

Town of Ridgefield Charter Revision Commission (CRC)

Approved Minutes

April 20, 2023, at 6:30 p.m.

Town Hall Annex Conference Room #2

These minutes are a general summary of the meeting and are not intended to be a verbatim transcription. A video of the meeting is available on the Town's website.

Members Present: Bob Cascella, Rebecca Mucchetti, Michael Rettger, Todd Zagorec, Kim Welton, Laurie Christiansen, and Tom Lansen,

Members Absent: Mike Lordi, Derick Schirm

1. Call to Order

The meeting was called to order by Ms. Mucchetti at 6:30 p.m.

2. Public Comment

No public comments.

3. Discussion and possible vote on open Tracker items

Mr. Greg McLaughlin, chair of the Board of Ethics, reviewed comments on the proposed changes to Article XI of the Charter, which had been shared with Mr. McLaughlin earlier. The Board of Ethics had not had time to meet as a group so the comments came individually from the members and do not reflect a formal motion by the Board. Mr. McLaughlin discussed the various areas of concern that had arisen, and responded to CRC members' questions. In response to a question, Mr. McLaughlin stated that if the concerns were addressed as suggested, he felt the proposed amendments to Article XI would be constructive improvements to current language. Mr. Zagorec, Mr. Lansen, and Mr. Rettger offered to provide new wording to respond to the comments and circulate that in advance of the next CRC meeting, so that it might be considered and voted on at that time.

Mr. Rettger and Mr. Zagorec reviewed proposed amendments to Article VI of the Charter, to incorporate reference to the Town of Ridgefield Guidelines for Boards, Committees, and Commissions, and to address use of electronic communications by board members as proposed by Andrew Neblett in an earlier meeting. Motion by Mr. Cascella to accept amendments to Sec 6-1, 6-2, and 6-3, as proposed and as amended at the meeting. Seconded by Mr. Lansen. Motion carried 7-0. (Tracker Item A-54 and G-1)

Members discussed and agreed that the prior item incorporated the suggested proposal by Ms. Lynne Noyes concerning operations of boards (Tracker Item A-54) and that no additional action was required on this suggestion.

Mr. Cascella reviewed the findings of his research on the status of fire commissions in other towns comparable to Ridgefield in size. After discussion of questions, Mr. Cascella offered to draft a more specific proposal for creating an appointed Fire Commission in the Charter, for review and possible consideration at the next meeting.

4. Additional Charter Revision Proposals from Commission Members

As discussed at the prior meeting, members were given the opportunity to offer any additional suggestions for Charter changes that they may have. No additional proposals were presented.

5. Initial Draft Report discussion

Members reviewed the calendar over the coming month relative to the actions that need to be completed to deliver a draft report of recommendations to the Board of Selectmen by the end of May. The members agreed to use the following timeline as a target for completing that work:

- Complete work on all remaining open proposals and an initial draft report by 5/11
- Publish the initial draft report to the public, via the Town website, on 5/12.
- Schedule public hearings on the draft for 5/18 at 7:30 pm and 5/20 at 9:00 am, subject to confirming room availability
- Target complete review of public comments and adopt a final draft for the BOS by 5/25

Ms. Mucchetti will confirm availability of rooms for the proposed hearing dates. The Commission will notice a special working meeting following the close of the Public Hearing on 5/20 for discussion of public comments and the draft report. Members agreed to hold open that full morning to be available for this discussion. Members also agreed to tentatively block out the evening of Tuesday, 5/23 in the event it was felt an additional discussion meeting would be needed.

The members also discussed that the first draft report would include the following components:

- A summary cover letter
- A summary listing of accepted recommendations, with reference to the Charter redline and the Tracker
- A redline mark-up version of the Charter showing proposed amendments
- A “clean” version of the Charter showing the incorporation of all amendments if approved
- A summary listing of proposals declined or withdrawn, based on the current Tracker

It was agreed that initial drafts of the first and second components developed by Mr. Rettger would be circulated for review by members, as a basis for discussion at the next meeting.

6. Communications

Ms. Christiansen confirmed the date and arrangements for the information session on the Charter Revision process requested by the League of Women Voters on 5/16. It was noted that

the timing of this session will be good as it falls just ahead of the planned public comment sessions.

Ms. Christiansen agreed to explore having some number of physical copies of the CRC draft report prepared and available at Town Hall for residents who would like them. She will also publicize the planned hearing dates in local media once the dates and locations are confirmed.

7. Review of Action Items

Ms. Welton reviewed open action items and identified those she felt could be closed out.

8. Old Business

Motion by Mr. Cascella to accept amendments to Sec 5-14 as proposed by Mr. Rettger.
Seconded by Mr. Rettger. Motion carried 7-0. (Tracker Item K-4)

Motion by Mr. Rettger to accept amendments to Sec 8-3 (b) and Sec 10-3 as proposed.
Seconded by Mr. Zagorec. Motion carried 7-0. (Tracker Item I-3c)

Mr. Rettger confirmed his withdrawal of amendments regarding Sec 4-17.

9. Correspondence

Ms. Mucchetti reviewed the following correspondence received since the last meeting:

- Emails from Ms. Lynne Noyes providing supplemental information to her letter of April 3
- Email from Ms. Noyes offering comment on the topic of Elected vs Appointed officials
- Email from Ms. Noyes offering comments on the Commission's discussion on the Affordable Housing Committee at the prior meeting. Mr. Cascella asked that the record note that the comment in Ms. Noyes letter attributing a statement to Mr. Lordi was incorrect, and that the statement had in fact been made by Mr. Cascella.
- Correspondence from the Commission on the Aging requesting that the Charter to amended to change the group's name to "Commission on Aging".

Motion by Mr. Cascella to accept the request from the Commission on the Aging to modify Sec 5.3 to make the name of the entity "Commission on Aging" and to adjust all other title references in the section accordingly. Seconded by Mr. Lansen. Motion carried 7-0. (Tracker Item D-2)

10. Planning Future CRC Agendas/Calendar

It was agreed that this topic had been covered in the earlier discussion of the draft Commission report.

11. Minutes – Review and Approval

Motion by Mr. Cascella to approve as amended the minutes of the April 13, 2023 meeting. Seconded by Mr. Rettger. Motion carried 5-0, Ms. Christiansen and Mr. Lansen abstaining.

12. Adjourn

Motion by Mr. Cascella at 10:00 p.m. to adjourn. Seconded by Ms. Christiansen. Motion carried 7 -0.

Respectfully submitted,
Mike Rettger, acting Recording Secretary

* Tracker: The Change Request Tracker is a document that lists recommended changes received by the CRC.