

Charter Review Commission
Minutes of Governance Sub-Committee Meeting on 4/22/21

The following were discussed:

1. Call to Order - Meeting on Zoom called to order at 7:03 pm by Dave Anderson, Chair.
2. Roll Call - Present: Dave Anderson, Janet Brownell, David Dehlendorf, Jane Fuller, Dick Grout, Kevin Ranker, & Olivia Roseberry. Absent: Tony Ghazel.
3. Approval of 4/15/21 Minutes - Approved 7-0.
4. Issue #7 (Various Proposed Amendments to Articles 2 & 4) - As Ghazel, who proposed the amendments, was not present, there was no discussion of this subject.
5. Issue #15 (Transfer Visitors Bureau to County) - The meeting consisted exclusively of a conversation led by Janet Brownell about the possibility that San Juan County should take over from the San Juan Islands Business Association (aka San Juan Islands Visitors Bureau) responsibility for the management of our county's tourism promotion using the portion of the existing lodging tax that is currently provided to the Visitors Bureau. She started with a Power Point presentation, copy attached, detailing the mission, funding, and operations of the Visitors Bureau, as well as details of the existing lodging tax that provides most of its funds. Brownell explained that the idea for transferring tourism promotion management from the Visitors Bureau to the county government is a result of displeasure expressed by many members of the public with the impact of today's excessive tourism on the everyday activities of local residents, as well as dissatisfaction with the Visitors Bureau's activities in mid-2020 when it continued to widely promote tourism to our county at the same time that the public and county health officials were attempting to discourage visits to our county in order to better protect our citizens from Covid-19. She argued that the interests of the residents of our county might be better served if tourism management, including promotion, were instead to be the responsibility a new county department. The possible benefits of doing so would include better alignment of promotional activities with the desires of the public (i.e. accountability), specifically a greater public say in how the existing lodging tax is spent on promotion. Although not currently channeled through the Visitors Bureau, there was support for increased use of a portion of the tax for other purposes permitted by law, including for the improvement of tourism facilities, such as county parks, and for support of development of affordable housing for seasonal tourism workers. There might also be a cost savings. Most commissioners present reacted favorably to the possible transfer, but all agreed we need more specifics before considering further action. As a result, no motion was made to vote at this time on the proposed transfer. Instead, Browning agreed to draft an outline of her proposal for our next meeting. Roseberry also volunteered to research the specifics of how a portion of the lodging tax could be used to support development of affordable housing. We also agreed to obtain the thoughts of the Visitors Bureau's existing management by inviting Deborah Hoskinson, Executive Director, to answer questions at our next meeting. Brownell suggested a 15-minute conversation. Dehlendorf agreed to set up the meeting.
6. Next Meeting - Dave Anderson announced he may be absent from our next meeting on April 24. If he is, Olivia Roseberry agreed to act as chair in his absence.

7. New Business - None.
8. Public Comment - No members of the public were present.
9. Adjournment - Motion to adjourn approved 7-0 at 8:15 pm.

Minutes prepared by David Dehlendorf and submitted to chair on 4/25/21.