

Charter Revision Commission – Email(s) Received from 4/5/22 – 5/4/22

Susan H suska456@yahoo.com

Monday, April 18, 2022 at 12:12 PM

Please leave the 40 RTM member, 10 District structure as is! The over 60,000 residents of Fairfield must have their voices heard thru each of the 10 District's representatives rather than a "chosen few" speaking on behalf of all. This is a no brainer!

Thank you.

Sent from my iPhone

John Waxman johnwaxman@me.com

Monday, April 18, 2022 at 7:33 PM

Recently there have been a series of letters to Patch re the CRC and It's charge - Charter revision. Letters should identify the writer such as Bill Gerber, former RTM member. I have asked in previous emails for writers to the CRC to identify any possible local government affiliation other than town resident. It is important for Fairfield residents to know how the writer came by his or her knowledge and position. At times I have questioned Ms Carpenter's reasoning on why the RTM questions the First Selectman. I also what is the basis for selecting Branford as a town "similar" to Fairfield. Our town is a commuter town relying on the train rather than a car to get to NYC, it has a larger population more in common with a city than Branford. It is important to have a RTM that is large enough(40 to 60 members) to represent the needs of the diverse community. The fact that it started as a town meeting usually in a church in which all residents could attend and vote on expenditures was very important. It then evolved to election of representatives of the town meeting which is also similar to the federal House of Representatives. We must uphold this form of equality in order to maintain a democracy. We need more representation, not less. It is also important to have a three person board of selectmen. The third person must represent the minority needs in budget items and May not be popular but courageous.

Carol Waxman
Resident

Sent from my iPhone

Ann Green anngreen203@gmail.com

Tuesday, April 19, 2022 at 9:05 AM

To our Charter Review Commission,

Please leave our 40-member, 10-district RTM structure alone. We should keep the RTM as is. It really allows for the many voices from all the diverse districts to be heard.

We are concerned about consolidating government power in fewer hands and diminishing opportunities for the non-"political class" to represent their neighborhoods.

Thank you,

Ann Green

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Ann Green

203-913-2248

Richard Jacobs delaracom@aol.com

Monday, April 25, 2022 at 1:49 PM

-----Original Message-----

From: Richard Jacobs <delaracom@aol.com>

To: PO'Brien@fairfieldct.org <PO'Brien@fairfieldct.org>

Sent: Wed, Apr 20, 2022 12:34 pm

Subject: "Charter Revision Commission"

Mr. Charter Revision Chairman,

The following are some of my concerns with regards to changes to the charter.

- 1) Any time there is reduction in representation there is also reduction in democracy. By limiting the number of voices in the RTM, board of selectmen or any other board or commission, you will limit the number of ideas that will be heard, some of which might be wonderful ideas that never see the light of day. Consolidating power is always a bad idea. Look around the world and you can see what happens when powers consolidated. There is an old saying " power corrupts and absolute power corrupts absolutely"

- 2) TPZ : The TPZ commission should be broken into two commissions one would be planning and the other would be zoning. TPZ should be able to hiring their own attorney to defend their cases in court. Presently the attorney that defends the zoning cases is the town attorney who works for the first Selectmen. This situation gives the first Selectman a de facto veto effect over zoning. If the first Selectman does not like a zoning ruling and it is challenged in court, that first selectmen can tell the attorney not to rigorously defend the TPZ ruling.

Our town has function very well under our charter. This charter revision exercise seems to be an answer looking for a problem.

Richard Jacobs
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Judith Ewing jeewing8@outlook.com
Tuesday, April 26, 2022 at 9:04 AM

Thanks again for your thorough discussion on the many items of business before you. Things are winding down but several thoughts come to mind. I will share some of these at this time.

1. In trying to follow the Action Item reports I am a bit confused about the color coding. Could this be described at the top of each report? Which color for PROPOSED LANGUAGE; for CRC APPROVED NEW LANGUAGE; for items still up for discussion; for footnotes to be added; Etc??? I am trying my best to keep it all straight since day one; others are just getting engaged. Some description would be very helpful.
2. As you know, I am strongly in favor of 10 RTM districts, but prefer a 40 member RTM. I have heard suggestions for more committees, both standing and temporary. Such committees mean more work for more people. I am very disappointed that the Charter will state that the 10 districts will have 3 representatives each. With such a small number, how can it grow and develop beyond just being a "rubber stamp?"
3. I also do not agree with the decision to include this information regarding the 10/3 plan in the Charter. The legislative body should decide its own fate and not be bound by the Charter which is not reviewed that often. Since my involvement in the Town in 1971 there have been very few opportunities to propose Charter changes: 1986; 1992 (which failed to get on the ballot); 1997; 2006; and 2021-22. In addition, two attorneys have informed me that such language is contrary to state statute Sec. 9 – 169. Our Charter should not contradict any statute.
4. In addition, I strongly disagree with the decision to have minority party representation on the RTM. Since 1947 our Charter has included the following language as stated in Section 2.6. D. (3): "The number of candidates in each district equal to the number of RTM members for the district who have polled the highest number of votes shall be elected." Elections should be won by those with the highest number of votes unless restricted by state statute. To do otherwise is undemocratic and unresponsive to the voting public. And be careful what you wish for because I anticipate that this practice will lead to "automatic election by nomination." Those districts which are least competitive will probably decide to nominate two candidates from the majority party, and one candidate from the minority party. I thought we were trying to avoid automatic elections.

5. I also oppose the notion of limiting an appointed employee to any period of time. Continuity has served us well. Successful employees should be able to serve until they choose to retire, or are dismissed for cause. I look forward to hearing more about Best Practices standards.
6. I favor standardizing terms of appointment to boards and commissions, and clarifying what happens when alternates move into full positions, and to volunteers who fill unexpired terms.
7. Is there some way that we can elect three Board of Education members to serve four year terms every two years? A transition page could be added (See page 53 of the current Charter). Former members have suggested returning to the six year term.
8. I do not see the necessity of adding any pages to the Charter to describe FOIA. The Town Clerk can offer guidance to the paid secretaries. This does not seem to be a pressing issue. Workshops and orientation meetings have been offered from time to time on FOIA and Robert's Rules.

Submitted by: Judy Ewing
98 Sasco Hill Terrace
Fairfield, CT 06824

Kgriffi1@optonline.net

Wednesday, April 27, 2022 at 10:49 PM
Boards and Commissions

Dear CRC Members –

I understand that Boards and Commissions are on your agenda for tomorrow evening. So I am resending the suggestions and requested clarifications I sent last November (see attached).

Additionally, I would like to make two requests.

First, that you find a way to make the appointment process more transparent and less political. Fairfield has approximately 400 Board and Commission members – almost as many members as there are employees. There needs to be a way to ensure that the Town is utilizing its valuable volunteer resources and that appointments aren't being used for political favors.

And second, that you sunset the specifics about individual Boards and Commissions to the Town Code for more thoughtful consideration at a later date, and leave only minimal, generic language in the Charter.

Sincerely,
Kathleen D. Griffin
15 Stonybrook Road

11/18/2021

Dear Charter Revision Commission Members –

I apologize for the tardiness of this e-mail but would appreciate your consideration of the following clarifications and recommendations regarding various issues related to boards and commissions currently in the Town Charter.

As background, I worked for the prior administration in the First Selectman's Office where one of my responsibilities was as Clerk for the Board of Selectmen. In that role I communicated regularly with board and commission chairs, appointees, department heads, and the selectmen to coordinate board and commission appointments. I was also the website manager and created most of the current web content related to our Town government and the appointment process. I have also served on the RTM and the Board of Assessment Appeals. I believe I have a solid understanding of the Town's boards and commissions and where clarification is needed and/or change could be beneficial.

I would also like to say that Fairfield's volunteer board and commission members devote a tremendous amount of time and effort to serving our residents, provide invaluable area expertise, and play a vital role in policy setting and the successful operation of our Town. I would ask you to do your due diligence before eliminating any of them. I do support moving the appointed boards and commissions out of the Charter and into the Town Code (sunset clause) where roles and responsibilities can be more easily modified and thoughtfully defined.

Sincerely,
Kathleen Griffin
15 Stonybrook Road

3.1.D Eligibility for Reappointment

Clarification Needed – Define successive full terms (vs. partial terms)

The Charter specifies term limits of 'two successive full terms' for appointed Boards and Commissions. But what is considered a 'full-term' (or conversely, what is a 'partial term') is not defined. The Town Clerk may be able to add more clarity in this area. But it's my understanding that a term is considered 'partial' when someone else served in the term for any length of time before the current member took over. And a term is considered 'full' when no one else has served in that term regardless of when the term started. So, for example, on a board with a 5-year term, that means a person could potentially serve for 14 years and 11 months if a member replaces someone who serves only two weeks. Conversely a person who serves only 6 months at the end of a 5-year term, but the seat went vacant for 4 and 1/2 years, that service would be considered a full term and the member would time out after having served 5 years and 6 months. That's almost a 10-year difference.

Additionally, if a person moves from an alternate position to full position and then back to alternate, they may be continually serving partial terms at each position and may never serve a single 'full term' as either an alternate or a full member.

If term limits are to remain, please define what is a full term and what is a partial term, keeping in mind that seats may remain vacant for long periods of time, and that members often move back and forth

between being regular members and alternates. Or, since different boards have different term lengths, perhaps eligibility for reappointment should be based on years of service rather than terms.

Recommendation – Eliminate term limits for appointed boards

I recommend eliminating term limits on appointed boards and leaving it up to the appointing body to determine whether it is in the best interest of the Board and the Town to reappoint a member to an additional term and/or fresh blood is needed. There is tremendous institutional knowledge among our board and commission members. Having a person sit out for ‘one year’ (which is the current time a person has to be off to then be considered again) doesn’t really make that much difference. If the appointment process can be de-politicized and improved (which I believe it can), then the process of re-evaluating a board’s talent needs and the contributions of the member eligible for reappointment could be happening each time a term expires.

6.2B (2) – Appointment Powers of the First Selectman

Recommendation – Remove ‘Commissions and Boards’ from the list that report to the First Selectman

Section 6.2. (2) says that All Town officers, commissions, boards, and employees of the Town appointed solely by the First Selectman shall be responsible to the First Selectman for the faithful performance of their respective duties and shall report to the First Selectman. Does that mean the members of the Conservation Commission, the Economic Development Commission, the Parking Authority, the Housing Authority and any other Boards appointed solely by the First Selectman are responsible to the First Selectman? The Parking Authority and the Fairfield Housing Authority are not listed in the Charter or the Code but their board members are currently appointed by the First Selectman. I think these Boards, once appointed, should be independent and/or not responsible to the person or body that solely appointed them.

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10.2 – Bodies Appointed by the First Selectman

Recommendation – Have the Conservation Commission appointed by the Board of Selectmen

All appointed boards in the Charter, with the exception of the Conservation Commission, are Board of Selectmen or Board of Selectmen and RTM appointments. Why is the Conservation Commission solely appointed by the First Selectman? If it is required by state statute, can the statute be overridden by the Charter so the Conservation Commission is appointed by the Board of Selectmen not just the First Selectman? This is a significant and important commission in Fairfield.

10.2 and 10.4 – Appointed Boards and Commissions

Recommendation – Have the majority of Boards and Commissions Appointed by the RTM

I would like the Commission to consider the positive and de-politicizing effect it might have on Town government to have most of the Board and Commission members appointed by the RTM rather than by the First Selectman or the Board of Selectmen. It looks like most boards in Greenwich have candidates

nominated by the BOS but are interviewed, reviewed, and ultimately appointed by the RTM. Some of Greenwich's boards (e.g. Flood and Erosion Control Board) are appointed solely by the RTM. The RTM has a standing Appointments Committee. These links provide some information on the process in Greenwich:

- [Appointment Process](#)
- [Flow Chart](#)
- [Selectmen's Nominations Advisory Committee](#)
- [RTM Appointments Committee](#)

Giving the RTM this responsibility would put the final word on the make-up of the Town's appointed boards in the hands of the people, rather than with a small, often partisan, Board of Selectmen or solely the First Selectman.

Article 10 - Appointment Date

Clarification Needed – **Add clarifying language about when an appointment can be made**

There is no language in the charter to say how early Board and Commission members can be appointed or reappointed. Can the First Selectman or Board of Selectmen appoint (or reappoint) Board and Commission members in early November before leaving office and/or before the members' terms have expired? Or must the appointment not occur until after the 4th Monday in November/the start of the new term? There have been questions about this as there's no language that says how much earlier than the start date of a term the appointment can be made.

8.4 Board of Assessment Appeals (BAA) Recommendation – Make this an Appointed Board

Due to the minority representation clause, when there are only two BAA members on the ballot (which happens every two years), whoever the parties nominate is elected. (Each party can only run one candidate, the public can only vote for one candidate, but two candidates win.) It also means the party

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balance on the Board can only change every four years. A similar situation happened with the Board of Education this year.

More importantly, it seems difficult for the parties to get candidates to run for this Board and the public largely doesn't pay attention to it in Town-wide races. Yet being an appeals board, it directly serves the public and its decisions can have a significant and direct impact on a property owner. The public and the Board may be better served by having the BAA appointed as is done in other Towns in CT (some have 3 members, 3 alternates). Some towns even have paid BAA members.

8.4 Zoning Board of Appeals (ZBA) Recommendation – Make this an Appointed Board

Similar to the BAA, it seems difficult for the political parties to get candidates to run for these positions and they are important ones in directly serving the public. The candidates receive minimal attention during election season. The public may be better served by having the ZBA members appointed rather than elected.

Article 10 – Harbor Management Commission

Clarification Needed – **Define the Harbor Management Commission**

Article 9 Section 9.11 references the Harbor Management Commission (HMC) multiple times but the HMC is in the Code not the Charter. Consider adding the HMC to the Charter (if the duties of the Director of Parks and Recreation remain in the Charter.) And if it HMC is added to the Charter then address the issue of short alternate terms/term limits on the HMC as alternate terms are only two years so alternates time out after four years due to term limits.

10.18 Golf Commission Terms

Recommendation – **Change Golf Commission terms to begin 4th Monday in November; Eliminate the 1 term limit**

The Golf Commission has term start dates of April 1 and a term limit of one term. I don't know if there's a specific reason why this Commission was set up differently than the others. But unless it's a compelling one I would recommend putting the Golf Commission in line with most other permanent charter Boards (2 full terms; terms begin in November). As it currently is defined, appointing leadership in December with April turnover can get complicated. Additionally, the application of the '65th day after the fourth Monday in November' clause in Section 3.3 doesn't make sense for this Commission. [The same situation occurs for FairTV Commission and the Town Facilities Commission in the Code which begin their terms in July].

The Ethics Commission is also a July appointment. There may be a specific reason why Ethics does not line up with all the other Boards. But perhaps changing the start date of the terms (and the length of them) should be considered as well.

10.7 Police and Fire Retirement Board

Recommendation – **Change term limits to longer than 3 years.**

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These terms are very short – three years. So board members time out after six years due to current term limits. Consider making these term lengths similar to those of the Employees Retirement Board or other boards – four or five years.

10.7 Police and Fire Retirement Board

Recommendation – **Move the Board to the Town Code/same location as EMPRET and JRIB**

Consider moving this Board to the Code so it is in the same location as the Employees Retirement Board and the Joint Retirement Investment Board (JRIB). Its members also sit on the JRIB so it may make sense to have all three boards defined in the same location.

10.1.4 – Roberts Rules

Clarification Needed – **What does ‘otherwise stipulates’ mean?**

10.1.4 says “Roberts Rules of Order shall regulate the conduct of all meetings of boards and commissions unless a particular board or commission **otherwise stipulates.**” Stipulates where and/or how? What process must a board go through, or what documents should it create, in order to modify the way it conducts its meetings? Does this refer to the RTM’s Rules to Regulate or a policies and procedures manual? Can rules be changed for just one meeting? It would be helpful to know how a board goes about stipulating a different set of rules.

Article XII Standards of Conduct

Recommendation – **Add language about Patronage**

To reduce the use of Board and Commission appointments as political favors, consider adding the following language:

Patronage. No public official or employee shall promise an appointment or the use of his or her influence to obtain an appointment to any position as reward for any political activity or contribution.

Recommendation – **Move the Standards of Conduct to the Town Code**

I’d like the Commission to consider what Ridgefield did in their last charter revision – move the

Standards of Conduct from the Charter to the Code once the RTM [passes the ordinance](#).

10.15 (B) of the Town Charter defines the powers and duties of the Ethics Commission and references the Standards of Conduct and the Code of Ethics. I don’t know when the Standards of Conduct were last updated but they are narrow, addressing primarily conflict of interest. And although the Charter references a Code of Ethics, no such ordinance has been passed and no Code of Ethics exists. If the Standards of Conduct remain in the Charter and the RTM decides to pass a Code of Ethics, then our ethical standards reside in two separate documents.

I don’t believe it should be the work of the Commission (both in time and thought) to come up with the significant changes needed to make our Standards of Conduct more robust and applicable to today’s ethical challenges. I believe moving the Standards of Conduct out of the Charter and into the Code will provide the RTM the time, flexibility, and opportunity to make thoughtful modifications and improvements to whatever language is needed in our governing documents to better define the ethical standards we as a Town wish to hold our Town officials and employees to.

Constantina Karageorge constantina.karageorge@gmail.com

Tuesday May 3, 2022 at 8:23 PM

RTM Minority Representation

Dear Committee,

The Karageorge Family does not approve adding a minority party representation to the RTM. Are we going back to Segregation???? Are we not trying to keep unified??? I just read the "**Letter To The Editor: Fairfield Charter Revision Is Too Controversial**" and agree "This is not only undemocratic, but is contrary to the long-standing tradition that those elected to represent the people have received the highest number of votes. To allow minority representation is to disenfranchise a large number of citizens the right to choose their own representatives."

Respectfully,

Agnes Karageorge

Dimitrea Karageorge

Constantina Karageorge

John Karageorge

103 Brookside Drive

203-257-7655

Joy Karageorge

James Karageorge

296 Reef Road

203-767-2319

From: Constantina Karageorge [mailto:constantina.karageorge@gmail.com]
Sent: Wednesday, May 4, 2022 6:17 AM
To: CRC@fairfieldct.org
Subject: Re: RTM Minority Representation

Good morning Committee,

After being educated on what Minority Representation actually means instead of how it dubiously reads to the populace, we, the Karageorge Family, are in agreement with this provision.

Someone should comment to clarify on this PATCH “Letter To The Editor: Fairfield Charter Revision Is Too Controversial”; <https://patch.com/connecticut/fairfield/letter-editor-fairfield-charter-revision-too-controversial>.

Here we go again, being gaslighted!!!

Our apologies for not first asking for clarification before making a decision.

Respectfully,
Agens Karageorge
Dimitrea Karageorge
John Karageorge
103 Brookside Drive
203-257-7655

Joy Karageorge
James Karageorge
296 Reef Road
203-767-2319

Carol Waxman cawaxman40@gmail.com

Wednesday, May 4, 2022 at 8:13 AM
Proposed CRC changes

Dear CRC members-

I have been watching the many well organized meetings of the CRC and cannot comprehend why with all the input from residents the Commission seems dead set on reducing the importantly strong legislative body of the Fairfield town government. If anything with such a diverse community, the Commission should retain the current membership of the RTM. This is the elected body which represents each and every resident or constituent. The Board of Selectmen is the executive body and it is important that the residents of Fairfield have district electors to whom they can direct their financial, environmental and social concerns in a timely manner before regular monthly meetings of the RTM.

Obviously this is a very difficult time in all our lives but it is made even more difficult by the lack of cooperation between Republicans and Democrats. The most beneficial government is achieved thru mediation and cooperation of members of both parties. Some of us are old enough to remember the "good old days" in local, state and federal government when representatives were proud to claim friendship with their opponents in government, when they could spend hours in heated battle over wants, mediate and go out to lunch together — or even play a game of cards to relax together.

We may not be getting back to those days but we should not be so quick to reduce the partisan RTM (which cannot be changed to non-partisan) but we can keep the districts and number of representatives. This is not Branford(the example used bob CRC) in diversity or numbers. we are a proud mixture of people and must keep the representation. We miss the Civics class of old and we need to educate the students and residents to understand where and why we presently have this form of government especially in New England. We might get more volunteers if the residents were educated. Another town, Westport, invites the League of Women Voters into the public high school to provide a well-organized Civics class and Westporters have gotten many volunteers as a result within their government, which I strongly

believe comes from an educated citizenry!! While talking to other towns about the running of their government, ask how they get such volunteers to run for office. Invite Westport LWV to come and explain their Civics class. I don't believe it costs the town of Westport any money as they use volunteers. Also, it is important to have the individual RTM committees study budget requests to discover and smartly support the requests and give a Committee report to the entire body when the request comes before it. If the RTM committees are in touch with the town departments and the residents, the knowledge will help build a better run community, based on mediation not party caucus!!

I have been told that the Commission was selected with one intention - to change the manner of government, possibly by reducing the number of selectmen, utilizing a town manager and a council, reducing the Representative Town Meeting membership. I question whether the Town of Fairfield residents have the education to vote knowledgably on any of the possible recommendations and therefore we might be railroaded into a large mistake in a redo of our town government.

Most sincerely and respectfully,
Carol Waxman
Fairfield, CT

Catherine Albin catherinealbin@icloud.com
Wednesday, May 4, 2022 at 10:03 AM
Some thoughts about CRC work

Dear CRC Members-

I am writing to offer some thoughts on Changes to the Fairfield Town Charter.

1. Regarding the composition of the BOS. I have long believed that it is long overdue for Fairfield to move to a Town Manager form of government to ensure that the Chief Executive is someone that possesses the necessary educational and professional experience that is needed to run a town of this size and complexity. As I understand, the CRC is entertaining the position of Chief Administrator (named something like this and not Town Manager). As I understand this position would be a hired position and the individual would need to have the educational and professional experience to qualify for the position. This is a good step forward and in fact other than the title, what I have long believed is needed to run this town properly.

With this in mind, then there is the question of what is the role of the BOS and especially the First Select-person. If the CRC decides to keep the same three person board, it could simply be a Board of Selectman that is elected and there not a First Selectman election, but instead once the board is elected, those members elect a Chairperson to serve in the same position as the Chair of the Board of Education does for that board and between the Superintendent.

Now, if this was the new format for the BOS, there would be a need to address the salary of the BOS Chairman to start. Also, the rationale for this format is based on the fact that we would now have a Professional Chief Administrator in charge of. Running the day to day operations of the town (just like the Superintendent of Schools runs day to day operations of schools). The needs for the day to day work of a First Select-person/BOS Chair would be greatly reduced and hence the need to pay that person what is currently paid to the First Select-person would not only be unnecessary, but inappropriate. Of course we will need to pay the appropriate salary to the hired Chief Administrator and provide an appropriate budget to run that office, which the CA would have to justify along with job descriptions just like all other town departments.

If this was to be what the CRC decided was the best way to move forward for Fairfield, you may want to consider to make the BOS and three (as it is now) or a five member board.

I do believe that if this was how you moved forward on this town function, the voters of Fairfield would support this when the charter goes before them for a vote. Fairfield voters are well informed and can understand the need to have qualified professionals running the business of our town.

2. With regard to the subject of the automatic election on the BOE. First I need to provide a bit of history (inside baseball). When the 2006 Charter Revision was work on, it was felt by one or more people that the BOE had too much power because they had six year terms. Based on this belief there was a push to shorten the BOE terms in an attempt to limit the "Power" of the BOE. At the same time, there were a number of people who tried to tell the CRC at the time that by reducing the term to four years, the exact problem this CRC is trying to fix would expiation. I had also tried to tell the CRC at that time, that this model would also create another problem for the town, and that is if the BOE is a weak board, this model gives too much authority to the School Administration.

The easiest way to fix this issue at hand is to return the BOE term to six years as it had been for as far back as anyone can remember. The four year term does not work. There is no need to change the number of members to try to fix the four person election problem, again, simply go back to six year terms and there will be three people elected in competitive elections every two years, just like the BOF. This is an easy fix!

Thank you for the time you are each spending on this vital work and thank you for the time you have taken to read my thoughts.

Catherine Albin

Please excuse Typos and auto correct

Sent from my iPad

