

City of Flint Charter Review Commission

Advisory Committee Meeting

Thursday, January 7, 2015

6:00 pm – 7:30 pm

Stockton Center at Spring Grove
720 Ann Arbor St, Flint, MI

Meeting Minutes

Advisors Present: William Hammond (chair), Lamonica Harris, Tony Palladeno, Ashley Nickels, Renee' Harvey, Steve Mintline, Ben Pauli, Derwin Munroe, Dale Weighill, Denise Yarbrough, Travis Moore, Joe King, Yvonne Lewis, Pam Loving- Copeland

Commissioners Present: Heidi Phaneuf, Quincy Murphy, Barry Williams

I. Call to Order – Introductions

Bill Hammond welcomed everyone to the Stockton Center and called the meeting to order at 6: 02 pm. Introductions were made by all who where present.

II. Charter Review Advisory Committee Roles and Responsibilities

Heidi Phaneuf went over the Advisory Committee Roles and Responsibilities which were included with the agenda packet

III. Minutes of the Previous Meeting

A motion was made by Denise Yarbrough, 2nd by Steve Mintline to approve the minutes of the December 3, 2015 Advisory Committee meeting as presented. Motion carried unanimously.

IV. Presentation on Forms of Government

Heidi gave a presentation on the different forms of government. There was also a couple of handouts with each type explained in greater detail, comparison sheets and pros and cons of each type of government. The two main types being the strong mayor (current form) and council- manager. There are also additional variations that can be added or combined with these two basic types. During the presentation there was some discussion on issues/ideas on how to improve local government. Access to information for City Council was identified as an important issue as well as the potential for 6 month probationary periods for new appointees or department heads to ensure the person is a good fit before making a long term appointment or confirmation and requiring the Mayor or City Administrator to attend City Council meetings.

V. Group Exercise on Forms of Government

The advisory committee divided into three groups and each group discussed the three questions in the group exercise their responses are below:

Group 1:

1. *What form of government do you prefer and why?*
 - Need to understand different components and not vote one form of government up or down.
 - Mayor directly elected no matter what form of government you have.
2. *Any other important elements that should be added or changed to improve local government?*
 - Hold Dept. Heads responsible for what they do.
 - 1 council person elected at large that would represent the whole city.
3. *What are the three most important things you want to see in local government?*
 - (blank)

Group 2:

1. *What form of government do you prefer and why?*
 - Strong Mayor / hybrid with Mayor elected by people sitting on Council
 - The voice of community is important
 - Mayor should be elected, based on the voice of the people
2. *Any other important elements that should be added or changed to improve local government?*
 - Dept. Heads accountable
 - You can't go by what it is now
 - Help support
 - What the roles are for
 - Mayor is dysfunctional
 - Let the community know by understanding
 - If you don't have a strong mayor you don't have nothing
3. *What are the three most important things you want to see in local government?*
 - Look at what it is now
 - Representation
 - Politics
 - No longer Flint
 - Resources
 - Federal shifts
 - How to maintain institutional memory

Other notes from Group 2:

- General population does not understand the current process- Therefore changing it based upon what is currently being experienced will not necessarily lead to change.
- Challenge to make decisions on changing charter without adequate knowledge

Group 3:

1. *What form of government do you prefer and why?*

- A ‘hybrid’ format. A combination would improve both the level of professionalism and the degree of representation provided by the council.
 - Accountability is the key outcome, regardless of the specific form that is included in the charter.
 - The virtue of a strong mayor form is that it provides both leadership and accountability. In the absence of an Ombudsman position in the city, voters need better representation and accountability measures. The operation of the existing charter has eroded this.
 - The key choice for the Commission is whether to adopt a new (untested) charter, or to reinforce the 1974 document (which was been severely undermined over the years).
2. *Any other important elements that should be added or changed to improve local government?*
- Revive the following from the existing charter (which have become defunct over time):
 - Human Relations Commission
 - Civil Service Commission
 - Ombudsman
 - There is a need to revise the procedures for public meetings and the process for public comment, to insure public input (e.g. at Council meetings), but also to ensure responsiveness and accountability from city officials.
Mandate that department heads attend council meetings
 - There is a need to have clear information provided to the public, regardless of the choices that are instituted
3. *What are the three most important things you want to see in local government?*
- Accountability (the group had consensus on this point)
 - Representation (consensus on the need to ensure representation by the council; no consensus on the number of wards or how council members are to be elected)
 - Provision for the council to remove/replace Mayoral appointments (e.g. by a 2/3 vote)
 - The language of the charter need to be ‘available’ for citizens (i.e. simple, easy to read), but the charter also needs to be comprehensive and cover contingencies (e.g. interim appointments and how to hold them accountable).

The group talked about their thoughts on the material and presentation and any suggestions for changes.

VI. Charter Review Community Meeting: Form of Government Discussion: Thursday, January 21st from 5:30 – 7:30 pm at Grace Emmanuel Baptist Church, 3502 Lapeer Rd, Flint, MI
 Everyone was encouraged to attend and help get the word out about this meeting.

VII. Next Meeting- Charter Review Advisory Committee: Thursday, February 4th at 6:00 pm (location TBD)
 Renee' Harvey agreed to chair the next meeting. Thank you, Renee'! We will be in Ward 3 in February, location TBD.

VIII. Public Comment

There was no additional public comment.

IX. Adjournment

The meeting was adjourned at 7:32 pm.

Guiding Principles for the City of Flint Charter Review Commission

The City of Flint Charter Review process will be open to all Flint citizens. The Commission will ensure that public voices are recognized and that information is open and accessible to the public. The Commission will go to where the people are and will reach out to residents and businesses from all wards. The Commission will seek to engage and educate the community on the City of Flint Charter and will consider all ideas heard in the community. (Adopted June 18, 2015)