

CALL TO ORDER

Chairman Hadley Rose called the Special Meeting of the Simsbury Charter Revision Commission to order at 5:35 p.m. on Thursday, December 17, 2015. 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, Mary Glassman, Anita Mielert, Lydia Tedone, Melissa Osborne, Thomas Benneche, James Ray, Edward Pabich and Robert Crowther. Staff included Tom Cooke, Director of Administrative Services, Sean Kimball, Deputy Director of Administrative Services and Robert DeCrescenzo, Town Attorney.

PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE

All stood for the Pledge of Allegiance.

PUBLIC AUDIENCE

Joan Coe of 26 Whitcomb Drive urged the Commission to take the final step and incorporate a professional Town Manager in the Simsbury Charter. She said that the town will not be losing the ability to interact with the elected council and drive policy that would be in the best interest of the community. Instead, the Town Manager serves the Council and has been successful in Avon and Farmington for decades. Ms. Coe added that Simsbury is no longer competitive since the surrounding town's have lower mill rates and taxes.

ACTION ITEMS

a. Review of Minutes – Regular Meeting of December 3, 2015.

Page 1, Item B, Line 2: Text should read as follows: “Mr. Cooke answered Commissioner Osborne’s question....”

Page 1, Item A: Add the following text: “Commissioner Mielert requested the Commission to study the space and time between mandated Charter Revision Commissions.”

Commissioner Mielert requested that the minutes include more comments from the Commissioners.

The minutes were unanimously approved with changes as submitted.

b: Discussion and Possible Action on Recommended Form of Town Government

Commissioner Mielert suggested that the Director of Personnel duties should be moved from the political realm to a professional position, such as a Chief Operating Officer. She added there has to be somebody with consistency and professionalism giving the personnel reviews and budgeting non-union benefits.

Commissioner Rose noted that there is no real formal HR position in the Charter; it falls on the First Selectman. He suggested establishing a formal HR person separate from the First Selectman and is primarily responsible for administrative staff, contracts, conducting searches and interviews.

Commissioner Benneche said that Section 502 of the Charter indicates that the First Selectman is the Personnel Director but has the option of delegating a town officer to the position of Personnel Director.

Commissioner Glassman asked what experiences should be required for the position? She also asked what risk management decisions should be implemented to protect the town from liability and costly mistakes?

Commissioners Ray and Pabich mentioned that the responsibilities of the position should be defined prior to voting for a Town Manager. The duties should match the needs of the town.

Commissioner Rose commented that we aren’t specifically deciding whether or not we are hiring a Town Manager. We are evaluating the changes that are necessary to improve Simsbury over time. Our recommendation will then go before the First Selectman.

The Commissioners discussed the pros and cons of having a Town Manager. Comments in favor included:

- The town will have professional management and attract professional staff
- Two parties have to compromise upfront
- Strategic planning
- Peer network
- Removal of politics from personnel duties
- Risk management
- Initiatives from an elected official are perceived as political

Commissioner Mielert said that she is concerned that a Town manager will remove the very personal connection between the public and the First Selectman. She added that Simsbury has a character that represents more of a “town” rather than a suburb, which is important to keep.

Commissioner Pabich agrees with Commissioner Mielert about the relationship the public has with the First Selectman. However, he added that the relationship can be maintained even if the duties of the First Selectman are decreased.

e: Agenda items for next scheduled meeting

Commissioner Rose stated that he will be away during the month of January. Commissioner Benneche will run the meetings in his absence. Commissioner Rose will meet with the Town

Attorney and Commissioner Benneche to discuss the agenda for January. He would like to hold off on discussing the Town Manager topic until he returns.

ADJOURN

The meeting was adjourned at 7:00 p.m.

Respectfully Submitted,
Irene Muench