CHARTER REVISION COMMISSION

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MINUTES OF PUBLIC HEARING
TOWN OF BETHEL, CT

Monday, January 13, 2014
7:00 PM
CJH Municipal Center – General Purpose Room

PRESENT: Chairman David Olson, Vice Chairman Nicholas Hoffman, Secretary Wendy Smith, William Hillman and Meghan O'Connor. Also in attendance was Nicholas Vitti, Charter Revision Commission Attorney.

David Olson opened the Public Hearing at 7:00 pm in Meeting Room 'A' and then moved to the General Purpose Room to accommodate the number of people attendance. The meeting resumed at 7:10 pm.

The Call:
To receive public comments and/or recommendations for proposals to revise the Town of Bethel Charter.

Dated at Bethel, Connecticut, this 16th day of December, 2013

Presentation: Chairman David Olson presented the Final Report of the Charter Revision Commission to the public.

PUBLIC COMMENTS:

J. Phillip Gallagher, Sunset Hill Road: Among other comments, spoke against the Item #2 - 4 Year Terms for the BOS and questions whether there is a conflict with the Charter in Item #4 – The Annual Town Meeting. He is also opposed to Item #12 – Town Department Line Item Budget Review and Approval, Item #13 – Special Appropriations and Transfers & Item #14 - Budget Neutral Transfers. He supports Item #18 – PUC – but members should be elected not appointed. A list of the above comments, in their entirety, was presented to the Commission .

David Glahn, 9 Elizabeth Street: Among other comments, asked where the Commission stands at this point in time. Members of the Commission clarified their next steps.

Michal Duff, 23 Long Meadow Lane: Among other comments, offered that the location of meetings, Item #17 - Meetings, should not be changed. He feels that the Police Station provides better parking, handicapped and rest-room access than other facilities as well as readily available office support.

Bill Kingston, 11 Dittmar Road: Among other comments, stated that he is in favor of Item #12 – Town Department Line Item Budget Review and Approval. The BOF would still require that all departments present their budget to the Board in a line-item format.

Bernie Flemming, 42 Quaker Ridge Road: Among other comments, questioned why we need a 4 year term of office for the Board of Selectmen. The public is constantly changing and we need fast action to keep up. A 2 year term works.

Steve Gauruder, 11 Benson Road: Among other comments, suggested that the town send emails to notify the public of town meetings, etc. He also stated that he is opposed to Item #10 – Changing Bidding Threshold. He feels that the people will not be made aware of the increases.

Ann Cleary, 2 Eagle Rock Hill: Among other comments, requested that the Commission reconsider the idea of creating an Oversight Board to go to when all other avenues are exhausted or if there are problems encountered along the way.

William Duff, 33 Long Meadow Lane: Among other comments, offered that he opposes the increase to 4 Year Terms of Office for the BOS. His opinion is that this change will unintentionally politicize the 1st Selectmen's Office as well as the Town Clerks' position

AJ Bernard, Highview Terrace: Among other comments, opposed to Item #1 - 5 Member BOS – it's too big for this town and Item #2 – 4 Year Terms of Office for BOS because there is no recall if something comes up during the term. In addition, he also opposes Item #7 – Sale, Purchase or Other Disposition of Town Real Estate.

Cynthia McCorkindale, 19 Elgin Avenue: Among other comments, offered a general comment stating that the Charter is like our town "Constitution" and should not have major changes made to it that might lead to unforeseen problems. She opposes Item #2 - 4 Year Terms of Office for the BOS and Item #1- 5 Member BOS as it may invite more politics. She also opposes Item #16 – BOE Special Revenue Funds Account.

Larry Craybas, Kellogg Street, Chairman of the Board of Education: Among other comments, explained that the rationale for asking for Item #16 – BOE Special Revenue Funds Account – was to clarify that the BOF does not need to be brought into the process of setting up Special Revenue accounts.

Jim Roden, 53 Juniper Road: Among other comments suggested that the Water/Sewer and Transfer Station accounts should be mentioned in the Charter. The accounts should be separated from the General Fund account and the BOF should have more oversight power, not less.

Don Goodrich, 6 Aunt Patty's Lane West: Among other comments, is in favor of Item #1 - 5 Member BOS and Item #2 - 4 Year Terms Office for BOS. It provides wider and more representation as well as more opportunity for improvements to the town. This would give the BOS more time to work together as a team and spend less time campaigning.

Diana Carlino, 93 Nashville Road: Among other comments, supports the 4 Year Terms of Office for the BOS and a 5 member BOS stating that this would be a positive move for the town to take a step back from campaigning and focus on the management of the town. She also supports the BOF setting the salary for the elected officials as well as compensating the 1st Selectman properly.

Billy Michael, 27 ½ Fleetwood Ave: Among other comments, opposes Item #2 - 4 Year Terms of Office for the BOS and Item #1 - 5 Member BOS. He would like to see the BOF maintain oversight of budget line items, Item #13, because they are the experts. Mr. Michael questioned the Commission about the number of meetings that the Commission held and the process of determining what items would be considered as changes to the Charter.

Stuart Carlsen, 18 Winthrop Road: Among other comments, asked what the next steps for the Commission are. David Olson explained that the members would listen to the public comments tonight, make revisions to the Report if necessary and then present the Report to the Selectmen by January 21, 2014. After that the Commission is done.

Shani Specht, 26 Nashville Road: Among other comments, stated that she is opposed to the following – Item #1 - 4 Year Terms of Office for BOS, Item #12 – Town Department Line Item Budget Review and Approval - stating that the people elect the BOF to allocate the Town funds so the power should stay with them and Item #18 - Public Utilities Commission - stating that the commission should be elected not appointed.

John Rondano, 75 Plumbtrees Road: Among other comments, stated that he is opposed to Item #2- 4 Year Terms of Office - and Item #1 -BOS and the 5 Member BOS. The 2 year term has worked for over 100 years and will continue to work.

Matthew Knickerbocker, Colonial Drive, First Selectman: Among other comments, stated that he supports Item #2 - 4 Year Terms of Office for the BOS. The learning curve is long due to the

enormous legal and regulatory responsibilities that go along with managing our town, even though Bethel is not a big city.

Stuart Carlsen, 18 Winthrop Road: Asked if the audio recording of this hearing is available to the public. Wendy Smith stated that it will be available to listen to at Municipal Center.

Deno Gualtieri, 26 Codfish Hill Road: Among other comments, questioned the inflation rate increase in Item #6 - Change Threshold for Actions Requiring a Town Meeting . He sees the 50K as too high. In addition, he supports Item #12 - Town Department Line Item Budget Review and Approval.

Mary O'Leary, 11 Terry Drive: Among other comments, offered that the power is in the citizens hands. We shouldn't criticize the people who volunteer their time to do this work if we don't get involved. She urges everyone to get involved and go the meetings.

David Glahn, 9 Elizabeth Street: Among other comments, offered that people need an incentive to go to the meetings and speak. The public needs to have the right to speak their minds and not be cut off.

John Shepard, 73 Kingswood Drive: Among other comments, stated that he is opposed to Item #2 - 4 Year Terms of Office for the BOS - citing that it is a powerful position and there is potential to do a lot of damage in that length of time.

Jim Fiddes, 204 Chestnut Ridge Road: Among other comments, stated that he would like to keep the 2 Year Terms of Office for the BOS. There would be more time to play with more money. He does support compensating the 1st Selectman appropriately.

James Rodan, 53 Juniper Road: Among other comments, questioned how the Referendum will be worded. The Commission explained that the BOS is the appointed authority, not the Commission. It may be that "like items" will be listed together.

Anne Cleary, 2 Eagle Rock Hill: Among other comments, stated that in response to Mrs. O'Leary's comment she has been involved and attending meetings for 7 years and has knowledge of what's going on. This is why she feels it is important to have an Oversight Board.

Cynthia McCorkindale, 19 Elgin Avenue: Added that she supports the BOF setting the salary of elected officials prior to the municipal election. She also supports an increase in salary for the 1st Selectman.

Shani Specht, 26 Nashville Road: Added that she would like to see electronic notice of meetings go to out to the public.

Steve Gauruder, 11 Benson Road: Added that staggered terms for the BOS would be more confusing.

Jenny Taser, Chestnut Street: Among other comments, supports Item #18- Public Utilities Commission. Having appointed officials on the PUC would bring less politics. Appointed officials would be knowledgeable and interested in the duties of the commission.

The Public Hearing was closed at 9:40 pm

Respectfully submitted,

Debra Roper wes

Debra Roper, Recording Secretary