

Town Charter Revision Commission Meeting – Saturday, May 25, 2024

Public Comments

In-Person:

1. **Suzette DeBeatham-Brown, 25 Fairfield Lane** sent her written comments (see attached) prior to this meeting via e-mail to the Commissioners. She commented on her surveying of surrounding towns for statistical data relative to the Election of Mayor and Council compensation. In her findings, Mrs. DeBeatham-Brown stated that the Election of Mayor is through general election and held at-large and not elected by districts. She also noted that regarding Council compensation, there are only a couple of towns that provide stipends to their elected Councilors on an annual basis. Mrs. DeBeatham-Brown is of the sentiment that if one elected group is selected to receive compensation that all elected officials should receive the same. She mentioned that all are volunteers and willing to give up valuable time that cannot be replaced to serve the Bloomfield community.
2. **Robert Berman, 8 Hiram Lane** mentioned that he sent initial comments into the Commission in April prior to receiving their official Council charges, which are somewhat aligned with his recommendations. Mr. Berman commented on changing the number of Councilors from 9 to 10 with four-year terms, every two years elect 5 Councilors. No party will be able to nominate no more than 3, citizens would be able to vote for any 5 Councilors. This would give continuity and could still have turnover as needed. In addition, Mr. Berman mentioned the position of the Library Director. He noted that this position is no different than any other senior staff position reporting to the Town Manager. He also noted that he did some research regarding this position and how appointed in other towns:

Library Board of Directors/Trustees: East Granby and Avon

Town Manager/CEO: Enfield, Simsbury, South Windsor, Granby

Human Resources: Windsor

3. **Frank Merblum, 13 Butternut Drive** commented on the town charter section focusing on referendums. He noted that there is a need to have language in the town charter that references a town budget referendum for both the Town and Board of Education. He is not in agreement with having nine Councilors decide on how much his taxes should be. In his research, Mr. Merblum noted 46% of Connecticut towns have budget referendums.

Councilor Kenneth McClary commented on the lack of Council interest to change the current form of government, Council-Manager. He strongly encouraged the public to take an active interest to come out and be engaged in this process. There are a variety of ways to participate by attending regular Commission meetings (flexible weekend meeting hours), e-mail and online form.

Virtual:

1. **Dr. James Biffer, 17 Terry Plains Drive** commented on some misinformation shared with Commissioners regarding Library Services. He cautioned them to review and speak with specific town departments before making a final recommendation to eliminate or change what they perceive to be reporting authority. It was noted that the Library Services department has always reported to the Town Manager. The Library Board of Trustees have nothing to do with the Town budget, they only control programming and the library collection. Dr. Biffer expressed his disagreement with changing Council

terms of office from 2 to 4 years. He noted too much chance for abuse of power without a recall provision and voting districts.

Councilor Todd Cooper thanked the Commissioners for their hard work and due diligence in updating our Town Charter, by providing flexible and ease of access for public participation. He also commented on the overall overview of Council charges to be discussed and reaffirmed the Council's commitment to undertake this revision process that is long overdue.