

CHARTER REVIEW COMMITTEE  
MINUTES  
November 9, 2020

Webex Conferencing System

5:30 p.m.

**CALL TO ORDER** Chairperson Singer called the meeting to order at 5:30 p.m.

**PRESENT** Chairperson David Singer, Vice Chairperson Otis Wheeler, Councilor Shelia Gilmour, Councilor Christine Forgey, Erin Donnally Drake, John Lunt and Allen Woods.

**ABSENT** None

**ALSO PRESENT** Members of the public.

**CHAIR STATEMENT:** This meeting is being recorded by the Charter Review Committee. If any other persons present were doing the same they must notify the chairperson at this time.

Chairperson Singer requests to have the Charter Review Committee minutes approved separately.

**MOTION:** On a motion by Councilor Gilmour, second by Councilor Forgey, it was by roll call, 7 yes, 0 no,

**VOTED:** TO APPROVE THE CHARTER REVIEW COMMITTEE MINUTES DATED SEPTEMBER 14, 2020.

**MOTION:** On a motion by Councilor Gilmour, second by Councilor Wheeler, it was by roll call, 7 yes, 0 no,

**VOTED:** TO APPROVE THE CHARTER REVIEW COMMITTEE MINUTES DATED OCTOBER 5, 2020.

**MOTION:** On a motion by Councilor Gilmour, second by Councilor Wheeler, it was,

**MOVED:** TO APPROVE THE CHARTER REVIEW COMMITTEE MINUTES DATED OCTOBER 26, 2020.

**DISCUSSION:** A friendly amendment was made by Chairperson Singer requesting that the discussion as to 2.1 Composition, should be clarified to state that the discussion was whether to change the number of Councilors or to leave as is. Councilor Gilmour accepted the friendly amendment.

It was by roll call, 7 yes, 0 no,

**VOTED:** TO APPROVE THE CHARTER REVIEW COMMITTEE MINUTES DATED OCTOBER 26, 2020, AS AMENDED.

Chairperson Singer read into the record an email he had sent to the Committee members on how to approach proposed changes/amendments to the Charter:

“1. To make a change in the Charter, a rationale for the change needs to be determined. If the rationale for change provides more access and equity, then a "lower bar" should be used as a reference point for discussion, i.e. how to describe in the report whether the change is a good or bad idea. If the rationale for change provides less access and equity, then a "higher bar" should be used as a reference point for discussion, i.e. how to describe in the report whether the change is a good or bad idea.

2. I received another suggested standard from Christine Forgey that I want to discuss at the meeting. Her suggestion begins with her insight that committees like ours tend to view the Charter change as a look back on what works and doesn't work, which stimulates the old adage "If it ain't broke, don't fix it". What Chris is suggesting is that we also need to look ahead in to the future; what changes will be helpful to our City going forward in time." Other comments included:

- The City Charter is the foundation of our local government and changes should be made sparingly; changes can more easily be made with Ordinances allowing flexibility in accommodating future changes.
- At the same time the City Charter could be viewed as similar to the Constitution in which amendments can be made to reflect future matters as they present themselves.

Committee members Erin Donnally Drake and John Lunt presented their proposals for Article 4 of the Charter, School Department. Comments included:

- Most of the proposed changes were towards the positions held on the School Committee.
- Section 4.2 (b) School Committee Chair Power and Duties there was discussion as to whether the School Committee Chair or the full School Committee members could appoint all members of all committees of the School Committee. The School Committee uses a policy manual which discusses this and other matters and it was suggested that it could be aligned with the City Charter.
- Proposed change to the language from "Salary" to "Stipend" in regards to the School Committee's compensation.
- Rationale was provided both for and against allowing the Mayor to be Chair of the School Committee.
- Rationale was provided both for and against the Chair of the School Committee being the position to break a tie vote on appointments for School Committee vacancies. Need language to determine process for choosing new member and timeline for voting.

Councilor Wheeler presented his proposals for Article 5 of the Charter, Finance and Fiscal Procedures. Comments included:

- Suggestion was made to remove the language from Section 5-2 (a) School Committee Budget Public Hearing as follows: "The notice shall further indicate the times and places at which complete copies of the proposed budget are available for examination by the public, and it shall indicate the date, time and place [not less than seven (7) nor more than fourteen (14) days following such publication]," to alleviate some of the Superintendent and School Committee's budget timeline issues. It was noted that reasonable notice and time for public comment are very important.
- In place of removing the deadlines would it be beneficial amending the language to provide the School Committee additional time to submit their budget.
- This issue falls into the powers of the School Committee and would need to be exercised by the Superintendent and School Committee.
- Section 5-7 (b) Supplementary Budgets: Other Appropriations Intradepartmental Transfers change the timeframe from 15 days to 21 days of the new fiscal year. It was later noted that Massachusetts General Law mandated 15 days.
- Section 5-11 Independent Audit: Suggestion was made to change date from September 15 to September 30 of each year.

Next meeting would be held on Monday, November 23, 2020, at 6:00 pm.

**ADJOURNMENT:** On a motion by Committee Member Lunt, second by Councilor Gilmour, it was by roll call, 7 yes, 0 no,

**VOTED:** TO ADJOURN THE MEETING AT 7:14 P.M.