

CHARTER REVIEW COMMITTEE
MINUTES
April 12, 2021

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6:00 p.m.

CALL TO ORDER Chairperson Singer called the meeting to order at 6:00 p.m.

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

ABSENT Vice Chairperson Otis Wheeler.

ALSO PRESENT Mayor Roxann Wedegartner; Councilor President Penny Ricketts; Councilor Virginia Desorgher and 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.

MOTION: On a motion by Councilor Gilmour, second by Councilor Forgey, it was, by roll call, 6 yes, 0 no,

VOTED: TO APPROVE THE CHARTER REVIEW COMMITTEE MINUTES DATED MARCH 29, 2021.

Chairperson Singer opened discussion on Charter Section 2-8 (b), as it refers to the City Clerk:

- Initially, Chairperson Singer stated he will not forward any recommendations to change or amend language to the full Council. The Clerk can be appointed and removed by the Council and the Mayor will continue salary and contract negotiations with the City Clerk.
- Councilor Forgey then stated that in the future the Council President and the Council itself should oversee responsibility of the administration of the City Clerk through the Human Resources Department and not through the Mayor. She stated the Charter language should change to allow for a very discreet description of the City Clerk, including their assigned functions, and that the Clerk's position is appointed by the Council and therefore, the Council would monitor and prepare performance appraisals and advocate for the City Clerk in regards to salary and departmental budgeting. And on the occasion the Mayor and the Council both require the City Clerk's assistance, the Council would take precedence. Councilor Forgey does not consider the City Clerk as an employee, nor a Department Head in the administrative side of the City government. The City Clerk is an employee of the Council and therefore would be under the supervision of the Council President.
- Mayor Wedegartner did not agree that Charter Section 2-8 (b), as it pertains to the City Clerk, should require any changes to the language.
- Chairperson Singer noted that a future overview and reorganization of the Charter Section may be warranted and that currently the Charter, or perhaps an ordinance, should reflect that there has to be a qualified member of the City Clerk's office who is solely designated to work for the City Council.
- Councilor Forgey relayed her difficult political experience with the issue of the City Clerk when she was elected as Mayor and Greenfield had changed from a Town to a City. Mayor Wedegartner has not come across any issues of her dealings with the City Clerk or the Council.
- President Ricketts noted that if she has an issue she can consort with either the City Clerk or the Administrative Assistant to the Council.

- Chairperson Singer asked the Charter Committee if he has permission to add language in the Charter Report about the Charter, or an ordinance, being drafted in regards to the requirement that a full time qualified assistant in the City Clerk's office be available to support the Council. No one objected to Chairperson Singer's suggestion.

Chairperson Singer opened discussion on other sections Committee members may have proposed amendments or concerns:

- Councilor Forgey noted that she performed further research on Charter Section 6-14: Board of Assessors. She stated that she was still uncomfortable in regard to the setup of the Board of Assessors and an issue with the voting on the Board, she will submit her report to the Committee Members before the Charter Review Committee report is forwarded to the Committee members.
- Committee member Donnally believed there should be a departmental review of the Board of Assessors. She felt the Committee is not in a position to make decisions on this issue.
- Chairperson Singer stated that the Committee would not revisit this issue at this late in the Charter Review; however, this issue could be included in the summary letter or the Committee's final report to the Council as an alternative discussion.
- Councilor Forgey clarified her view that the Board of Assessors should not be made up of both elected and appointed officials, it should be either all elected or all appointed; she would like to see the Chief Assessor as a full time professional employee of the City of Greenfield; the Board of Assessors should comprise 3 elected officials, as it was previously. There would be more accountability and a cleaner, more defined position in the Assessors' office itself, as well as for the benefit of the taxpayers of Greenfield.
- Mayor Wedegartner informed the Committee that she recently spoke to Attorney Rose Crowley, who had prepared the recent legal opinion on the Assessors portion of the Charter, and Attorney Crowley stated that in her opinion, the City would need to do the following: 1. Increase its Board membership and have them all elected positions and 2. The Chief Assessor position would be a separate position, appointed by the Mayor, to run the day to day functions of the Assessors' office and act in an advisory capacity to the Board and not as a voting member. That would create clear separation of the appointed non-voting Chief and the elected members of the Board. Further, the Assessor's office is "under the thumb" and governed by the Department of Revenue, who monitors all Assessors' offices in the State. Chairperson Singer will include this new information to the Charter Review draft Report.
- Councilor Gilmour suggested that the Board of Assessors meetings be moved to later in the day to encourage a more diverse membership of the board.

Chairperson Singer opened discussion on his proposed summary letter and 4th draft of the final report:

- Committee member Donnally noted that some sections were outlined that the Committee had discussed in detail; she suggests adding the discussion on the Board of Health. Chairperson Singer stated that it was determined by the Committee that the suggestion by Glenn Ayers had been vetted by the Committee and the Mayor, and that the Committee unanimously recommends that the Health Director be appointed and managed by the Mayor, not the Board of Health; therefore, to keep the Charter language as it is.
- Committee member Woods noted that the phrase "a likelihood of success" should be stricken from the Charter Summary due to the uncertainty in that determination. Chairperson Singer explained the reason was when the City Council discusses where the threshold should be; the question becomes, if 400 people sign a petition, is there any real likelihood of success? He stated that he would strike the term from the summary.
- Chairperson Singer addressed the suggestions submitted by Greenfield citizen Al Norman in regards to the Charter Sections 7-7 & 7-8.

Chairperson Singer would prepare a final report and summary and forward to the Charter Review Committee members to review and vote to present to the City Council.

The final meeting is scheduled for Monday, April 26, 2021, 5:30 pm.

ADJOURNMENT: On a motion by Councilor Forgey, second by Councilor Gilmour, it was unanimously,

VOTED: TO ADJOURN THE MEETING AT 7:13 P.M.