

City of Flint Charter Review Commission

Advisory Committee Meeting

Thursday, October 1, 2015

6:00 pm – 7:30 pm

City of Flint, City Hall, McKenzie Room, 2nd Floor

1101 S Saginaw St, Flint, MI

Meeting Minutes

(Approved 11-5-2015)

Meeting Attendees: Steven Mintline (Chair), Denise Yarbrough, Chris Monk, Joe King, Chris DelMorone, Derwin Munroe, Barbara Biggs, Joe King, Minerva M. Witt, Ben Pauli, Allan-Gowan Reeder, Leonard Terry, DeWaun E Robinson, Jabril Muhamad, Thomas Donnellan, Kendrick Walker, Cleora Magee, Heidi Phaneuf, Marsha Wesley, and John Cherry

Cleora Magee introduced the Charter Commission members, Marsha Welsey, Heidi Phaneuf and John Cherry. Cleora Magee introduced Steve Mintline.

I. **Call to Order – Introductions**

Steve called the meeting to order at 6:07 pm. Introductions were made by all who were present.

II. **Charter Review Advisory Committee Roles and Responsibilities**

Heidi passed out folders to anyone who did not get one at the kick-off meeting on September 26th. She shared the Charter Review Advisory Committee Roles and Responsibilities which were attached to the agenda packet. This group's role is to be a conduit for ideas from the community related to the Charter and to share information with the community through the Advisory Group's individual member's connections to the community. Interest forms were also available for anyone who would like to join the Charter Review Advisory Committee.

III. **Discussion- Kick-Off Meeting Group Exercise Results (attached)**

Steve led discussion on the outcomes of the group exercise from the Charter Review Community Kick-off meeting. Members on the group shared their thoughts on the responses given at the meeting. A brief description of the discussion is as follows:

Q1: What does good government look like?

People were honest. Transparency and checks and balances were mentioned multiple times. People are tired of things being unorganized. We want to see order in this town. Fiscal responsibility was mentioned. A government that is responsive. Want to see it transformed into action. Government is representing the people instead of the City, government should respond to the residents first.

Q2: What does bad government look like?

Barriers to the citizens. Difficult to understand rules and unnecessary red tape. People can have a difference of opinion and not be argumentative. Lack of communication is a barrier. Government can be difficult to navigate. Answers can be

hard to get. Skepticism of politicians and administrators who may be motivated by a particular item not in the best interests of the citizens. Lack of concern for the community.

Q3: What are some qualities that you want to see in your city government?

In response to item 1 on Group 3: But you can work on more than one thing at a time, but in general agreement with this statement. Focusing on transparency. People want to see in a city government – a government that cares about them. Cares about the issues and things that they are going through. Build a more positive relationship with the government and the people. Collaboration and teamwork. General civility. Be more physically active in the community. Ask people their stories in Flint, like ministry in the church. Get government out of city hall. See more young people in city government.

Q4: What are some things that you would like to see in the Charter?

Ombudsman and Civil Service Commission in the next charter. Avoid being too complicated, the Charter is too complicated. Need to understand the meaning. Make it more resident friendly. In regards to Group 4- eliminating primary elections, shared idea no requirement from nominating petitions. Going to the State Requirements 400 (mayor) 40 (council), and at the state level you can just pay money to get on the ballot. 1974 Charter just created a number. The redistricting of wards to save money is a misnomer does not help because you have same issues. City wards are more than double the number of representatives than any other local government in the county. In regards to the Councilmember just for downtown Flint- Cleo shared that the person who was at her table stated that and it was because the person didn't feel that their ward represented downtown well. Strong mayor vs. city manager discussion – many different opinions on this. Steve's group just wanted to see competent staff.

Q: Why did the 1974 Charter go to Strong Mayor? Tom Donnelly shared that before then the City Managers were not professional City Managers. When we finally got a professional City Manager – it was his recommendation to get rid of the City Manager form of government. At that time the City of Flint had the 9 mayor system- each councilperson acted as their own Mayor. There does not seem to be a lot of interest in a real City Manager form of government. Most councilpersons feel that they have to represent their ward. Tom Donnellan introduced himself and his role was in drafting the 1974 Charter, he is an attorney and was a judge at one time. Tom wants trained and qualified persons in office.

Q: In the City Manager form is there less accountability? Tom said the City Manager form of government is focused on carrying out policies which are set by the City Council. Tom added that maybe they overemphasized the Mayor's role, and Mayor and council had a lot of fights he says most of these were unnecessary. In Saginaw the Council elects City Manager and City Manager selects everyone else. The Mayor in Saginaw is totally ceremonial.

Q: Why do we have so much government? Core and outer core and outer core on top? *(No specific answers given by group)*

Q: Could we function without a Mayor? Tom said you need someone to give out keys to the city and kisses babies.

Tom added that 1974 there were double the people in the city of Flint. Mayor/council and charter may need to shrink too. Every effort to reduce costs. Primary elections- do they really reduce costs? Charter Review is a temporary system. Will we look at other cities and discussion on strong mayor or city manager? Look at studies on this. What is the impact of the change? There will be a lot more to come. What are we spending all this money on so many administrators job. The CA has an assistant. Have competent officials, if you need an assistant that means perhaps you are not needed.

IV. Charter Review Survey Distribution

Steve mentioned the Charter Commission has a survey out, copies were available at the meeting. We talked about ways to access the survey online, through Facebook, and at City Hall, Flint Public Library, Brennan Center, Haskell Center, Hasselbring Center, and Berston Field House. Surveys must be completed by Oct. 31st.

V. Process for submitting amendments to Charter

John Cherry explained the process for submitting amendments to the Charter and gave everyone a handout. Proposals will be put on the website and provided to the advisory committee. After public comment the Charter Commission may make changes. Charter Commission must vote a proposal out for 3rd reading. Emails will go out for 3rd reading, there will be public comment. After 3rd reading there will be a vote to add it to the Charter.

Q: Is there a way the Transition Advisory Board can be involved in the Charter? There is no legal mandate for the Transition Advisory Board to be involved in the Charter.

Q: Who is the Committee of the Whole? The entire commission. The Committee of the Whole is a work group where the Charter is discussed.

Q: What is the duration on the public comment? It is at the discretion of the Chair. Currently it is 3 minutes, but it can be higher.

John stated the Charter Review Advisory Committee gives input on the work of the Charter. The Advisory Committee will get all the proposals. Proposals are sections of the Charter.

VI. Article 1 – Attorney Roth’s Review

Heidi presented Attorney Roth’s notes on Article 1. This is meant to give some additional information on each section of the article.

Tom shared that the Michigan Constitution has an Oath of Office. The City Charter adds an Oath of Office to uphold the City of Flint Charter.

In the Attorney's review when it is listed as "its obsolete" means not currently functioning.

There was discussion on 1-501, "qualifications" seems light. Discussion on the residency requirement being struck down. Qualifications have to be thought about. In 1974, it was whatever the voters wanted.

Conflict of Interest: The Home Rule Act is silent on this. We can be more explicit on this.

Qualifications of appointed officers. Example: Finance director with so many years' experience, etc. Have someone who is knowledgeable about City government. Mayor Stanley hired Darnell Early had been City Manager, who became the City Manager for Saginaw. Governor then hired Darnell Early. He was an exception to the unqualified individuals.

Look at all the possibilities and all the loopholes.

VII. Agenda items for next month's meeting

The group discussed agenda items for next months meeting. The survey should be complete and preliminary results may be available. Chris D suggested to pull the results and leave it open.

VIII. Next Meeting

The next meeting of Charter Review Advisory Committee will be Thursday, November 5th 6:00 pm at Bethel United Methodist Church, 1309 N Ballenger Hwy, Flint. Chris D volunteered to chair the meeting. Thank you Chris!

IX. Public Comment

Cleo stated that we have to also have public comment on the agenda as this is a public meeting. Cleo thanked everyone for their comments throughout the meeting. There were no other public comments.

X. Adjournment

Joe made a motion to adjourn support Chris M. Meeting was adjourned at 7:25 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)