

2019 Charter Revision Recommendations

Submitted by Tim Beeble, 63 Grassy Plain Street, Bethel, CT

I served on four Charter Revision Commissions, including twice as its Chair. I have some suggestions for technical corrections as well as other changes. The suggestions are made in the order that these items appear in the current charter. Note that I will make separate recommendations in my official capacity as Registrar of Voters.

C3-3 A. Vacancies

This proposed revision is intended to conform charter language with the current practice of filling vacancies on elected boards and commissions. In the 2003 Charter Revision, Section C3-3 was modified to extend the period of 30 days to 60 days for the Board of Selectmen to fill vacancies in elected seats. Its purpose was to give the Town Committees a reasonable timeframe to identify and recommend appointees for the Board of Selectmen's consideration. After the 60-day period, the respective board/commission would have the authority to fill the vacant seat. Although the intent of the 2003 Charter Revision Commission was to give the respective board/commission the exclusive authority to fill the vacancy after the 60-day period, the prevailing practice has been to allow either the Board of Selectmen or the respective board/commission to act on the vacancy. I suggest that the Charter language in Section C3-3 A be modified to reflect current practice.

I suggest replacement language for last sentence of Section 3-3 A.:

If after said sixty (60) day period the vacant seat remains unfilled, and the vacancy is of a member of a board or commission, then, either the Board of Selectmen or the remaining members of such board or commission shall have the authority to fill such vacancy.

C3-6 Board of Education

This section is missing verbiage that is otherwise common in Charter Sections covering other elected boards & commissions. For consistency, I recommend that the following standard language be inserted after the first sentence:

The members shall serve overlapping terms. At each regular town election, there shall be elected sufficient members to succeed each member whose term shall expire.

C7-1 C. Appointed Boards and Commissions

The language in this section should be consistent to that in Section C2-5 A for elected officials. If an appointed board member moves out of Bethel, the Town should not have to rely on them to

vacate their seat by submitting a resignation letter to the Town Clerk. The act of moving out of town should be their effective resignation.

Suggested substitute language to be consistent with C2-5A.:

All members of appointed boards and commissions shall be resident electors of the town and any person ceasing to be a resident and elector of said town shall thereupon cease to hold appointive office in the town.

C7-2 B. Terms of Office (Appointed Boards and Commissions)

Recommend similar language regarding filling vacancies on Appointed Boards and Commissions. Substitute the following for the second sentence:

If after said sixty (60) day period the vacant seat remains unfilled, then, either the Board of Selectmen or the remaining members of such board or commission shall have the authority to fill such vacancy.

C7-5 Housing Authority (NEW)

The Board of Selectmen shall appoint in accordance with the provisions of this Charter and Section 9- of the Connecticut General Statutes, a Housing Authority consisting of five (5) Commissioners, each of whom shall serve a five (5) year term. The terms shall overlap so that each year, the term of one seat shall expire. In accordance with C.G.S. 8-41 One seat shall be held by an elector who is a tenant of the Housing Authority. The tenant commissioner seat shall be filled in accordance with C.G.S. 8-41 by a vote of tenants of the Housing Authority,, or otherwise, by appointment of the Board of Selectmen.

C7-9 A. Youth Commission

The Charter is missing language to recognize that the Youth Commission Alternate seats overlap.

Suggest additional language to be appended to the second sentence:

...”, and said terms shall overlap.”

C7-15 Insurance and Pension Commission

This section does not indicate the terms of the commissioners nor state that the terms overlap. Instead, there is a reference to a town ordinance passed 36 years ago on June 10, 1982. I suggest that revised language be adopted to recognize that Commissioners serve 4 year overlapping terms.

C8-9 Department of Public Works

The current language refers to the Department of Public Works encompassing the duties of the Town Water Department and Town Sewer Department. Have these duties been transferred to the Public Utility Commission and the recently hired Director?

C11-11 Meetings

This section required all meetings of elected and appointed boards to be held at the Municipal Center. The Bethel housing Authority meets in the common room at Reynolds Ridge which is convenient to the many elderly tenants who attend these meetings. Perhaps the last sentence could be amended to include the Reynolds Ridge Common Room as a compliant meeting space for “convenience and overflow purposes.