

MEETING OF THE CHARTER REVISION COMMISSION

APRIL 14, 2022

A Meeting of the Charter Revision Commission was held on April 14, 2022 at the Bristol Public Library, 5 High Street, Bristol, CT. Members present: Chairman Jon Fitzgerald, Vice Chairman Calvin Brown, Melanie McKinley, Michelle Roalf, John Lafreniere, Richard Carter. Absent: Commissioner Daniel Micari.

Also Present: Mayor Jeffrey Caggiano
Richard Lacey, Edward Krawiecki, and Jeffrey Steeg from City of Bristol Corporation
Counsel. Sharon Krawiecki from Registrars of Voters

1. Call to order.

The meeting was called to order at 7:00 p.m. by Chairman Jon Fitzgerald.

2. Introduction of Commissioners

3. Discuss and approve the minutes of the public hearing held on March 23, 2022 and take any action as necessary.

On motion made by Commissioner Brown and seconded by Commissioner Roalf it was unanimously voted: to approve the minutes.

4. Discuss the charter revision process, public participation on the charter revision process and take any action as necessary.

Chairman Fitzgerald stated the process that must be done to revise or develop a municipal charter. (See attached chart).

5. Presentation by the Registrars of Voters on their proposal for redistricting of the city council districts, public participation on the redistricting proposal and take any action as necessary.

Sharon Krawiecki stated that the boundaries of the new 2022 map have been approved by the Ordinance Committee and the State. However, Registrars of Voters is requesting that the date on the map is removed and replaced with the most recent map filed with the Town Clerk of Bristol. If the date is not changed the Registrars of Voters would violate the law in the 2023 elections. Changing the date would further allow them to keep the most recent map filed by Registrars and avoid having to submit for public approval every 10 years.

6. Public participation regarding revisions to the charter

Chairman Fitzgerald stated that Town Clerk agrees that the map title be removed from the charter. He commented on a letter received from Alexander Carros, 203 Belridge Road, where he stated that he is opposed to a 4-year term for mayor as he feels 2-year term is easier and it works for the City.

Ron Craft, 67 Colony Street, addressed the commission stating that he agrees with the redistricting proposal from Registrars. He also agrees with the 4-year term for mayor, he believes 4 years is a much better time length and option for the City.

Shirley Dunphy, 67 Colony Street, addressed the commission stating that she is in agreement with her son Ron Craft.

Faye Duquette, 6 Apple Road, addressed the commission stating that she is speaking on behalf of Ann Hunger Crystal who agrees with the 4-year term for mayor.

Darren Pearson, 125 Redwood Drive, addressed the commission stating that a 4-year term for mayor is a more modern way to go. A poll done in 2016 where 2,000 municipalities participated showed that 45% were in favor of a 4-year term and 35% chose a 2-year term. The majority answered and were in favor of a 4-year term.

Commissioner Melanie McKinley stated that after speaking to neighbors, friends, and co-workers 2 disagree with the 4-year term for mayor. A total of 14 agree with the 4-year term, it would be a great change for the city and it would allow more time for the mayor to finish projects.

Jan Gyurko, 88 Fern Hill Road, addressed the commission stating that she would like to see the 4-year term for mayor. She feels it would be easier because he or she would be able to fully accomplish the job without worrying about campaigning every 2 years.

7. Discussion by charter revision commissioners of possible revisions to section 12 of the charter to alter the city council districts as a result of the census and legislative district changes and to take any action as necessary

Commissioner Brown commented that the proposal made by Registrars of Voters should be approved.

Chairman Fitzgerald stated that he disagrees to approve motion as he believes it should be up to Bristol voters to decide and not up to Registrars.

Commissioners Calvin Brown, Melanie McKinley, Michelle Roalf, and John Lafreniere voted to approve motion. Commissioners Jon Fitzgerald and Richard Carter voted against motion.

8. Discussion by charter revision commissioners of possible revisions to section 20 of the charter to change the date when officials elected at a municipal election take office.

On motion made by Commissioner Brown and seconded by Commissioner Roalf it was unanimously voted to: table the proposal.

9. Discussion by charter revision commissioners of possible revisions to the charter to replace the current 2-year terms for the office of mayor and/or city council with a 4-year term for the offices of mayor and/or city council and take any action as necessary.

Commissioner Brown stated that a 4-year term for mayor would work well if a 2- year term is kept for council members which is similar to how other cities are organized.

Commissioner Roalf noted that speaking for herself and those who have reached out to her - they are not in favor of the 4-year term because if for any given reason the mayor does not act appropriately and doesn't resign the only option according to the charter would be censorship. She feels that in a situation like this a 2-year term would be more than enough time.

Edward Krawiecki from the Corporation Counsel's office stated that it might be a good idea to look at how the city of East Hartford is structured. They have a legislative mechanism in their ordinances that allows the elective board to propose the removal of someone from office if needed. He noted that this could be a good option for the city to have. He further stated that there is a risk in losing recall, however, recall has not been used in the history of Bristol since 1911.

Commissioner Roalf commented that it could be seriously damaging to the City if a 4-year term means losing recall and only being able to censor the Mayor. She is concerned whether attorney fees are covered by the City if there was an issue raised by Mayor.

10. Discussion by charter revision commissioners of possible revisions to the charter to require multi-party representation on the city council and take any action as necessary.

Chairman Fitzgerald highlighted that three choices have been presented. 1.) Elect all council people at large in this case the state law does not permit more than 2/3 of the members in one party. 2.) Maintain city council districts without multi-party representation and elect some members at large. A decision needs to be made on how many members would be elected at large. 3.) Each party nominates two people from each district, the top 3 get elected resulting in no more than two people from one party

11. Discussion by charter revision commissioners of possible revisions to section 51 of the charter to increase the membership on the board of finance.

None.

12. Discuss by charter revision commissioners of comments and potential topics for charter revision raised during the public hearing and take any action as necessary.

None.

13. Discuss by charter revision commissioners of the charter and proposed charter revisions and take any action as necessary.

None.

14. Old Business.

None.

15. New Business.

None.

16. Discuss meeting dates and agendas and take any action as necessary.

Next meetings will be Wednesday May 4th, Wednesday May 25th, and Wednesday June 15th.

Decisions need to be made by May 25th. Report to Council is due by June 24th.

17. Adjourn.

At 7:53 p.m. a motion was made by Commissioner Brown and seconded by Commissioner Roalf and it was unanimously voted: to "Adjourn."

Respectfully Submitted
Genesis Ojeda
Recording Secretary

P 1

BASIC STEPS FOR REVISING OR DEVELOPING A MUNICIPAL CHARTER¹

The process for charter revision, from initiating a proposal to filing approved revisions with the Secretary of State, is prescribed in *Connecticut General Statutes (CGS) 7-188* "Initiation of action for adoption, amendment or repeal of charter or home rule ordinances" (attached in its entirety). Summarized below are the basic steps to municipal charter revision, with statutory citations.

STEP 1: Charter revision proposal must be initiated by either a 2/3 vote of the entire membership of the municipal appointing authority (common council, board of aldermen, selectmen, etc.), or a petition signed by not less than 10% of the electorate. [CGS §§7-187(a), 7-188(b)]



STEP 2: Within 30 days after step 1 (vote of appointing authority or certification of a petition), the appointing authority must appoint a charter commission, charter revision commission, or home rule ordinance revision commission. The commission must consist of five to fifteen electors, not more than 1/3 of whom may hold another public office in the municipality, and with no more than a bare majority from the same political party. "The commission shall proceed forthwith to draft a charter or amendment to the existing charter, or amendments to the home rule ordinance as the case maybe." [CGS §7-190(a)]



STEP 3: The commission must hold at least two public hearings: one prior to beginning "substantive work," and one after the commission has completed a draft report, but before submitting it to the appointing authority. The commission may hold other meetings it deems necessary. [CGS §7-191(a)]



STEP 4: The appointing authority shall prescribe a date, no later than 16 months from appointment, by which the commission must submit the draft report, including the proposed revisions, to the municipal clerk. Although the appointing authority can prescribe a date, decisions are not definitive. [CGS §§7-190(b), 7-191(b)]



STEP 5: The appointing authority shall hold its last public hearing, within 45 days after submission of the commission's draft report. [CGS §7-191(b)]

¹ This bulletin is an update of MMB 02-20 previously issued in October 2002.



STEP 6: The appointing authority may recommend changes to the draft within 15 days after its last hearing.

- If there are recommendations, the commission shall confer with the appointing authority concerning such recommendation and may amend its report or reject the recommendations. In either case the commission shall make its final report within 30 days after receiving such recommendations.
- If there are no recommendations, the commission's report becomes final and the appointing authority shall act on the report. [CGS §§7-191(b), (c)]



STEP 7: Within 15 days after receiving the final report², the appointing authority shall, by majority vote, either approve or reject the proposed changes. Following a vote to reject may file a petition for referendum within 45 days after such rejection by the appointing authority. [CGS §§7-191(d)]



STEP 8: Within 30 days after the appointing authority's approval or certification of a petition from the electorate, the charter, amendments, shall be published in full at least once in a general newspaper having circulation in the municipality. [CGS §7-191(d)]



STEP 9: After approval or the filing of electorate petition, the appointing authority decides by majority vote whether to hold a vote on the charter, amendments, or revisions at either a regular election (majority vote of participants needed for approval), or a special election (majority equal to at least 15% of qualified electors needed for approval). The election must be held not later than 15 months either after approval by the appointing authority or certification for a petition. [CGS §§7-191(e), (f)]



STEP 10: Not later than 30 days after the approval by the electors, the municipal clerk must notify the Secretary of State, in writing, of the results. Also, the municipal clerk must file three certified copies of the charter, amendments, or revisions with the Secretary of State. [CGS §7-191(g)]

² The commission shall terminate upon acceptance or rejection of its final report by the appointing authority [CGS §7-190(c)].

3/31/22

Alexander J. Carros
203 Belridge Road
Bristol, CT

To: Jon Fitzgerald
Chairman
Charter Revision Committee
City of Bristol, CT

Dear Sir:

After deliberation and debate during the past election cycle the proposed four-year mayoral term has returned to the Charter Revision Committee. Why does Bristol's political class keep pushing things like this over and over again?

Bristol has been lucky to not have any major corruption or scandals in its political history. One reason in my opinion is that the mayoral term is only for two years. Review by the constituents every two years with an election cultivates this positive environment. In other words, it keeps them honest. In one case a possible painful removal from office has been spared the city thanks to the two-year term.

Several poor arguments for the change to a four-year term have been made. One is that it's harder to find candidates for a two-year term. On the contrary, it's easier for a challenger to be elected to a two-year term since voters are only being asked to buy-in to a shorter term for that challenger. That selling point can and should be made to prospective candidates by the party leadership rather than those leaders lobbying for a charter change. In the case for an incumbent, if that person is doing a good job, the voters generally will award him or her with another term. If an incumbent is doing a good job, the need for him or her to campaign is greatly reduced as it is with any incumbent. Learned, experienced people understand this.

Another poor argument is that it's harder for a mayor to execute his or her "agenda" in two years. There have been several controversial projects and decisions made that were terminated (along with that mayor's term in office) per the two-year term. Projects like Renaissance or a grand, public funded downtown scheme supported or promoted by previous administrations were never put on a ballot as a referendum. Thanks to the two-year mayoral term these unpopular projects were stopped. There are numerous other examples of this in our city's political history.

The four-year term will affect the council races that will subsequently be held every two years. Voter interest, enthusiasm and turnout for the council races will be affected negatively by a change to a four-year mayoral term.

One of the worst and wrong-headed arguments is that we need a four-year term to keep any certain office holder in office longer, rather than expose him or her to the voting process. Any change to the

charter should be for the betterment of government not for any political reasons. Responsible and thoughtful activists and town committee members should note this. I refer to my previous comments on the recruitment and/or reelection of prospective candidates.

Recently, during the past election cycle and during the past Charter review, four former and well-respected mayors signed a letter opposing changing to a four-year term. Their reasoning should be given strong consideration as they are learned and experienced in government matters.

As with the change to a four-year term for Registrar that was voted down strongly in the past election cycle, I'm hoping for the continued greatness of Bristol the four-year mayoral term proposal is placed in the scrap bin permanently as well, in this case before it makes it to the ballot.

Sincerely,
Alexander J. Carros