

Matthew D. Ritter,
Chairman, Legislative Affairs Committee
Hartford Court of Common Council
550 Main Street
Hartford, CT 06103

June 4, 2009

Dear Council Colleagues:

The City of Hartford Charter Revision Commission (the "Commission") has finished its draft report and, pursuant to Conn. Gen. Stat. §7-191(b), the Commission has officially submitted its draft report for review by the Court of Common Council (the "City Council"). This letter aims to provide a timeline for the charter revision process which will unfold in the next 8-12 weeks.

Please be advised that the City Council must vote on whether it wants to have proposed changes to the charter voted on at a referendum to be held at either a regular or special election. In addition, the City Council must vote to determine the date of that election.

For purposes of this letter and for creating a timeline for this process, I have assumed that the referendum to vote on changes to the charter will occur at the November 3, 2009 election, which is the next regularly scheduled election for the City. If the City Council votes to have these questions voted on at the November 3, 2009 election, it must have the final ballot questions drafted at least forty-five days prior to the November 3, 2009 election. Conn. Gen. Stat. §9-369a(b) provides that at least forty-five days prior to the election in which a referendum is to be held, the Town Clerk "must file in the office of the Secretary of State a statement setting forth the designation of the question as it is to appear on the voting machine ballot labels at the election, the date upon which the submitting action was taken and the reference to the law under which the action was taken."

With regards to the draft report recently submitted by the Commission to the City Council, Conn. Gen. Stat. §7-191(b) requires the City Council to hold "at least one public hearing on the draft report . . . not later than forty-five days after the submission of the draft report." Accordingly, there will be a public hearing on Tuesday, June 23 at 5:30 p.m. at City Hall in order to receive public feedback on the Commission's draft report.

Subsequent to the public hearing to be held on June 23, the City Council, pursuant to Conn. Gen. Stat. §7-191(b), must “not later than fifteen days after its last hearing . . . make recommendations to the commission for such changes in the draft report as it deems desirable.” Therefore, I respectfully request that you provide the Legislative Affairs Committee with any recommendations for changes to the draft report by July 1, 2009. The Legislative Affairs Committee will then compile and submit the City Council’s recommendations to the Commission before the July 8, 2009 deadline.¹

After the submission of the City Council’s recommendations for changes to the draft report, the Commission may, pursuant to Conn. Gen. Stat. §7-191(c), amend any provisions of the proposed charter or reject any recommendations made by the City Council. In either case, the Commission shall make its final report to the City Council no later than thirty days after receiving the City Council’s recommendations. In my conversations with the Chairman of the Commission, it appears likely that the Commission will be able to submit its final report well before the thirty day timeline. This is important because if the City Council wishes to have any proposed changes to the charter voted on at the November 3, 2009 election, it will need to have final questions drafted by no later than the September 14, 2009 regular meeting of the City Council.

Pursuant to Conn. Gen. Stat. §7-191(d), the City Council “not later than fifteen days after receiving the final report . . . by a majority vote of its entire membership, shall either approve the proposed charter . . . or reject the same or separate provisions thereof.” Accordingly, it will require five votes to approve of any proposed change to the charter and the City Council may accept some of the proposed changes and reject others.

As a City Council, to ensure that the proposed changes to the charter are on the ballot this November, we should act on the final report at a special meeting sometime in July. This will ensure that the forty-five day period for petitions, pursuant to §7-191(d), will have expired prior to the September 14, 2009 City Council regular meeting.

At the September 14, 2009 meeting or earlier, and pursuant to Conn. Gen. Stat. §7-191(e), the City Council shall “by a majority vote of its membership, determine whether the proposed charter . . . shall be submitted to the electors for approval at a regular election or at a special election warned and held for that purpose.” Since November 3, 2009 is a regular election, any proposed changes to the charter will pass if approved by a majority of electors. If the City Council wishes to have the charter voted on at a special election, there is a requirement that the proposed charter changes pass “by a majority which number equals at least fifteen per cent of the electors of the

¹ If the City Council has no recommendations for changes in the draft report, the report of the Commission shall be final pursuant to Conn. Gen. Stat. §7-191(c).

municipality as determined by the last-completed active registry list of such municipality.” (See §7-191(f)).

In addition to determining the type of election in which the changes will be voted on, the City Council must at the September 14, 2009 meeting or earlier, pursuant to Conn. Gen. Stat. §7-191(f), prepare the questions to be voted on by the electors.

This is a long process but state statutes are very clear about the timelines to which we must adhere. I have provided an approximate timeline below and look forward to working with everyone on the charter revision process in the coming months.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Matt Ritter". The signature is written in a cursive, slightly slanted style.

Matthew D. Ritter
Councilman

**TENTATIVE SCHEDULE FOR 2009 CITY OF HARTFORD CHARTER
REVISION PROCESS**

May, 2009	City Council receives Commission's draft report
June 23, 2009	City Council public hearing on Commission's draft report
July 1, 2009	Members of City Council submit proposed recommendations and amendments to draft report to Legislative Affairs Committee
July 8, 2009	Legislative Affairs Committee submits City Council recommendations and amendments to draft report to Commission
Mid-July	Commission amends draft report and/or accepts or rejects City Council proposals; submits final draft of charter to City Council
Late July	At a special meeting, City Council acts on final draft of Commission (after this meeting and final action by the City Council, there is a 45 day window in which electors can petition items rejected by the City Council but recommended by the Commission onto the ballot)
September	After expiration of 45 day "petition" period, City Council determines election in which proposed charter changes are to be voted on and drafts final ballot questions
September	Town Clerk files information with Secretary of State's office at least forty-five days prior to election (Note: this assumes that the City Council votes to have the charter revision questions on the ballot for the November 3, 2009 election)