

BLOOMFIELD TOWN CHARTER REVISION COMMISSION

There was a regular meeting of the above referenced subcommittee held on Thursday, April 18, 2024, at 7:00 p.m. in Conference Room #5 at Bloomfield Town Hall, 800 Bloomfield Avenue, Bloomfield, CT.

Committee Members: Joseph Suggs, Chair and Dwight Bolton

Virtual Attendance: Bradley Klein

Absent: Erica Coleman and Elvin Turner

Others present (in-person): Mayor Danielle C. Wong, Deputy Mayor Anthony Harrington, Councilors Shamar Mahon, Kenneth McClary and Town Attorney Andrew Crumbie, India Rodgers, Clerk of Council, Lynette Easmon, Chair (virtual)

The meeting was called to order at 7:15 p.m.

PUBLIC HEARING

The public hearing opened at 7:15 p.m.

Public Comments

1. **Rickford Kirton, 7 Hickory Lane** expressed his support of the Charter Revision process. However, he also voiced concerns regarding the overall timing and tentative completion date. It was noted that the goal of the Charter Revision Commission is to field public opinion, suggestions, and revisions for a final draft to be presented to the Town Council by August 2024. This timeframe would allow a potential referendum question for the November 2024 Presidential ballot. Mr. Kirton also commented on preferring weekday meetings versus occasional Saturday meetings of the Commission. He noted that public outreach and voter education is key to this revision process.
2. **David Baram, 5 Warbler Circle** congratulated the Council on forming a Town Charter Revision Commission. Mr. Baram informed the Commission that he was co-chair of the last charter revision process in 2004-05. He mentioned that the Commission met 18 months prior to submitting a draft charter revision for Council consideration. Mr. Baram offered some general guidance to the revision process as well as the need to meet with town leadership and staff for public/Council debates.
3. **Suzette DeBeatham-Brown, 25 Fairfield Lane** expressed concerns relative to the Commission timeline. She noted that the Commission should be intentional with public outreach and education regarding the charter revision process. There should be as much participation as possible from the community to get involved to let their voices be heard. This process should be very open and transparent.
4. **Donna Hubbs, 16 Brooke Street** stated that the charter revision process is the most important task that the Town does. She agreed with all previous public comments regarding the timeline, process and overall

public outreach to engage residents to share their opinions and suggestions for better standards in local governance. She pleaded with the Commission to finally put the town first.

5. **Councilor Shamar Mahon, 8 Hilltop Circle** commented on making necessary changes to the town charter if changes aren't needed. He would like the Commission to be very intentional as well and review all public comments received. In moving forward, Councilor Mahon would like the Commission to ensure inclusivity and provide access and outreach in other locations across Bloomfield for all residents to get involved.

Virtual

1. **Dr. James Biffer, 17 Terry Plains Road** commented on the purpose of the Town Charter is meant to enumerate and limit the extent of government and the powers of government. It was designed to protect citizens from government overreach. The goal should be to improve citizens' lives, make Bloomfield more attractive to businesses and preserve citizens' rights and freedoms. Anything else doesn't belong in the charter.

Dr. Biffer also referred to Section 703 – Elections. He commented on the terms of office, and noted that there should be a recall provision, and a charter for the Council and Board of Education. The two larger groups that control the money in town. The use of taxpayer funds. He also stated that there is just too much power and too much chance of abuse.

The public hearing closed at 7:35 p.m.

Discussion of Town Council Charges to the Commission

Commissioner Klein mentioned regarding the importance of respecting a legitimate election, even if there is not full participation. In addition, Commissioner Klein reviewed a listing of 60% presidential participation rates of eligible electors of voters statewide. It's about 40% for regional primary primaries and about 20% that do not undercut the legitimacy of the election. It was reiterated that the efforts made by the Town to include participation should be respected, and it should enhance the legitimacy of any proceedings that the Commission will undertake.

Mayor Wong stated the Council made suggested recommendations on charter sections/topics for review as official council charges. The Council will continue to be engaged and provide some relay of content. They look forward to the work that this Commission is doing daily, promoting extensive community engagement during this process. This is an inclusive process with a meeting schedule to accommodate all during the work week and on Saturdays. Mayor expressed her excitement about beginning this process and providing encouragement and support to the commission with this important task at hand.

Discussion of Schedule for Board of Education and Town Manager

Chairwoman Lynette Easmon, Chair of Bloomfield Board of Education will solicit input from the Acting Superintendent, Bethany Silva and coordinate a meeting date with the Board of Education Administration to discuss further.

Mayor Wong will coordinate with the Town Manager's Office to schedule a meet and greet with the new Town Manager, Mr. Alvin D. Schwapp, Jr. His first official day is Monday, May 6, 2024.

Discussion and Possible Action regarding Revision of 2024 Meeting Schedule

Ms. India Rodgers, Clerk of Council requesting clarification of the 2024 Commission Meeting Schedule to identify the correct time and meeting days. It was noted that the Commission has plans to complete the charter revision process with a final draft to the Council by the end of August. The last meeting date listed is Thursday, August 29, 2024, at 7:00 p.m.

Discussion and Possible Action regarding Administrative Management & Public Education Outreach Campaign/Marketing Materials

Ms. Rodgers gave a brief overview of the administrative management support for the Commission as well as a glimpse of the public educational outreach for the community. A dedicated webpage:

<https://ct-bloomfield.civicplus.com/963/Bloomfield-Charter-Revision-Commission>

has been created to include tabs such as Public Input & Community Feedback, Commission Progress Tracker as well as a variety of links that further extend resource materials for residents to engage in and learn about. In addition to the webpage, a customized e-mail address was created to provide another level of access for public comment submissions to the Commission. The e-mail address is CharterRevision@bloomfieldct.gov.

APPROVAL OF MINUTES

There was no quorum to approve the minutes of March 23, 2024.

ADJOURNMENT

The meeting was adjourned at 7:53 p.m.