

I. CALL TO ORDER

Vice Chairman Thomas Benneche called the Special Meeting of the Simsbury Charter Revision Commission to order at 6:30 p.m. on Thursday, January 21, 2016. The meeting was held in the Board of Education Conference Room of the Simsbury Town Offices located at 933 Hopmeadow Street, Simsbury, CT. In attendance were the following commission members: Paul Henault, Anita Mielert, Thomas Benneche, James Ray, Edward Pabich and Robert Crowther. Staff included Sean Kimball, Deputy Director of Administrative Services and Robert DeCrescenzo, Town Attorney.

II. PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE

All stood for the Pledge of Allegiance.

III. PUBLIC AUDIENCE

Mr. Robert Kalechman of 971 Hopmeadow Street said that the Constable position should be reinstated since it is an historical position that dates back 300 years. He added that Constables could be available in situations of dire emergency. Mr. Kalechman mentioned that Constables pay all their expenses including insurance.

IV. Presentation by Former Charter Revision Commissioners Robert Heagney and Charles Howard

Mr. Charles Howard said that the Town Manager position was not discussed while he served on the Charter Revision Commission because the system in place at that time worked very well. People in the town were comfortable with having a First Selectman. The First Selectman had a professional assistant that wasn't listed in the Charter. Mr. Howard added in his opinion, Simsbury doesn't need a Town Manager. He questioned if the town can afford a full-time First Selectman and a Town Manager. He responded to Commissioner Mielert's comment regarding personnel issues she experienced as a First Selectman. Mr. Howard said that a Town Manager might not resolve the issues.

Mr. Robert Heagney said that the focus at the time he was on the Charter Review Commission was to provide the First Selectman with flexibility to select administrative staff with the necessary experience. He commented that there were problems as a result of Administrative Officers not assigned clear roles. Mr. Heagney recommended not adding a Town Manager. He said that Granby, Avon and Farmington have had a Town Manager for many years but have fallen short in comparison to Simsbury. The vision and leadership of the First Selectman over the years has resulted in the creation of Simsbury Farms, Rails to Trails and the Performing Arts Center and more. He added that a Town Manager or part-time First Selectman would not have the vision and leadership necessary to keep Simsbury ahead of other towns. Mr. Heagney suggested for the Commission to hold referendums and put the primary questions in front of the public.

Both Mr. Heagney and Mr. Howard said there doesn't seem to be much outcry from the public to add a Town Manager. They asked the Commission to question what they are trying to solve by having a Town Manger. Mr. Heagney suggested having a "straw vote" to gage the opinions of the Commission in an

effort to narrow the issues at hand. Commissioner Crowther mentioned he is concerned that the First Selectman may not have the necessary experience to develop long range plans or best practices that a Town Manager would offer. Mr. Heagney responded that the other neighboring towns with town managers have yet to show initiative or originality. The issues mentioned can be addressed by providing the First Selectman flexibility in hiring administrative staff that have the expertise needed. Mr. Howard added that Simsbury has been awarded Distinct Destination for Tourism and received a grant from Preserve America because of the vision and leadership of the First Selectman.

Mr. Heagney answered Commissioner Benneche’s question about the Constable issue. He said that no one was appointed a Constable for a very long time; therefore, it was struck from the Charter in 2015. Commissioner Mielert asked town staff to speak with the Police Chief for their opinion about the Constable position.

V. ACTION ITEMS

a. Review of Minutes – Regular Meeting of January 7, 2016.

Page 1, Item I, Line 1: Text should read as follows: “Vice Chairman Thomas Benneche called ...”

Page 1, Item I: Line 2: change the date to read January 7, 2016

Page 2, section B: The heading should read: “...Three to Five and Add Two Alternates”, not “Tow”

Page 4 line 2: The sentences should read: **The motion was seconded by Commissioner Mielert. Commissioners Henault, Glassman, Mielert, Tedone and Ray voted in favor of the motion. Commissioners Benneche, Crowther and Pabich voted against. The motion passed.**

Commissioner Crowther moved to approve the minutes with changes. The motion was seconded by Commissioners Pabich and Mielert and was unanimously approved.

b. Discussion and Possible Recommendation to Board of Selectmen Concerning Ordinance to Address Number of Board Members and Alternates for the Board of Assessment Appeals.

Mr. Robert DeCrescenzo, Town Attorney, discussed the draft “Proposed Amendment to the Simsbury Code of Ordinances – Board of Assessment Appeals” dated January 21, 2016. He said that Section One states the Board of Selectmen may appoint an alternate for each member of the Board of Assessment Appeals. Section Two states that the Board of Selectmen may appoint an additional regular member to the Board of Assessment Appeals when additional help is requested.

Commissioner Henault moved to approve the draft dated January 21, 2016 submitted by Town Council regarding the Expansion of the Membership of the Simsbury Board of Assessment

Appeals. The motion included forwarding the draft to the Board of Selectmen. The motion was seconded by Commissioner Pabich and was unanimously approved.

VI. OTHER MATTERS

a. Review of Chief Administrative Officer Template Prepared by Town Counsel

Mr. Robert DeCrescenzo, Town Attorney said that the draft shows the responsibilities of the Chief Administrative Officer to include budgeting, appointing department heads, monitoring and disciplining personnel. The CAO is appointed by the First Selectman (or CEO) and evaluated every two years. The Commission members will review the draft.

b. Discussion of Future Agenda Items

Commissioner Ray asked for Town Counsel to provide final reports from previous Charter Revision Commissions. Commissioner Benneche said he would like to set a date for the Commission to conduct a “straw vote” as mentioned by Mr. Heagney.

VII. ADJOURN

Commissioner Henault moved to adjourn the meeting at 8:20 pm. The motion was seconded by Commissioner Ray and was unanimously approved.

Respectfully Submitted,
Irene Muench