

Charter Revision Commission, Commissions Subcommittee Minutes

February 21, 2023

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Present: Jay Ginsberg, Mark Salerno, Wayne Blair

Guests: Rose Ann Hardy, ex-officio; Mark Christensen representing Conservation and Natural Resources Commission

Carroll Hill
TOWN CLERK

The meeting was called to order at 7:15 PM by Jay Ginsberg

Work Discussion:

1. Regarding Charter Revision Commission charge #3 (*Consider possible amendment of Section 2.7 to provide four-year terms of Selectmen and two- or four-year terms of First Selectman*): there was discussion of the pros and cons of such a change. The members of the subcommittee felt a four year term for all selectmen would allow for selectmen to get more experience before having to run for re-election. Also, a 4-year term would allow for longer term planning for the town by selectmen. It was also felt that terms should be staggered to allow the public to determine the direction the town should take every two years.
 - a. **Action Plan:** The subcommittee recommends 4-year terms for selectmen and first selectman with staggered terms.
2. Regarding Charter Revision Commission charge #13 (*Consider reinstating the Conservation Commission which will be comprised of members from both the Inland Wetlands Agency and the Commission for the Conservation of Natural Resources.*): Following some comments from Ms. Hardy and Mr. Christensen on this topic, the subcommittee reviewed various options for getting more value from the Natural Resources Commission. Several possibilities were discussed and the subcommittee feels further discussion is needed.
 - a. **Action Plan:** further discussion about how to better use the talent on the Natural Resources Commission.
3. Regarding Charter Revision Commission charge #2 (*Consider possible merger of the Planning and Zoning Commission*): The Subcommittee members had discussions with current and previous members of the Planning Commission and Zoning Commission as well as the Planning officer and Zoning officer. The uniform opinion was that for a town as large and active as East Lyme the two commissions should not be combined.
 - a. **Action Plan:** The Commissions Subcommittee recommends the two commissions in question remain separate.
4. Regarding Charter Revision Commission charge #12 (*Consider the possible amendment of Section 2.5.4 to provide that an appointee to a vacancy in an elective office shall serve the remainder of the term that was filled.*): The subcommittee reviewed the pros and cons of this change. This change has been recommended to all towns by the Connecticut Secretary of State to improve accountability and prevent confusion as to who fills an office. The subcommittee felt this change is warranted.

- a. **Action Plan:** The subcommittee recommends Section 2.5.4 of the charter be amended to provide that an appointee to a vacancy in an elective office serve the remainder of the term that was filled.
5. The Subcommittee feels there should be increased transparency when applications for development are submitted. We discussed options to be sure Planning, Zoning, Wetlands, and Natural Resources commissions are all “in the loop” when such applications are advanced.
6. The Subcommittee has been asked to consider adding term limits to elected and appointed positions on Commissions. The Subcommittee began discussion of this issue and could see numerous pros and cons. We feel further discussion is warranted before formulating a recommendation.
7. The subcommittee feels some Commissions should be included in the Charter and some should be created by ordinance. The Subcommittee feels all elected Commissions need to be in the Charter along with some of the appointed Commissions.
 - a. **Action Plan:** Review the list of all the current commissions and consider which need to be made permanent by putting them in the Charter.
 - b. **Action Plan:** Discuss with town attorney the ramifications of including Commissions in the charter as opposed to creating them by ordinance.

The meeting was adjourned at 8:35 PM

Respectfully Submitted,
Jay Ginsberg