

CHARTER REVIEW COMMISSION

A meeting of the Charter Review Commission was held on Wednesday, January 15, 2020 in the Cranston High School West Auditorium, 80 Metropolitan Ave., Cranston, Rhode Island.

1. Call the meeting to order:

The meeting was called to order at 6:00 P.M. by the Chairman.

Present: Michael Lepizzera, Esq., Matthew Pallini; Steven Frias, Chair, Ellen O'Hara, Vice-Chair; Dan DosSantos, Katie Nee, Esq., Edward Coccio, Evan Kirshenbaum, Esq., Joseph Agresti and Matthew Reilly, Esq.

Absent: Robert Santurri, Jr.

Chair stated that he received an e-mail from Mr. Santurri indicating that, due to an unexpected obligation, he will not be able to attend this meeting.

2. Approval of the minutes of the last meeting:

On motion by Mr. Kirshenbaum, seconded by Mr. Agresti, it was voted to dispense with the reading of the minutes of the last meeting and they stand approved as recorded. Motion passed unanimously.

Chair stated that since the last meeting, the Commission received the following public comment in writing:

- Correspondence dated 12/2/2019 from Steven Brown of the ACLU regarding counting of ACI Inmates for purposes of redistricting.
- Correspondence dated 12/11/2019 from Mayor Fung in opposition to Mr. Brown's comments.

3. Public Comment:

Chair asked for public comments.

Councilmember Steven Stycos, 37 Ferncrest Ave., appeared to speak and stated that the Democratic members of the City Council met and discussed some of the proposed changes to the Charter made by the Mayor and some others by the Democratic Members of the Council. Councilmember Stycos highlighted the following proposed changes by the Mayor and the Democratic Members of the Council's opinion on them:

- Eliminate City campaign contribution filings: they support that proposal because you can get all of it online.
- Notify Council of special meetings by e-mail, not registered mail: they support that proposal because that is being done now.

- Allow the Mayor to veto the whole Budget: they do not support that proposal.
- Allow the Mayor to veto Budget decreases: they support that proposal.
- Allow fourth quarter transfers in the first quarter of the next Fiscal Year: they do not support that proposal. Councilmember Stycos stated that, unfortunately, that is being done now and he has objected to that practice, and gives the Mayor huge power to spend as much as he wants for whatever he wants.
- Emergency appropriations allowed by the Mayor without City Council approval: they do not support that proposal. Councilmember Stycos stated that there is nothing of an emergency that the City Council could not meet to approve. The City Council can meet on a 48-hour notice.
- Mandatory 5 percent minimum surplus: they oppose that proposal.
- Limiting tax levy to 3 percent annual increase: they oppose that proposal. Councilmember Stycos stated that State Law has a 4 percent cap and sometimes you need to go higher than 4 percent.
- Consolidating School and City purchasing: they do not have a position on that proposal and more information is needed.
- Increase minimum purchase without competitive bidding from \$1,000 to \$5,000. They do not have a position on that proposal, but are skeptical and would like more information on that.
- Solicitor being a non-resident: they support that proposal.
- Reduce Comprehensive Plan advertising: they support that proposal with a reasonable adjustment.

Councilmember Stycos stated the following proposed changes by the Democratic Council Members:

- Eliminate prison population when redistricting: they would support that proposal and also support the ACLU's position on this.
- School Committee pay set by City Council: they would support paying the School Committee Members: they would suggest that the pay would be set by the City Council.
- Delay deadline for budget passage two or three weeks after State May revenue estimating conference: they would support that change in general. Councilmember Stycos stated that the Charter currently states that the budget be introduced by April 1st and it is to be approved by May 15th. He indicated that you never know for sure what State Aid is going to be. They would support moving that timetable for considering the budget to closer to the end of the Fiscal Year. This would have to be discussed with the Finance Director to see if moving the timetable to the end of the Fiscal Year would be a problem. **Ms. Nee** asked if there would be a financial impact by doing this. Councilmember Stycos stated that he does not know.

Chair asked Councilmember Stycos to e-mail the proposals he addressed to the Clerk and she can forward them to the Commission members.

4. Scheduling of additional meetings and public hearings

Discussion took place on date for next meeting.

Chair suggested meeting on February 5th at 6 p.m. in the City Hall Council Chambers and if this date is not available, the Clerk will notify him and another date will be determined. Committee Members present agreed to holding the next meeting on February 5th.

Chair stated that Ms. Nee has asked him of the possibility of allowing proxy voting or teleprompting voting when the time comes due to her expecting a baby in a few months. He stated that he will look into this and he would also have to look into the Open Meetings Law.

5. Discussion of possible changes to the City Charter

Chair suggested taking a few Chapters of the Charter at each meeting. He suggested that the February meeting, the Commission take Chapters 1-5.

Chair asked that if a Commission member has a proposal and would like it voted on, the member forward him and the Clerk the proposal at least one week before the February meeting so it can be placed on the agenda.

Chair stated he will be proposing an amendment related to the Mayor's veto powers consistent with what the Mayor recommended and a redistricting amendment based on what John Marion of Common Cause suggested.

Mr. DosSantos stated that he would like the issue of the term for City Council to be increased from the two years to four years be placed on the February agenda to be discussed and possible vote.

Ms. Nee stated that she would like the issue of the ACI Inmates be placed on the February agenda to be discussed and possible vote.

Chair stated that the Commission will vote on the items and at the end, the Commission will make a decision of what will be forwarded to the City Council and possibly be placed on the ballot for the 2020 Election.

The meeting adjourned at 6:55 P.M.

Respectfully submitted,

Rosalba Zanni
Assistant City Clerk/Clerk of Committees