

**CITY OF BRIDGEPORT
CHARTER REVISION COMMISSION
PUBLIC HEARING
JANUARY 31, 2012**

ATTENDANCE: Cathleen Simpson, Chair; George Estrada, Vice Chair; Florisca Carter, Secretary; Harry Weichsel, Charles Valentino Sr.; Ruben Felipe; William Marshall

OTHERS: Mark Anastasi, City Counsel; Atty. Steven Mednick

CALL TO ORDER

Ms. Simpson called the public hearing to order at 5:45 p.m. She then read the published notice that appeared in the newspaper. A sign up sheet was available for those who wished to speak.

**** MR. VALENTINO MOVED TO HAVE A FIVE MINUTES TIME LIMIT FOR EACH SPEAKER.**

**** MR. FELIPE SECONDED.**

**** THE MOTION PASSED UNANIMOUSLY.**

Ms. Mary Pat Healy, Executive Director of Bridgeport Child Guidance came forward and asked several questions about the various goals such as determining the best practices and how the public input would be incorporated. She then requested at least two more public hearing be held for the residents. She asked the Commission to perform their due diligence in determining the role of the mayor in reference to education. Minutes should be posted on the website. Ms. Healy then submitted a copy of her remarks for inclusion in the record.

Mr. Valentino asked a question about the document, which Ms. Healy answered.

Ms. Marilyn Moore came forward and congratulated the Commissioners on their appointment to the Commission. She said that each of the seven members represent 15,000 voices in the City and asked them not to have personal agendas.

Ms. Moore said that the Commission should be vigilant and appoint an Ethics Director and went on to speak about various issues. She then said that she was disappointed in the lack of participation by the residents at the hearing. She submitted a copy of her remarks to the Committee

Mr. Robert Walsh, a former City Council Member, came forward and said that he was very happy to address the Committee. He said that if the Office of the Mayor was made more powerful, it should be done with care. Mr. Walsh then went on to express his concerns about the

role of the City Attorney. He then listed a number of issues regarding the City Council and expressed concerns that many of the Council Members were City employees. Issues such as having the Council President who is a City employee and potentially running the City when the Mayor is out of time. Mr. Walsh also spoke on the issue of indefinitely extending Commissioners' and Board members' terms by not appointing someone else. Mr. Walsh then addressed issues regarding the Board of Education and various aspects related to it.

Ms. Eve Canales came forward and said that she would be willing to assist the Commission via making phone calls and working to acquire signatures for petitions.

Mr. Ralph Ford came forward and said that he was present as a concerned father. He said that he felt there was too many relationships between the Council and the employees. He said that this was why this City could not get out of its own way. He encouraged the Commissioners to address this issue and avoid conflicts of interests.

Mr. John Marshal Lee then came forward and spoke about the way that the City Charter interacts with the Code of Ordinances. He said that he hoped that there were ways to make the Charter more readable and resident friendly in terms of finding out where information was in the Charter.

Mr. Lee then said that there needed to be more accountability. He asked if the Commissioners had been to a Council Meetings. He pointed out that it would be important to know how the Council Members interact with the public.

He then spoke about the Budget and Appropriations Committee and checks and balances. He suggested that a Finance Board would be appropriate. Another town has one and after every agenda item, there is an opportunity for the public to comment. He said that there were a number of people who were more than willing to assist the Commissioner in the work. He then submitted copies of the document to the Commissioners.

Mr. Joel Gonzalez came forward and asked how the members of the Charter Revision Commission were selected. He said that there was no trust on the part of the public regarding this process.

Mr. John Gomes came forward and reiterated that each member represented 15,000 residents. He encouraged the members to take their time and do a good job on the revision. He also requested that the Commission have the various school administrations come and speak to the Commission. There is a tremendous lack of trust in the community and the Commission has the opportunity to change that.

He pointed out that Police Chief, the Superintendent of Schools and the Fire Chief do not live in the City. He wondered whether the Council Members who were City employees were representing their constituents or their pay checks.

Mr. Gomes said that the Charter does not allow for a recall of the Mayor. He concluded his remarks by saying that if the people can put someone in office, they should have the power to remove someone from office.

Ms. Maria Pereira came forward and said that she was a resident of the City and a member of the BOE. She said that the Commission was approved in July of 2011 and now it has taken 28 days to get the Commission selected and formed. The Commission is now holding their first public hearing. She then referred the Commission to Chapter 15 of the current Charter regarding education. She said that in a democratic society, they elect people to govern, not to be ruled. She said that the establishment of a Board of Finance would be a positive movement. She then requested that the Council President and not the Mayor should conduct the Council Meetings.

Mr. Valentino asked Ms. Pereira if she had voted in favor of turning the District over to the State. Ms. Pereira said that she had voted against that.

Atty. Mednick submitted a written testimony that he had received earlier in the day to Ms. Simpson for inclusion in the record.

Mr. David Goodman, came forward and asked that the Commission limit the Council elections to every two years. He then read a letter submitted for consideration. He encouraged the Commission to consider allowing the Building Inspectors to raise their fees to generate more revenue for the City.

ADJOURNMENT

**** MR. VALENTINO MOVED TO ADJOURN.**

**** MR. ESTRADA SECONDED.**

**** THE MOTION PASSED UNANIMOUSLY.**

The meeting adjourned 6:30 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Sharon L. Soltes
Telesco Secretarial Services