

September 18, 2024

Dear Burt as CRC Chair and CRC members;

As a member of the Woodbury Charter Revision Commission (CRC), I am writing **to address concerns**, as I understand them, that seem to have been expressed by CRC members during our meeting on 9/11/2024 regarding my proposal to review and consider Dynamic Governance/Sociocracy, as follows:

1. I understand the following concerns to be:
 - a. It is believed to be beyond the responsibility of the Woodbury Charter Revision Commission (CRC) to review alternative forms of governance and decision-making, such as Dynamic Governance/Sociocracy.
 - b. It is believed that such a review and assessment could be a multi-year process.
 - c. I imagine too that it may seem overwhelming to consider something seemingly new and different.
 - d. The CRC has a short period of time to review the Woodbury Charter as is.
 - e. Interest is uncertain.
 - f. A proposal of Dynamic Governance/Sociocracy is considered to be beyond CT state statutes.

2. In response:

- a. Has the scope of CRC's Charter review/revision been clearly defined?

Whose responsibility is it to review, assess, and revise the town's form of governance and decision-making process if not the CRC?

Hasn't and isn't the CRC indeed been reviewing and making proposals regarding the town's form of governance, governance roles, and decision-making process for consideration by the town's citizenry?

For example: Such has been itemized in the minutes; three handouts were provided on such, namely, 1) a review of municipalities and their form of government, 2) an article from Ct Mirror regarding the Town Meeting and whether it still makes sense, 3) Town of Ellington Position Description of Town Administrator; and community members have made proposals on such, including the number of Selectmen and inclusion of Robert's Rules in either the Charter or a document on file with the Town Clerk.

The Town of Chester Governance Study Committee Report addressed the following ideals:

- “match an executive authority with a legislative body that meets the needs of a community and its culture”
- “participation and informed decision-making”
- “shared legislative authority” and collaboration
- empowering “a community to operate efficiently and effectively in the delivery of services to its residents” in a manner that is “reliant on collaboration, communication, and agreement of those involved in the financial policy, administration, and budgeting process”
- “simultaneously focus on policy and planning while managing the day-to-day functions of government”

Dynamic Governance/Sociocracy addresses such ideals, including:

- providing an [egalitarian](#) organizational structure of self-governance
- facilitating active [consent-based decision-making](#) by participating members and constituents of town governance bodies
- encouraging greater citizen involvement.

b. Regarding the amount of time required to review and assess Dynamic Governance/Sociocracy, this could be done in stages as follows:

1.) An **understanding** of the following important elements could be relatively immediate:

- [Roles](#)
- [Double-linking](#) of [circles](#) as an organizational structure
- [Consent-based decision-making](#)

2.) Regarding their **practice**, this would likely be ever-evolving.

- Roles could be customized to meet the needs and desires of each governance organization
- Double linking of circles is a matter of organizational design, which would be a process among Boards, Commissions, and Committees.
- Consent-based decision-making could be practiced during CRC meetings and/or with an ad hoc committee dedicated to such.

3.) Regarding their **implementation**, both can be presented to the town citizenry for consideration. A proposal could be developed, and is otherwise available for review.

4.) Other aspects and nuances of Dynamic Governance/Sociocracy could be reviewed, practiced, and implemented, as needed and appropriate, over time.

c. If we can significantly improve how governance functions, advocate for the voice and active consent of We, the People, and enhance community participation and involvement, surely considering a “deeper democracy” is not only worthwhile, but essential to help ensure the promise of a representative form of governance of, by, and for We, the People.

"A republic, if you can keep it" was Benjamin Franklin's response to Elizabeth Willing Powell's question: *"Well, Doctor, what have we got, a republic or a monarchy?"*

- d. If there exists, even if in part, a remedy to town governance issues and/or improvement on how town governance in Woodbury currently operates, including greater organization, greater efficiency, greater coordination of the flow of information, greater representation, greater participation, greater collaboration, and an active consent-based decision-making process, - isn't it worth exploring a proposal that could help address these issues and/or needs/desires, especially since the CRC meeting session will not meet again for another ten years?!
- e. To actually determine if there is interest, I propose:
 - providing CRC members a clear understanding of Dynamic Governance/Sociocracy
 - having a discussion about Dynamic Governance/Sociocracy, in the round, and
 - practicing an active consent-based decision-making process on a proposal to bring it before the town citizenry
 - and/or establishing an open forum, public hearing, survey, and/or polling about Dynamic Governance/Sociocracy for the town citizenry to consider it.
- f. A proposal of Dynamic Governance/Sociocracy is pursuant to Article 1, §§ 1, 2, and 14 and Article X, § 2 of the [Connecticut Constitution](#), as well as the promise of the 1776 U.S. [Declaration of Independence](#) of consent-based self-governance of, by, and for We, the People.

Article 1

SEC. 1. *All men when they form a social compact, are equal in rights; and no man or set of men are entitled to exclusive public emoluments or privileges from the community.*

SEC. 2. *All political power is inherent in the people, and all free governments are founded on their authority, and instituted for their benefit; and they have at all times an undeniable and indefeasible right to alter their form of government in such manner as they may think expedient.*

SEC. 14. *The citizens have a right, in a peaceable manner, to assemble for their common good, and to apply to those invested with the powers of government, for redress of grievances, or other proper purposes, by petition, address or remonstrance.*

https://ballotpedia.org/Article_I,_Connecticut_Constitution

Article X, SEC. 2. *The general assembly may prescribe the methods by which towns, cities and boroughs may establish regional governments and the methods by which towns, cities, boroughs and regional governments may enter into compacts. The general assembly shall prescribe the powers, organization, form, and method of dissolution of any government so established.*

https://ballotpedia.org/Article_X,_Connecticut_Constitution

The 1776 U.S. Declaration of Independence states: *"Governments are instituted among Men, deriving their just powers from the consent of the governed..."*

<https://www.archives.gov/founding-docs/declaration-transcript>

3. Based on our CRC experience so far, which do you believe is better?

- a. Term limits on Board, Commission, and Committee Chairs were imposed by a majority vote.

What if instead, criteria were to be established for evaluating the effectiveness of the selected person for Chair, (for example, inclusivity, productivity, performance, positivity, etc.), giving the Chair an opportunity to meet the agreed standards that group/circle members espouse and improve his/her performance, or, if performance is unsatisfactory, give the group/circle members an opportunity to select a different Chair during a specified time frame?

- b. Are any proposals subject to “gatekeeping” and decided by a minority of CRC members?

Does voting result in majority rule that may not account for well-reasoned arguments and that can disenfranchise the voting minority?

Is voting a less inclusive, less integrative decision-making process that could result in problems that surface over time?

What if proposals are discussed, in the round, and subject to the active consent of all members?

What if well-reasoned arguments and objections that appeal to the sensibility of the group members are welcome to deepen the conversation and account for any unintended consequences?

What if such objections are incorporated to improve the proposal?

What if consent means: “no paramount objections, good enough for now, safe enough to try, with a method of evaluation at a predetermined time.”

In sum, I believe that thoughtfully reviewing, considering, and choosing a deeper, more robust, and more representative form of governance and decision-making process is in service to We, the People, and the common good.

May we ask: What form of governance are we consciously choosing?!

Respectfully,
Margaret S. Arndt
CRC Member