

Charter Review Commission
Minutes of Governance Sub-Committee Meeting on 3/18/21

The following were discussed:

1. Call to Order at 7:03 pm - Meeting called to order by Dave Anderson, Chair.
2. Roll Call - All eight members were present: Dave Anderson, Sharon Abreu, Janet Brownell, David Dehlendorf, Jane Fuller, Tony Ghazel, Richard Grout, & Olivia Roseberry.
3. Change in Membership - This is Sharon Abreu's last meeting as member of our sub-committee. She will be replaced by Kevin Ranker.
4. Approval of Minutes - Subject to one modification, the minutes of our last meeting on 3/11/21 were approved 7-0, with one abstention by Tony Ghazel because he did not attend the meeting. Janet agreed to modify the wording at the end of #4 to clarify the specifics of the motion that was voted on and approved.
5. Approval of Today's Agenda - Unanimously approved.
6. Conversation With County Manager - Tony Ghazel reported on his discussion last week with Mike Thomas concerning various ambiguities in how Articles 2 and 4 of the Charter deal with the relationship between the County Council and the County Manager, among other charter issues. Tony learned that the existing council resolution 10-2013 passed in 2013 specifies additional details of the relationship between the County Council and the County Manager in a way that resolves most of his concerns. Mike expressed satisfaction with his relationship with the council and that he has not experienced meddling by current and past council members in the operations of the various county departments. Nevertheless, Jane Fuller requested that Tony speak with Jaime Stephens and other past council members to also gain their perspectives on the relationship. Tony will do so and then present for discussion at our next meeting possible changes to the charter that address his remaining concerns, if any.
7. List of Departments Reporting Directly to County Manager - Tony will draft for discussion at our next meeting his suggested change to Section 4.10 that would update the list of departments reporting directly to the County Manager.
8. Hiring and Firing of County Employees - Dick Grout expressed concern that all hirings and firings by the County Manager and by the various department heads require ratification by the County Council. He would like to see this provision removed from the charter thereby giving the County Manager full discretion to hire and fire. After extensive discussion, no decision was made. To be discussed again at future meetings.
9. County Council Role in Approving Tax Levies - Tony Ghazel expressed concern that Section 2.30(2)(a) of the charter appears to give the County Council authority to approve tax levies without voter approval. David Dehlendorf stated his belief that under state law, only the voting public can approve levies. Tony will consult with Randy Gaylord and suggest any possible necessary amendment at our next meeting.

10. Number of Required Monthly Meetings by County Council - We discussed whether Section 2.41 of the charter should be amended to increase the required minimum number of monthly public meetings from two to either 3 or 4. David Dehlendorf disclosed that he spoke with the existing Clerk of the County Council who said the council met an average of 7.6 - 4.3 times per month in each year between 2015 and 2020, much more than the required two. He argued against the idea as unnecessary given recent meeting history and because it would be micro managing the council which instead should be allowed to continue making its own decisions as to when meetings are necessary or not. Dehlendorf moved that our sub-committee drop this issue from further consideration. However, there was no second and the motion failed.
11. Management of Budget Process - Dick Grout withdrew his suggestion from several weeks ago, that was never voted on, that responsibility for managing the budget process be transferred from the Auditor to the County Manager. After considerable discussion, Dick will instead prepare for discussion at our next meeting a proposed amendment to Section 7.10 and/or Section 7.20 that would require the County Manager to coordinate closely with the Auditor in preparation of the budget.
12. New Business - Olivia Roseberry presented a draft of a proposed spreadsheet that details the status of all charter issues under consideration by our sub-committee. A motion to request Olivia to update the draft for consideration at our next meeting was unanimously approved.
13. Future Meeting Times - After extensive discussion, we agreed to maintain our existing weekly meeting times of 7-8 pm on Thursdays.
14. Public Comment - No members of the public were present.
15. Adjournment - Motion to adjourn unanimously approved at 8:10 pm.

Minutes prepared by David Dehlendorf and submitted to our chair on 3/20/21.