

**CHARTER COMMISSION  
REGULAR MEETING  
DRAFT MINUTES October 23, 2014**

RECEIVED FOR RECORD  
STONINGTON, CT.  
14 NOV - 3 AM 8:46  
CYNTHIA LADWIG  
TOWN CLERK

Chairman Matthew Berger called the meeting to order at 7:06p. In attendance were Chairman Matthew Berger, Connie Frishman, Ashley Gillece, Bob Statchen, Sue Jones, Amy Hambly, Gail Shea and Alice Soscia. Vice-Chairman Stephen Bessette arrived at 7:13p. Absent were John Gomes and Jerry Murphy.

1. **Public Comment:** None.
2. **Approval of Minutes** of September 25, 2014:
3. Ms. Shea requested in section #2, Instead of "Mr Berger shared....", it should read, "Ms. Shea shared a letter from Attorney Kepple to the First Selectman, dated May 13, 2009". Ms. Shea requested the last line in #5 be removed. Ms. Shea requested in #7 remove 'good consensus of public came to the meeting'; under Town Clerk etc. change 'brought up to date' to 'reviewed' and remove 'term limits' to length of terms and change 'Change term limits of Board of Finance' to 'institute term limits'.  
-Mr. Statchen moved to approve the minutes as amended, with all comments above. Ms. Jones seconded. All in favor 8-0.

Vice-Chairman Stephen Bessette arrived at 7:13p.

4. **Communications:**
  - a. Mr. Berger shared a phone conversation he had with Mr. Murphy who is in Florida. Mr. Murphy believes the best idea is to change the Board of Finance to mirror the Board of Education.
  - b. The CRC received a letter dated 10/02/14 from June Strunk, it was emailed to the members. Ms. Shea commented on the statement about the CRC's website. Mr. Berger stated he believes she is referring to the website ChangetheCharter.com that was set up by the citizens that started the petition and the CRC is not affiliated. Mr. Berger stated he would send Ms. Strunk an email explaining that it is not the CRC's website.
  - c. Mr. Gomes sent an email with his views since he was unable to make the meeting, all the members had received it.
5. **Old Business:** None
6. **New Business:** Discussion re Charter Revision- the Board of Finance
  - a. Everyone received an email from Mr. Statchen including a chart with information about other towns in CT and the makeup like Stonington.  
-Ms. Shea asked why the column about term limits was not complete. Mr. Statchen said he just didn't get to all that info. Each towns charters has that information and he will try to collect more information and all others could as well.  
-Mr. Berger said there is an OLR-report that is about 15 yrs old, that has a question if towns are allowed to have term limits for elected

officials. Mr. Statchen said he believes the town of Stratford has term limits.

-There was a question of the nominating process of the Town Committees. Mr. Bessette said the Town Committees don't have to share anything with the public.

-Mr. Statchen asked if the CRC could require more transparency from the RTC and DTC, because that is what was on the petition. Five people are interviewing with the DTC trying to get the one vacant Board of Finance seat.

-Mr. Berger doesn't like how the replacement of Board of Education and Board of Finance are not handled differently than the Board of Selectman.

-Ms. Hambly handed out documents to the members from the 1998 CRC.

-Mr. Statchen in section 6.4 in the current Charter it states the Town Committees 'may' elect a certain number of people, he wonders if we can recommend it changed to 'shall'. If 'shall' is added we will have our contested elections.

-Discussion on the role and responsibility of the Town Committees and the roles of and the comparison to the Board of Education and the Board of Finance.

-Ms. Frishman Board of Finance budget is voted on by the people and the Board of Education's budget is not. If the Board of Finance members are elected then they will have constituents they have to answer to. Mr. Berger explained they do now. Ms. Frishman continued she is not for the Board of Education being elected either. Because to be elected takes money and you have to be working with a lot of people. She thinks it was frowned upon to be elected to the Board of Finance. Ms. Gillece disagreed citing the 1500 signatures on the petition said the opposite, most of the request were to make the Board of Finance like the Board of Education. Mr. Berger spoke to the appointed/election process, making it an elected position creates accountability.

**b. How many members everyone would like to recommend on the Board of Finance.**

-Ms. Shea said 7 or 5, to eliminate ties. She chooses 7

-Ms. Jones 7, would not be happy with 5, 5 is not enough

-Ms. Soscia-7

-Ms. Hambly-7

-Mr. Statchen-7, agrees with Sue, gives more participation.

-Mr. Berger would like to see all boards to have 5. But since everyone is for 7 he is good with 7

-Mr. Bessette wanted to stay at 6, 6 allows for balance. He believes with 5 or 7 it will become political. He wants to keep it apolitical.

Decision have always been agreed with 6, making it an odd number it becomes political.

-Ms. Gillece -7- She believes with 7 the group is a large enough number that personal interest won't be able to let it become political  
-Ms. Frishman-Thinks 6 works it is there for compromise  
-Mr. Berger with an odd number there will always be a seat in play, he doesn't believe it's not harder to compromise with one more than even number does.

Mr. Statchen motioned to recommend the Board of Finance changed from 6 to 7. Ms. Shea seconded. Vote 8-1. In favor – Mr. Statchen, Ms. Shea, Ms. Jones, Ms. Soccia, Ms. Gillece, Mr. Berger, Mr. Bessette. 1 opposed – Ms. Frishman

c. Mr. Statchen wonders if the 2/3 rule where there can be 5 from one party is a good idea. He would like to look into if we should recommend it changed to no more than 4 not 5 from one party. If it is no more than 4 being from one party it might open the board up to more people with more views and open up to Unaffiliateds. If we find that it would be better, then maybe it should be recommended to the Board of Education if it is recommended to change the Board of Finance. Tabled until next meeting will be under Old Business.

**d. The question of how many years the term should be on the Board of Finance.**

-Ms. Shea-4 years  
-Ms. Jones-4 years  
-Ms. Hambly-4 years  
-Mr. Statchen-4 years  
-Mr. Berger-4 years  
-Ms. Gillece-4 years  
-Ms. Frishman-can live with 4, but it takes 4 years to learn everything and understand what is there  
-Ms. Soccia-4 years - She noticed from Bob's chart that of the nine towns that have 7 members they have 4 year terms  
-Mr. Bessette-having 4 years goes perfectly with the 7 members. Members might be more willing to service 2 terms and that is 8 years instead of only serving one 6 year term

Ms. Shea motioned to recommend to change the term of the Board of Finance from 6 years to 4 years, Ms. Gillece seconded.

**Discussion on the motion-**

-Ms. Frishman asked if the members would still be appointed or changed to be elected. She stated if they were not appointed and the term was only 4 years, some people won't run if they would only get a 4 year term because it would cost money and time to run. Mr. Berger said it didn't deter people from running to the Board of Education when they changed theirs. Mr. Bessette said the Town Committees can help with raising money or the candidate can raise money for their own election, about \$1000. Ms. Soccia said if a board member did a good

job during their first term they won't have to campaign as much because the voters will elect them.

**Motion:** All in favor (9-0) of the motion to recommend the terms for the Board of Finance changed to 4 years.

- e. Mr. Bessette - Section 6.4 of the Board of Education should we dictate to the Boards how they fill their vacancies, how they are filled?  
-Mr. Statchen wants to look into how other Town's charters are set up  
-Mr. Bessette - Section 6.4B - 4 members of the Board of Education makes a quorum. The can set the quorum number. Mr. Berger said taking it from the Board of Education to use for the Board of Finance is correct.
- f. **For the Next Meeting:** Mr. Statchen items to discuss at the next meeting: Minority Representation, Term Limits and other related matter to the Board of Finance  
-Mr. Bessette asked if on the next agenda could be, housekeeping as per current Charter items for the rest of the charter? Ms. Shea suggested maybe the December meeting, everyone agreed to complete the Board of Finance first.

#### **7. Public Comments**

- a. Celena Drury asked Mr. Statchen term limits column on his chart and he said he just did not have enough time to finish the chart. They can only be found in the town's individual charters, so it takes time to read every charter to find the information.

- 8. Mr. Statchen motioned to adjourn and Ms. Shea seconded. All in favor

Meeting adjourned at 9:07pm.