

# CHARTER REVISION COMMISSION

APPROVED  
**SPECIAL MEETING**  
Wednesday, July 22, 2009

**THESE MINUTES ARE INTENDED TO BE A SUMMARY OF THE MEETING AND NOT A VERBATIM RECORDING.**

**Present:** Andrew Berger, Sharon Hyde, John McNicholas, Tiffany Lenz, Ed Tyrrell, Lisa Carroll, Charles Primerano

**Not present:** Andrew Kelemen

## PUBLIC HEARING

Mr. Tyrrell called the public hearing to order at 8:00 p.m.

Rich Brown, 36 Gilbert Street, requested the Commission consider creating a separate Fire Commission. He believes a separately appointed commission would better represent the interests of the Fire Department and would additionally lead to a lower ISO rating, which would reduce residential fire insurance rates in town. He suggested that the fire commission be made up of those not currently or formerly connected to the professional or volunteer fire departments. He also suggested that once a fire commission was up and running that it would be useful for the fire commission to periodically meet with the police commission. He also noted that other towns in the area do have fire commissions.

Joe Cwalinski, 32 Midrock Road, reiterated many of Mr. Brown's points in supporting a separate Fire Commission.

Jacquie Hodges, 51-18 Prospect Ridge, requested the Commission look closely at changing the way the Housing Authority operates. At present, the members are appointed to 5 year terms by the Board of Selectmen, but do not answer to the Selectmen in any way. She says the members of the authority are not responsive to the tenants and there are significant problems that need to be addressed. She perceives that the housing authority answers to the State of Connecticut rather than the people or government of

Ridgefield, but there is no one state agency that monitors them. She suggested a limit on the length of time that authority members can serve. She also suggested that there be one tenant representative for each location. She noted that the current charter does not specify tenant representatives.

Coco Barron, 51 Prospect Ridge, Apt. 6, reiterated many of the points made by Ms. Hodges. There are significant problems in the Housing Authority. There needs to be some new tenant representatives. She added that, in the future, tenants should have more input regarding those who are appointed as members of the housing authority. She asked if, during public hearings, that commission members not speak in shorthand and that they avoid abbreviations.

First Selectman Rudy Marconi, noted that the charter would be open for a transitional period of about a year. He observed that the amount of public housing has increased substantially since the housing authority was first created and that adjustments should be considered regarding the oversight of the authority. He added that any changes must follow state law and suggested that the Charter Revision Commission consult with Ridgefield Town Counsel.

With no further comments from the public, Mr. Tyrrell closed the public hearing at 8:25 p.m.

### **Regular Meeting**

#### **AGENDA:**

1. Discuss public hearing
2. Elect Chairperson, Vice Chair, Secretary
3. Set Regular Meeting Schedule

Mr. Tyrrell called the meeting to order at 8:25 pm.

The commission members introduced themselves to one another and described their backgrounds and experiences.

Item 1. The commission discussed what it heard at the public hearing and how it would go about handling such issues. Mr.

Tyrrell made the suggestion that the commission should try to handle some small, well defined issues early on in the process. This will give the commission some momentum and help develop a framework to follow later on. Mr. Tyrrell also suggested that the commission not dispose of any item at the same meeting it begins work on such item. Ms. Carroll asked whether commission members could receive emails suggestions from the public. The group decided this was a good method of communication and that if a member received such an email, it could be entered into the record during a "public comment" section on the agenda.

Item 3 was discussed next. Mr. Tyrrell suggested the commission adopt a meeting schedule on the same day of each month. Discussion followed to determine the day with the fewest conflicts.

Sharon Hyde motioned and Charles Primerano seconded a motion for the Commission to hold its regularly scheduled meetings on the first Wednesday of each month, beginning August 5, 2009, at 7:30 p.m. Vote unanimous.

Item 2. The commission discussed the appointment of a chairperson and vice-chairperson. Ms. Carroll suggested Mr. McNicholas be the chairperson and he accepted as long as everyone else helped him as necessary. Ms. Hyde volunteered to be vice-chairperson.

Lisa Carroll motioned and Charles Primerano seconded a motion to appoint John McNicholas chairperson and Sharon Hyde vice-chairperson. Vote unanimous.

The commission discussed the appointment of a secretary. Mr. Marconi was in audience and suggested that the commission hire someone to take notes and produce minutes to be sent to the commission's secretary, an idea the commission liked.

Tiffany Lenz motioned and Andrew Berger seconded a motion to appoint Charles Primerano as recording secretary. Vote Unanimous.

There being no further business, Lisa Carroll motioned and Charles Primerano seconded a motion to adjourn. Vote unanimous.

Meeting adjourned at 9:10 p.m.

Ed Tyrrell

Temporary Recording Secretary