

CHARTER REVISION COMMISSION
KILLINGWORTH, CT
REGULAR MEETING MINUTES*

March 1, 2021

Conducted as a Virtual Meeting via GoToMeeting

Members Present: Robert Rimmer (Chair), Walter Adametz, Joan Gay, Nancy Gorski, Mary Casey Jacob, Kathleen Zandi.

Members Absent: Mary Meixell.

Others Present: Catherine Iino, Michele Nuhn, and Shauna Ham, clerk.

1) Call to order. At 7:00pm, Chairman Rimmer called the meeting to order.

2) Public input. None.

3) Approval of February 16, 2021 minutes.

The minutes were reviewed and no amendments were made.

Motion: N Gorski moved to approve the minutes of February 16, 2021. W Adametz seconded.

Vote: All in favor, motion passed unanimously (6-0-0).

4) Tax Collector Discussion.

Michele Nuhn, Killingworth Tax Collector, addressed the Commission to discuss, and answer questions about, the role of the tax collector so that informed decisions can be made concerning how the position is structured in the charter. The tax collector is currently an elected position with four-year terms.

- M Nuhn discussed the operations of the tax collector's office, which are governed by State statutes. Becoming a Connecticut Certified Municipal Collector involves a minimum of three years' experience working in the office along with successful completion of certification courses and exams.
 - To maintain certification, certified collectors are required to re-certify every five years; this involves continued education, and ensures that "certified" tax collectors remain current and up-to-date with State Statutes.
 - CT statutes do not say that an individual has to be CCMC-certified in order to be a municipal tax collector. The current Killingworth charter defines the collector as an elected position with four-year terms, but it provides no qualification requirements. Currently, the Town has to hope that electors vote for the most qualified, experienced individual.
- M Nuhn reported that roughly half of CT tax collectors are elected; the other half are either hired or appointed with varying hiring authorities, term lengths, and qualification requirements. She expressed that she does not feel strongly one way or the other; there are pros and cons to both.
 - If the Town were to decide to change it to an appointed/hired position, M Nuhn suggested that they add qualification requirements.

- For M Nuhn personally, running for re-election every four years is stressful, but she just keeps doing her job and hopes that she has proven herself to the public through the quality of work she does. On the other hand, if the position were changed to appointed with a term and no requirements, the reappointment would be up to a body of three people, and the experienced collector could be replaced with anyone those three wanted, regardless of qualifications.
- The tax collector does not report to the First Selectman. The Board of Finance receives monthly reports (how much the tax office collected), and the Treasurer receives the monies collected. The tax collector also sends an annual report to the State of CT Office of Policy and Management.
- In summary: if the position of tax collector were changed from elected to appointed, it would serve the Town's best interest to include well-defined qualification requirements.
 - M Nuhn added that if they were to set a term, it should be at least four years. She noted that there are several positions in the current charter, including the Assessor and Director of Emergency Management, which are appointed to one-year terms; a one-year appointment in any office is not an appropriate amount of time to do the job.
- C Iino expressed that it is her opinion that the position of tax collector should be, whether appointed or hired, an indefinite term that would require some defined problem for removal (should not be a political appointment at-will).
 - Perhaps it would be most appropriate for the Board of Finance to appoint the collector; N Gorski commented that they should look at their assigned charters (to compare which bodies have appointing authority specifically for the tax collector across other towns).
- There was some discussion among Commission members about the hiring/appointing process
 - Looking at other charters, towns with town managers seem to have *hired* collectors; if hired in Killingworth, who would be the oversight? Perhaps the Board of Finance (or whoever the hiring body were) would be charged with performance review.
 - The Commission noted that they would need to consider the collector's term in relation to the term of the hiring body.
 - Whether elected, hired, or appointed, it is impossible for politics to be entirely removed; there are clear pros and cons to each scenario
- M Nuhn was asked to comment, as a resident, on any other aspects of the charter.
 - The requirement for legal notices to be published in a "daily" newspaper should be changed to "local medium" (or something to that effect); not "daily."
 - Nuhn reiterated that a one-year appointment is not a long enough term for any position/office to do its job correctly.

5) Survey Update.

Reference is made to a document summarizing the results of the initial Charter Revision survey, which was prepared by the subcommittee for the Commission; said document, as amended herein, is included at the end of these minutes.

- MC Jacob screen-shared the survey results, which were presented in the format reviewed during the last meeting (2/16); she discussed how they were organized and counted. She included an introduction, to be published with the minutes of this meeting.

- The results document features each survey question; under each question is a list of specific kinds of opinions (response-types) that were made about that section, and the number of participants who submitted a comment that would be categorized under each response-type.
- MC Jacob reported that many people only responded to *some* of the questions (which the Commission intentionally allowed as an option for participants); only written responses were counted (no assumptions were made if a question was left blank; blanks were not counted in any category other than “no answer given”). Answers that explicitly indicated “no change” were only counted in the category, “no changes needed;” although that answer would inherently qualify them to be counted in categories that align with the current charter, tallies were only made if such response-type was explicitly written. If a response was relevant to a different survey question, it was counted in the relevant section. Only responses relevant to the Charter were included in the results (counted under “Number of responses that did not address the Town Charter,” but the comment itself was not included). The numbers will not add up to the total number of submittals; a single individual’s response could include multiple comments meeting multiple response-types and would be counted in each.
- The results were discussed in the order in which the questions appeared in the survey.
 - MC Jacob noted that she has set aside a list of very specific concerns and suggestions that she felt should be sent to the Board of Selectmen for review/comment; they were good, thoughtful concerns, just not related to the Charter.
 - Some comments revealed some misinformation about the Town.
 - For example, there was a comment that all property owners (over a certain value), even if they are not Killingworth residents, should be allowed to vote at Town Meetings; but this already is allowed, they can vote on any budgetary item, just not on the election of people.
 - There also seem to be a number of people who feel like the First Selectman’s work is not a full-time job; there should be more information shared with the community as to what this position entails.
 - There also appears to be a lack of understanding about the Board of Education.
- Overall, there were a lot of very thoughtful respondents who clearly care about this town a great deal.
- The Commission emphasized again that this survey was intentionally vague and open-ended; it served as a first attempt at outreach, to solicit community thoughts and participation. It was meant to initiate feedback, interest, and awareness of the revision process. The Commission needs ways of getting a pulse as to what is going on in the community, what are the public’s ideas and concerns, before they, as a Commission, can zero in on any particular issue. This initial survey was not a vote on anything and will not be the only opportunity for public input. Likewise, the tallies associated with response-types in the results document do not represent votes and are not interpreted by the Commission as such.
- MC Jacob will make the following changes to the results document:
 - change the last sentence of the first paragraph to read “...a request for ideas...”
 - define “COST” as the Council of Small Towns
 - add February 2nd as the day the survey availability was announced
 - add a hyperlink to the Town Charter in the first paragraph

- correct the typo in the third paragraph (“states”)
- Members agreed the results document should be posted to the CRC page on the Town website.

6) Stakeholder Meeting Discussion.

No update.

7) Public Hearing Discussion.

- R Rimmer offered to begin the Public Hearing with an overview of the Commission, what they have been working on, etc., and suggested that the subcommittee give a summary of the survey as well. MC Jacobs agreed that should be helpful in getting attendees engaged in discussion, especially those who did not respond to the survey; “Here are some of the ideas that we have heard, what do you all think?” They do not want the numbers associated with the results to bias or deter anyone from sharing their ideas; perhaps refrain from going into specifics and direct people to the website if they are interested in viewing the survey results.
 - It was later noted that Rimmer’s introduction should include the fact that State statutes govern many procedures, to help people understand that the Town does not have the freedom to do whatever it wants with the Charter.
- Members discussed the level of structure that the Public Hearing should have. They ultimately seemed to agree that they should avoid over-managing, and allow the public to comment on whatever they choose as long as discussion remains related to the Charter.
- Members discussed how to moderate participation. Ideas included a 3-minute talking limit, having people type their name in the chat box if they want to speak, allowing people to write comments directly in the chat, alternating between chat and phone participants.
 - R Rimmer asked members to send him any additional thoughts or suggestions they may have between now and the Hearing.
- Access to the Public Hearing (GoToMeeting link and phone number) will be posted and publicized on the Town Calendar, Constant Contact, and social media. Links to the Charter should be posted with all Public Hearing notices, to encourage people to read the Charter prior to the meeting.

8) Article 9 Discussion.

None.

9) Review and Discussion of Current Charter.

None.

10) Adjournment: The meeting adjourned at 8:51pm.

Respectfully submitted,

Shauna Ham

Charter Revision Commission

The Killingworth Board of Selectmen voted unanimously to create a Charter Revision Commission charging the commission with drafting amendments to the 2009 Charter of the Town of Killingworth according to the process set forth within the Connecticut General Statutes. ([This is a link to the Charter.](#)) As one way of soliciting community participation, we developed a brief and general survey about the Charter. This survey was not a vote on any specific recommendations but a request for ideas the Charter Revision Commission should consider.

This is a summary of the 151 responses to our survey (survey availability was announced 2/2/21 and it closed 2/21/21 at 10:40 am), prepared for the Charter Revision Commission. The focus of this document is on responses made about the Town Charter's provisions. Remarks submitted that did not address the Charter are not included.

One person may be "counted" more than once in a question. For example, if someone specifically states an opinion on length of term AND term limits, they would be counted in both areas. Alternatively, if someone said "no changes needed" they would be counted once, but the reader might recognize that those people's opinions could be added to specific opinions in favor of the status quo (such as "not in favor of a quorum").

1. **All respondents but one indicated they are Killingworth Residents.** Five provided no further information beyond residency.

2. **Please share your views about the Town Charter relating to: our Town Meeting (for example, level of attendance)**
 - No answer given: 42
 - Number of responses that did not address the Town Charter: 44
 - No changes needed: 29
 - Not in favor of a quorum: 2
 - In favor of a quorum: 4
 - Meetings need to be advertised/marketed better; send emails with agendas and minutes: 9
 - Notify households individually (postcard?) and not just legal notice in paper: 1
 - Allow electronic participation: 18
 - All town meetings should be in person: 1
 - All voting should be in person: 1
 - All property owners (over a certain \$\$) should be allowed to vote: 1
 - Record town meetings and post for later viewing: 1
 - Have Town Meeting by referendum with the School Budget vote: 1

3. Please share your views about the Town Charter relating to: the Board of Selectmen (for example, number of selectmen, term of office, term limits)

- No answer given: 25
- Number of responses that did not address the Town Charter: 2
- No changes needed: 48
- No change to number of selectmen: 16
- Need more selectmen: 5
- No change to current terms: 7
- Make terms longer (and some said stagger the terms): 19
- In favor of term limits: 53
- Not in favor of term limits: 13
- Eliminate conflicts of interest, serving on multiple boards (including BOE): 3
- Should be required to have served on another board first: 1
- Should be one Selectman from each party registered in Killingworth: 1
- Should be 2 Republicans, 2 Democrats, and 2 Unaffiliated: 1

4. Please share your views about the Town Charter relating to: the First Selectman (for example, term of office, term limits)

- No answer given: 16
- Number of responses that did not address the Town Charter: 3
- No changes needed: 36
- No change to current term: 14
- Make term longer: 27
- In favor of term limits*: 66
- Not in favor of term limits: 15
- Should be required to have served on another board first: 1
- No authority to spend above a budgeted line item: 1
- Eliminate pension, convert to 457: 5
- Charter should note this is a full-time job: 2
- There should be more than one: 1

*The specific suggestions range from 2-14 years

5. Please share your views about the Town Charter relating to: Elections and Elective Positions (for example, terms of office, term limits, positions to change from elected to appointed)

- No answer given: 35
- Number of responses that did not address the Town Charter: 3
- No changes needed: 75
- Tax collector should be a hired employee: 5
- Town clerk should be a hired employee: 2
- Assessor should be a hired employee: 1
- Treasurer term should be 4 years: 1
- All terms should be longer than 2 years: 4
- Elected town employees should not be able to serve on BOE: 1
- In favor of term limits: 24
- Not in favor of term limits: 3
- Committees have too many people – bogs down the process: 1
- BOE should be appointed: 1
- Keep appointed positions to a minimum, but some make sense; positions that require repetitive (objective) duties should be hired positions; positions that require critical thinking (subjective) should be elected: 3
- If some positions are to be appointed, have a transparent review process to prevent hiring/retention of inappropriate candidates: 1

6. Please share your views about our form of government – the current form is selectmen/town meeting, other possibilities include representative town meeting, council/town manager.

- No answer given: 13
- Number of responses that did not address the Town Charter: 6
- No changes needed: 87
- In favor of council/town manager*: 20
- Not in favor of council/town manager: 24
- In favor of representative town meeting with selectmen: 1
- Not in favor of a representative town meeting with selectmen: 1
- Open to change but need to know more: 10
- Consider keeping same form of government but with larger staff in First Selectman's office (rather than going to town manager): 1
- I think having a few "general" residents who are NOT connected to, ... any of the town officials should be allowed to partake & provide unbiased input & other resident feelings on matters that may otherwise be overlooked: 1

*2 respondents favored this if the manager could be shared with 1-2 other towns

7. Please share other comments or concerns here:

- It's time for a director of public safety to monitor the fire company, ambulance association, resident trooper, and emergency management.
- There needs to be a strategy to get public out to meetings and encouraged to be informed on issues. We are hiding our process and therefore also discouraging growth and acceptance in our small community. This is absolutely not a call for a Facebook conversation. There should be a town-wide marketing strategy for individuals and business owners. (multiple comments like this)
- I believe it was clear from the town meetings about the Venutti (sic) property on 148 that the town overwhelmingly does not want to move toward commercial development. ANY suggested edits to the town charter around zoning law changes and/or the ability to more easily develop land for commercial purposes are not going to be well received.
- 3 respondents said we don't need a Town Charter.
- Please respect the Charter Revision Commission that came before you. Someone 10 years from now will question your decisions too. Ask questions about why things were set up the way they were from many people, including the previous members. When you change something, please be thoughtful and consult our best and brightest; not just the loudest.
- Add a Department of Public Works
- Town offices should get an independent review every five years from either the Council of Small Towns or the CT Conference of Municipalities.
- I do not support Section 4-3 (b). [Town Charter section 4-3(b): Minority representation requirements shall not apply to members of the District 17 Regional Board of Education, as set forth by Statute.]
- Some decision-making authority should be shifted from the First Selectman to the Board of Selectmen.
- Fire commissioner can be anyone. If they are fire dept members that's (sic) fine. You cannot stop people just because they have knowledge that's absurd.
- Would like community feedback session and input into (Town) meeting agendas.
- Would like to see a way that vacancies on committees can be publicized to get more people involved.
- I would be interested to know at what point towns become large/complicated enough to warrant the change to a town manager model. There must be data accessible that would show size of overall budget, or services, and organizational approach. There are tens of thousands of towns in the US that will have gone through this maturation and a little data science could be illuminating.
- Ask all community organizations to help publicize Town meetings.