

**TOWN ADMINISTRATOR WORKGROUP
REGULAR MEETING, May 30, 2023
COUNCIL CHAMBER, NEWTOWN MUNICIPAL CENTER
3 PRIMROSE STREET, NEWTOWN, CT**

These minutes are subject to approval by the Work Group

MINUTES

PRESENT: Pat Llodra, Bill Brimmer, Ned Simpson and Maureen Crick Owen

ALSO PRESENT: One voter and one member of the press

The meeting was called to order at 3:30 p.m. by chair Mrs. Crick Owen.

VOTER COMMENTS – None

ACCEPTANCE OF MINUTES

Mr. Brimmer moved to approve the minutes of May 15, 2023 meeting. Mrs. Llodra seconded. All in favor, motion passes.

Mr. Brimmer moved to approve the minutes of the Public Hearing May 15, 2023. Mrs. Llodra seconded. All in favor, motion passes.

DISCUSSION WITH CLINTON

Chris Ansikovich, Chair of Town Council of Clinton

Recording available at:

https://drive.google.com/file/d/1vSjaLgasnC_5b_OqW3U11bKRQbFm1tUH/view?usp=s

[Clinton switched from First Selectman to a Town Manager - Town Council model in 2019 The charter changes to effect the Town Manager structure failed the first time (2018) it was voted on . The town has a seven-member Town Council. There is no Board of Finance.]

Mrs. Ansikovich spoke to the history of conversion to Town Manager. He indicated that it started about 20 years ago during charter revision considerations. In 2018 a charter revision to establish a Town Manager failed. Mr Ansikovich attributed this to a lack of collective knowledge of how it would work. The second time around there was more community involvement. A group was active explaining how the new form would work. The charter changes passed the following year. The town struggled with a desire to see and access the Town Manager, but the role is running the town on a day-to-day basis. It was tough for a newly elected Town Council to go through the process of hiring a new Town Manager. When asked about learnings, Mr Ansikovich pointed to not getting enough information out to the town regarding what the Town Manager would do. There should have been more opportunity for residents to ask questions. More dialogue.

The seven member Town Council is elected and then the council elects the chair. There is politics in this. It is not a requirement that the Town Manager lives in town. Mr. Ansikovich was a big proponent of that.

On recruiting, Mr Ansikovich described that prior to the first Town Council election, everyone running was invited to discuss recruitment. After the election, an executive search firm, out of Florida, was engaged which was a huge benefit. The headhunter did all the work which resulted in 5 finalists being presented to Town Council. Three candidates were brought into town for two days.

Mr Brimmer asked how is the work of the Town Manager evaluated. Mr Ansikovich indicated that the contract spells out responsibilities, and what that individual would be in charge of. A lot of which are charter related. The first contract was for three years with a six month performance review followed by annual reviews. The Town Manger comes to the council with a report on what he accomplished. Council reviews and discusses, yes, no, maybe. It was a huge benefit of using a headhunter who worked up the contract and guide salary and benefits for the position. Mr Ansikovich, as council chair worked with the head hunter to get final contract.

Talking about desired experience and qualifications of their Town Manager, Mr Ansikovich started with Human Resources. Absent Human Resources staff, it was handled by the First Selectman. So when there is no HR department that is an important expertise. Extensive municipal experience is essential.

Mr Brimmer asked if there was push-back in town related to the expense of a Town Manager. Mr Ansikovich replied not much. Town Manager is not a political position and Mr Ansikovich sees his role a council chair including keeping politics away from the Town Manager.

Asked about key words describing the relationship between the council and Town Manager, Mr Ansikovich replied that it depends of time of year. There is a very good relationship. He is very open. His door is always open. During budget season it can become difficult.

Asked about partisan politics impacting the Town Manager, Mr Ansikovich stated the need to trust the professionalism of the town manager. He advises the council to trust the information and actions of the Town Manager who has 20 years' experience. As chair his priority is getting accurate information out to the public. He does not like social media as a source of information. To illustrate politics, Mr Ansikovich described that as chair he only votes as a tie breaker and has not had to vote. He asks a lot of questions. First Selectmen are elected lay people. It's political and its own crazy world. Charter revision did have events for community involvement, but is was more one way.

On how the Town Manager spends their time, Mr Ansikovich indicated that the Town Manager wants department heads to do their job. The beginning he spent a lot of time with department heads. The previous First Selectman was a micro manager. The Town Manager wants the department heads to run their departments.

Mr Simpson asked about the working relationship between the Town Manager and the schools superintendent. Mr Ansikovich replied that it is one of the best things that happened. There is more dialogue and a non-contentious relationship. Each November there is a joint Board of Education – Town Council meeting which sets the tone for the budget.

DISCUSSION WITH SOUTH WINDSOR

Liz Pendleton, Mayor

Recording available at:

<https://drive.google.com/file/d/1ymClzWzo1-OnoW7rySrJOP85ObLrFH62/view?usp=s>

[South Windsor has a Town Manager – elected Mayor form of government. It has had a Town manager for as long as can be remembered. Mrs. Pendelton has been on Town Council for 18 years and Mayor since 2021]

Regarding how Mrs Pendelton interacts with the Town Manager. The Town Manager takes his direction from the council. He brings items to the council that need their action. There is not office space for the Mayor, but she speaks with the Town Manager on a daily basis. There is a clerk of council who manages what the council has to address. Mrs Pendelton said that according to town charter she is basically a figure head. She runs the council meetings and sets their agenda, she does not make decisions on her own, she is the information go-between with the Town Manager and council,

On Town Manager salary, Mrs. Pendelton described the councils personnel committee. For both the Town Manager and Clerk of Council reviews and other data is compiled. The full council meets in executive session to determine salary.

The Town Manager is required to live in town. Mrs. Crick Owen asked if living in town makes the role more political. Mrs. Pendelton does not see that. He is a town employee. Most people approach the Mayor or elected council members. Businesses will contact the Town Manager directly. Mayor and council members will hand off resident issues to the Town Manager.

Mrs. Pendelton explained that the last Town Manager held the role for 23 years. For the current Town Manager, South Windsor used a company that worked with the council to create a packet for candidates then handled the advertising and a first interview. Candidate experience with human resources was absolutely something the town wanted.

Mr Simpson asked about the relationship between the Town Manager and school superintendent. Mrs. Pendelton started by describing the budget process with school and government paths. For joint efforts, the Town Manager and Superintendent work together. Mrs. Pendleton created a “Quad Board Meeting.” Each quarter the Board of Education, Planning and Zoning, Economic Development and Town Council meet together. They discuss where the town is headed, what needs to be done and how to be fiscally responsible.

Mrs. Pendleton described that South Windsor is the state’s largest school district. The town just four new elementary schools that are full to the brim. An increase of one thousand students over the next ten years is projected. These buildings are “town buildings” but under the auspices of the Board of Education. Old schools are returned to town jurisdiction. Schools are responsible for building maintenance.

Mrs. Llodra asked Mrs. Pendleton for her thoughts on the differences in town government structures. She responded that with a Town Manager, it is not necessary for the mayor to be on premises all day long. She is available 24/7. Currently the Mayor gets \$75/month. She believes that as Mayor she is the advocate for residents and businesses in the community. The town manager takes care of staff and operations. Council and Clerk of Council have defined responsibilities. Examples include events in the community ribbon cuttings and the newsletter.

OLD BUSINESS

Recording available at:

<https://drive.google.com/file/d/1ApvroMD8CwmTtUFR08hP2cKDoGG7h3J1/view?usp=s>

Draft document re: why possible executive structure change

Mrs. Crick Owen started by addressing process and going forward. She turned to the draft work product outline Mr Simpson provided. She suggested we could assign sections to various people to author, so it does not fall to one person writing the whole thing. She also expressed the importance of all Work Group documents identifying who drafted the document, date, that it is a draft and add page numbers.

Mrs. Llodra commented that group writing is extremely hard. While she does not like to be in the position of reacting to something someone has put forth. Explaining that her writer-head comes in. She pointed to the section "Newtown Executive Structure." She would delete the statement that it "Why is a Work Group considering changing . . . She recommended calling the next sub-section "Current Conditions" rather than "What Has Changed" This is because the things that have been raised in the working drafts, with the exception of social media, are not new. At this point, the Work Group's charge could be added. Then the document should define the models we are looking at: First Selectman-Council, First Selectman with Town Administrator and Town Manager – Council. Then to the research. The draft outline reflecting this discussion is Attachment A.

Mrs. Crick Owen acknowledging the difficulty of group write asked for suggestions of how we write it and how we make revisions. Everything through Research will be facts that we have gotten. Assessment and Recommendation will be working sections. Mrs Llodra recommended that she would draft the Newtown Executive Structure section, which is basically her document that was circulated today and Mr Simpson draft the Research section. Mr. Simpson agreed to draft the inventory of interviews, who, when and town structure, but suggested an alternative to the Common Themes section. Referring to Mrs. Crick Owen comments at earlier meeting that she keeps a notebook of highlights from each interview, each Work Group member should bring to the next meeting the key points, "ah has" and things that stuck-out from the interviews to date. Mrs. Llodra suggested discussion at a future meeting of what did we hear that we want to keep front-of-mind.

The place to describe research vs assessment was discussed. How the town leaders responded to the question: Should the Town Administrator/Manager live in town? was used as a reference example. Mr Brimmer suggested that the common themes actually come from our questions. Mrs. Llodra supported this construct. Mrs. Crick Owen said she will have identification of common themes as an ongoing agenda item. Mrs. Crick Owen will go through the questions and pull out what she thinks are the common themes. She will also go through her notes to see what stood out to her and asked that the other Work Group members also do that.

Mrs Crick Owen asked what would be in the Background section. Mr Simpson thought that it would be a timeline of BOS consideration leading to the creation and charge of the Work Group.

Mr Brimmer highlighted the importance of keeping the report simple. All agreed. Mr Simpson noted that it will be a yet to be determined set of people from what will be a newly elected BOS that would be implementing what if anything this Work Group recommends. Our work product should seek to avoid the need for redoing what this Work Group is doing.

Mr Brimmer observed that the options for recruiting is not the same for a Town Administrator as for a Town Manager. He doesn't think hiring an expensive recruiter for a Town Administrator doesn't make sense.

Mrs Llodra asked the Work Group to respond to the six things she put in her Current Conditions write-up.

- 1) longevity in role may not be relied on
- 2) compensation less than private sector
- 3) Knowledge and skill demands of the position continue to expand and deepen
- 4) Social media, expectations for FS to be immediately informed and responsive
- 5) Demands of the day-to-day role do not allow sufficient time for planning and reflection, problem solving, preparation for near and future challenges
- 6) Challenging attributes embedded in the position

The Work Group discussed the impact of social media. Multiple facets were highlighted. Discussion on these six points, common themes and the documents on future agenda.

NEW BUSINESS

1. Next Steps

Mrs. Crick Owen reported that town interviews are scheduled for the next two meetings. Monroe will join us June 26. Beyond that the group will continue to meet every other Monday. The first Board of Selectman meeting in September should be our target to make a presentation.

Next meeting, Monday June 12, will be held at 3:30 pm.

VOTER COMMENTS - None

Mrs. Brimmer moved to adjournment. Mr Simpson seconded. All in favor, motion passes.
The meeting was adjourned at 4:56 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,
Ned Simpson

Attachment A – Work Group Report Draft Outline

Executive Summary - Recommendation (1 page)

Background

Objectives – Work Group Charge

Newtown Executive Structure

- Current Executive Structure

- Current Condition

- Staying With the Current Executive Structure

Research

- Definition of CT Town Executive Structure Models

- Reference Town

 - Interviews (Town, role, who, when . .)

 - Common Thems and Take-aways

- Other Research

Assessment

- Alternatives Considered

 - (Modified current First Selectman, Town Administrator, and Town Manager)

- Assessment of Alternatives

Recommendation

Attachments