

Ogdensburg Charter Review Commission

June 6, 2017

Page 1

Chairman Fred Bean called the meeting of the Ogdensburg Charter Review Commission to order and asked the Secretary to call the roll:

Present: Chairman Fred Bean, Commissioners Joseph Basta, Douglas Loffler, Scott McRoberts, Sean O'Brien, Christopher Pitcher, John Wilson

Absent: Commissioners Storm Cilley*, Sean McNamara**, Laura Pearson***, Andrew Putman****

Excused: Commissioner Kevin Kendall

City Staff: Sarah Purdy, City Manager
Kathleen Bouchard, City Clerk
Cathy Jock, Deputy City Clerk
Coralee Barrett, City Manager's Secretary
Timothy Johnson, City Comptroller
Michael Farrell, Fire Chief
Gregg Mallette, Code Enforcement Officer

Guests: Councillor Jennifer Stevenson

APPROVAL OF PREVIOUS MINUTES

1. Commissioner O'Brien moved to approve the May 4, 2017 Charter Review Commission meeting minutes and Commissioner Loffler seconded the motion.

The vote was:

CARRIED, AYES ALL

COMMUNICATION

1. Secretary Kathleen Bouchard reported the Charter Review Commission received resignations from Donald O'Shea and Laura Ashley.

PUBLIC COMMENT

1. City Clerk Kathleen Bouchard presented the Commission with information requested at the last meeting. (A copy of the material follows these minutes.)

***Commissioner Pearson arrived at this point in the meeting.

**** Commissioner Putman arrived at this point in the meeting.

Ogdensburg Charter Review Commission

June 6, 2017

Page 2

Mrs. Bouchard recommended the following changes to the Charter:

- §C-23 – the expired date noted should be amended
- §C-100 – Charter Review Commission language may need to be updated

2. Fire Chief Michael Farrell said he did not have any recommended changes to the Fire section of the Charter. Commissioner Loffler noted the organizational chart was updated and asked if Code Enforcement Officer Gregg Mallette reports to Chief Farrell. Chief Farrell said yes, but Mr. Mallette handles the day to day functions in the Code Enforcement Office.

3. City Comptroller Timothy Johnson recommended the following changes to the Charter:

- §C-61 – the last sentence should state “office of the City Clerk” not “office of the Comptroller”
- §C-71 – sewer “taxes” should be changed to “rates”
- §C-72 – remove the word “equal”

**Commissioner Cilley arrived at this point in the meeting.*

Commissioner Loffler asked if an Audit Committee exists, and City Manager Sarah Purdy said yes. Commissioner Loffler asked if this committee should become more active. Chairman Bean asked when this committee last met. City Clerk Kathleen Bouchard said the Audit Committee was developed due to a yearly audit report.

City Councillor Jennifer Stevenson said she is a member of the Audit Committee. Councillor Stevenson explained Council receives information as a whole so there hasn't been much reason for the committee to meet. Councillor Stevenson said it is important to keep this committee, and she anticipates it will become more active in the future. Commissioner Loffler asked Councillor Stevenson if the committee has met since she has been appointed. Councillor Stevenson said no. Commissioner O'Brien asked if City employees or Council members make up this committee. Ms. Purdy said Council members. Ms. Purdy provided the Commission with an explanation of the purpose of the Audit Committee. Commissioner Loffler recommended the budget be presented earlier in the year. Ms. Purdy said she is aiming for early October, any earlier would not be feasible.

Commissioner O'Brien asked if combining our tax sale with the County tax sale is an option to attract a greater number of potential buyers. Mr. Johnson explained he is willing to explore that option, but the County would also need to agree. Ms. Purdy said more research is being done on this topic, and she intends to discuss it with Council. Ms. Purdy explained the Restructuring Board may also be able to help with this idea.

OLD BUSINESS

1. Chairman Bean asked the Commission if anyone wanted to make a motion for any of the changes that have been discussed. Commissioner Loffler said he would like to discuss term limits but was not ready to make a motion. Commissioner O'Brien said he believes it would be premature to vote on changes at this point. Chairman Bean recommended Commissioners make note of any changes they intend to propose.

2. Chairman Bean asked when last year's proposed budget was released. City Manager Sarah Purdy said she had aimed for Columbus Day, but that deadline was not met. Ms. Purdy explained we need to have realistic budget figures, and the pension figures are not even released until August.

Commissioner O'Brien said our typical release date is at a very stressful time of the year, and it is a horrible time to prepare a budget. After much discussion, Ms. Purdy explained she plans to start budget reviews by the end of October and adopt a budget by the end of November.

3. Commissioner Cilley suggested changing the election districts back to wards. Chairman Bean said voting by wards worked for years. There was a lengthy discussion of the differences in time periods and the representation of the districts.

4. Chairman Bean said Ms. Purdy provided information to the Commission regarding residency requirements. Ms. Purdy explained this issue has been discussed by City Council, and they agreed with her recommendation not to have a residency requirement. Ms. Purdy explained that most households today have two working adults, and the family often lives closer to one's place of employment. Ms. Purdy explained making households relocate to Ogdensburg could result in the most qualified candidates not applying. Chairman Bean and Commissioner Wilson disagreed. Commissioner Wilson said if a person wants a job they will move to Ogdensburg and questioned how the City requires board members to be residents but not employees. Chairman Bean said the Police Chief should be a City resident and suggested going forward, the City institute a residency requirement. Ms. Purdy explained it is against New York State Public Officers Law to have a residency requirement for police and fire personnel.

Commissioner Loffler asked if the provisions of a provisional appointment would allow the new Assessor to go back to her previous position if she is not successful on the exam. Ms. Purdy said yes she will be able to return to her Assessment Clerk title.

5. Chairman Bean asked if the non-active boards are necessary. City Clerk Kathleen Bouchard explained some boards only meet if needed. Commissioner Cilley said those boards are actually active boards, and only meeting as required.

Commissioner McRoberts asked if the Commission could receive the meeting material in advance. Mrs. Bouchard explained it was emailed to everyone prior to the May 23rd meeting that was eventually cancelled. Commissioner McRoberts said he did not receive that material.

Ogdensburg Charter Review Commission

June 6, 2017

Page 4

6. Chairman Bean suggested changes to the Engineering language in the Charter, and Commissioner O'Brien agreed. Commissioner Cilley cautioned against deleting the Engineering Department, noting it is important for the City to have the ability to hire an engineer. Commissioner McRoberts asked if the City Manager acts as the City Engineer since there is not one currently. Chairman Bean said yes, just as she does for any department head. Commissioner McRoberts suggested moving the engineering responsibilities to the Department of Public Works if the City does not intend to hire an engineer anytime soon.

7. Commissioner Loffler asked if Council receives updates from the active boards. City Manager Sarah Purdy said yes, some more than others.

8. Commissioner O'Brien said the size of City Council has changed and mentioned that Watertown has five members. Commissioner O'Brien asked for Councillor Stevenson's opinion on the size of the Ogdensburg City Council.

***Commissioner McNamara arrived at this point in the meeting.*

Councillor Stevenson said she likes the current Council size because it is easier to get a quorum. Councillor Stevenson said she also likes that Council members are elected at large because each Councillor represents the public as a whole.

9. Commissioner O'Brien asked how the process will work for making changes to the Charter. Chairman Bean said eventually the Commission will make recommendations to Council.

10. Commissioner McNamara said he believes that the Mayor should be elected at large, along with one Councillor from each district to represent that district. Councillor Stevenson said Council represents the entire City, and some areas would suffer if we went back to election by each district. Councillor Stevenson explained the voters ultimately decide which candidates they want because they vote for the best candidates to represent all, and Council is stronger when elected at large. Commission Secretary Kathleen Bouchard said the information that Commissioner McNamara requested regarding wards/districts was provided to everyone earlier in this meeting.

11. Commissioner Loffler asked if the Executive Compensation Committee, Economic Development Committee and Audit Committee are all composed of Councillors. Councillor Stevenson said yes. Commissioner Loffler recommended these committees be included in the Charter so Council members are obligated to hold regular meetings. Commissioner O'Brien said all the committees should be consistent and be listed under each section of the Charter. Ms. Purdy stated City staff will provide a complete list of commissions and boards contained in the Municipal Code for the next meeting.

Ogdensburg Charter Review Commission

June 6, 2017

Page 5

NEW BUSINESS

1. Commissioner O'Brien questioned how the Commission was going to move forward. Chairman Bean suggested each Commissioner bring their suggestions to the table and we will be vote on each one. Commissioner Loffler suggested waiting until all department heads have presented their suggestions to the Commission. Commissioner O'Brien said he sees significant differences in the Fire and Police sections of the Charter, and the Fire Chief's responsibilities are not spelled out as clearly as the Police Chief.

2. Chairman Bean said the Commission meets again on June 22, 2017 at 6pm and suggested scheduling an early July meeting. There was a consensus of the Commission to schedule a meeting on July 11, 2017 at 6pm at the Dobisky Community Center.

3. Commissioner Loffler asked if Commissioners can obtain a hard copy of the meeting material in advance of the next meeting. Secretary Kathleen Bouchard said meeting packets will be available for pickup at the City Clerk's Office the Friday prior to the meeting.

On a motion duly made and seconded, the meeting was adjourned.