

## **A CITIZENS GUIDE TO CHARTER REVISION IN NORWALK: FAQ**

**What is the Norwalk City Charter?** Under Connecticut “home rule” law, the City Charter serves as our local constitution. It creates the structure of our City government and the rules that govern our elected officials, like the Mayor, Common Council and the Board of Education, as well as appointed officials. How does a bill become a law (ordinance)? What rules govern the adoption of our annual general fund and capital budgets? Do charter provisions adopted fifty to one hundred years ago still have pertinence in the 21<sup>st</sup> century? Those are some of the questions that can be answered in the Charter.

**What does “home rule” mean?** “Home rule” is something of a misnomer. It sounds like a City can establish rules that govern the community. That is not true because in Connecticut there is no inherent right of local citizens to establish governance structures as they please and there is no implied right for municipalities to create government structures on their own. Local governments can only exercise authority expressly granted by the State. “Home Rule” is the body of laws and rules granted by the state. There are also state laws which restrict municipalities, including laws that govern elections, collective bargaining and public emergencies.

**What is a Charter Revision Commission?** The Charter Revision Commission is a group of seven citizens who are examining the current structure of Norwalk’s government and will make recommendations for possible changes.

**When will Charter Commission begin its work?** The Commission will begin the process with a **public hearing on October 12<sup>th</sup>**. It will continue with a series of subject matter meetings, all open to the public and will conclude, as it started, with a public hearing in late May or early June 2023. The revised Charter will be presented to the Common Council at that time and, if approved, to the voters for approval in November 2023.

**What form of government does Norwalk have?** The City of Norwalk utilizes the Mayor/Council form of government where the Mayor serves as the chief executive officer and the Council serves as the legislative body and fiscal authority.

**Why should you care?** As discussed above the Charter is the legal foundation for local government. If you care about the budget, planning, government contracts and spending, the impact of collective bargaining, public safety, and land use processes for the City, then you should care about charter revision. If you want to hold your local elected officials accountable your voice should be heard.

**How can you get involved?** It is vital that we hear from you. At the meetings and hearings, you can learn more about the issues and share your suggestions and ideas. You can also submit your ideas online at <https://forms.office.com/g/2cRKC0RYqz>