

City of Flint Charter Review Commission Advisory Committee

Meeting Minutes

Thursday, January 5, 2017

Antioch Missionary Baptist Church, 1083 E Stewart Ave, Flint, MI 48505

Advisory Committee Present: Richard Jones (Chair), Sharon Allen, Terry Bankert, Anita Brown, AC Dumas, Bill Hammond, Renee Harvey, Councilman Kerry Nelson, Ben Pauli, Patrick Powell, Deveron Sanders, Raynetta Speed, Andrew Watchorn, Dayne Walling, Joyce Wilson, Arthur Woodson, Denise Yarbrough

Charter Commission Present: Cleora Magee, John Cherry, Victoria McKenzie, Charles Metcalfe, Quincy Murphy, Heidi Phaneuf, Marsha Wesley, Barry Williams,

I. Call to Order – Introductions

Richard Jones called the meeting to order at 6:08 pm.

II. Charter Review Advisory Committee Roles and Responsibilities

Heidi went over the roles and responsibilities of the Charter Review Advisory Committee.

III. Minutes of the June and October 2016 meetings

A motion was made by Bill Hammond, seconded by Denise Yarbrough to approve the minutes of June and October 2016 Advisory Committee meetings as presented, the motion carried unanimously.

IV. Update on Charter Review Process

Commissioner John Cherry went over the Charter Review Process to date and a handout of the major changes to the Charter. A draft of the charter will be available in February. Discussion ensued.

V. Discussion on Charter Items

Cleo presented the information on the Ombudsperson starting on page 9 in the Proposal 23 which was included in the packet, we went through the proposed Ombudsperson language as a group.

The group discussed: What do you think about the Charter Commission's proposal on the Ombudsman's Office and Ombudsman's Commission?

- Qualifications of the Appointed Ombudsperson was discussed by the group.
- Key words or phrases that define the qualifications and funding levels. Budget for the office became a political concern for adequate staff. Tie the budget at a minimum % to the Clerk's core budget or something like that.
- Terry Bankert suggested the Ombudsperson be a position that is appointed by the City Council and not connected to the Administration. He also shared the

Commission could be an Advisory Group. He did not think that the position can be appointed by the Mayor and approved by Council. Terry thinks it's an issue that we cannot get the right person unless it is appointed by City Council alone.

- AC Dumas shared that the Ombudsperson and Clerk should be elected positions, because these offices serve directly to the people. AC also shared the Ombudspersons Office should be elected because the Ombudsperson may have to go after the Council. He would also like to see the Clerk's office as an elected position.
- Anita Brown shared concern for the City Council being able to target the Ombudspersons Office. She shared the office is highly needed and respected for all walks of life.
- Chairperson Richard Jones shared he agrees with AC.
- Renee Harvey shared she expects the Ombudsperson to be non-partisan and non-political. Between these two options, Renee would like to see the Ombudsperson be elected.
- The group discussed election of the Ombudsperson and not the commission. Chairperson Richard Jones says both the Ombudsperson and the Commission should be elected.
- Councilman Kerry Nelson has no problem with investigation by the Ombudsperson, because if you are doing the right thing it should not be an issue.
- Arthur Woodson asked if the person is elected don't they have to be recalled if there is an issue?

Commissioner Cleora Magee asked for a show of hands for those present (Charter Commissioners excluded) how many people want the Ombudsperson to be elected? 5 people raised their hands. How many people want the Ombudsperson to be appointed? 5 different people raised their hand. 3 people did not vote and still had not made up their mind. 1 person obtained stating they were a former elected official.

- There was questions on the role of the Ombudsperson and the Ombudspersons Commission.
- There was a question on why hasn't City Council put an Ombudsperson in the budget. Councilman Nelson shared that it's a budget issue. Terry Bankert shared that there is no reason legally why we can't have one today.

Commissioner Cleora Magee went over the Human Relations Commission which is also part of the Ombudspersons Commission.

- The group discussed how are these persons going to be selected? And is the Ombudsperson selecting the Human Relations Commission? Yes, but its vague. AC Dumas asked why the City Council can't select the Human Relations Commission.
- AC Dumas asked why not review the Charter every so many years, like every 10 years.

Discussion went back to the Ombudsperson and the Ombudspersons Commission

- Anita Brown said the Ombudsperson must be independent! She also shared that the Commission should be elected.
- Councilman Kerry Nelson did not like the three appointments for the Mayor to choose from for the Ombudsperson Commission. He thought the Council should be able to pick, without the Mayor approving and the Mayor should be able to pick one also (or something like that).

VI. Next Meeting- Charter Review Advisory Committee: Thursday, February 2nd at 6:00 pm (location TBD)

A calendar of meeting dates for January and February was included in the agenda packet and Commissioner Victoria McKenzie went over the dates. She asked for everyone in attendance to, please bring more people with you.

VII. Public Comment

Commissioner Quincy Murphy opened public comment

- Dayne Walling recommended clearly stating the budget for the Ombudsperson in and the charter. Some examples of how to do this could be the equivalent of about .3 mil (which is about the same as Parks), 4% of the 101 Fund revenues, tie it to general fund revenue, or could this be a millage? The Charter needs to require funding.
- Bill Hammond said double what Commissioner Victoria McKenzie said. If the Charter Commission does not pass a Charter, it is another 6 years by state law before you can look at again.
- Terry Bankert said there are 2 centers of accountability, Mayor and City Council, all power should derive from that. Separation of powers and the Ombudsperson should stay where it is in the current structure. And we need an advisory committee. Terry said power should be in the equal offices of Mayor and City Council. Terry opposes the popular election of the Ombudsperson.
- Arthur Woodson said if you are working for the mayor as a volunteer you should be a resident, there should be a background check, and an application. He is concerned how some people can make decisions for the City without any specific process for giving them authority.
- AC Dumas shared that he is very concerned with wanting to see elected positions of for the Ombudsperson and Clerk.
- Dayne Walling also shared that recordkeeping of who was appointed to what board was an issue he suggested adding 2-3 sentences that state the City Clerk shall maintain a record of who is on what Committees and published on an annual basis, including the person's addresses.
- Anita Brown shared that the Ombudsperson needs to be elected, and they should be able to pick their own advisory board or the board should be elected. She shared there needs to be independence for the Office of the Ombudsperson. She suggested setting not to exceed to staffing levels. She also shared she doesn't think we really need a commission.
- It was mentioned that the position of Ombudsman can be added to new budget that is taking effect July 1.
- Joyce Wilson volunteered to chair the next meeting and recommended Hasselbring Senior Center for the meeting location. Thank you Joyce!

VIII. Adjournment

The meeting was adjourned at 7:49 pm.