example of open, accountable and transparent policy. He feels that the City needs to do more to make fiscal information available online.

How does a stretched City Council ask questions and make quality decisions without this information. Many town/cities have a Financial Board whose job is to watch over all of these issues.

He also noted that the City's Library Board is an example of a group that acts independently and works at a high level of achievement within the City. Mr. Lee thanked the Commission for listening and submitted a written copy of his testimony. Mr. Lee asked if anyone had any questions. Mr. Estrada said that the only question he had was answered already.

****COMMISSIONER FELIPE MOVED TO RECESS THE MEETING AT 6:02 P.M.**

****COMMISSIONER ESTRADA SECONDED**

****MOTION PASSED UNANIMOUSLY**

Commissioner Simpson re-opened the meeting at 6:15 p.m. Commissioner Simpson called the next speaker to the podium.

David Walker, resident of Bridgeport for 2 years, former United States Comptroller General, came to the podium to address the Commission. He referenced his letter to the Commission dated 3/27/12 which proposed 3 areas for the Charter Review Commission to consider; Education, Governance; and Fiscal/Accountability issues. Knowing that they are focusing on the Board of Education changes being on the November ballot, he urged that the Charter Review continue past the November date. He believes there should be a 'best practice' review of the charter. He discussed the existence of City of Bridgeport employees serving on the City Council, which he sees as a conflict of interest. The City of Bridgeport Charter does not allow this, however state statute does allow, and state statutes prevail.

****COMMISSIONER VALENTINO MOVED TO RECESS THE MEETING AT 6:20 P.M.**

****COMMISSIONER CARTER SECONDED**

****MOTION PASSED UNANIMOUSLY**

Commissioner Simpson re-opened the meeting at 6:30 p.m. Commissioner Simpson, seeing no more speakers proposed ending the public hearing.

ADJOURNMENT

****COMMISSIONER VALENTINO MOVED TO RECESS THE MEETING AT 6:20 P.M.**

****COMMISSIONER MARSHALL SECONDED**

****MOTION PASSED UNANIMOUSLY**

The meeting adjourned at 6:30 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Jill Kuzmich

Telesco Secretarial Services