



City of Tacoma

Charter Review Committee Minutes

February 29, 2024

5:30 p.m.

747 Market Street, Tacoma WA 98402, Conference Room 243

Dial: 253-215-8782 Meeting ID: 915 2560 1849

Webinar Link: <https://www.zoom.us/j/91525601849>

Call to Order

Chair Wamback called the meeting to order at 5:34 p.m.

Roll Call

Present: 13 - Katie Baird, Nicholas Carr, Maricres Castro, Silong Chhun, Patrick Fischer, Bryan Flint, Jason Gauthier, Andre Jimenez, Melissa Malott, Andrea Reay, Rebecca Stith, Stephen Wamback and Lok Yin Wu

Absent: 2 – Latasha Palmer (excused) and Diamatris Winston

Committee Member Winston arrived at 6:35 p.m.

Committee Members Chhun, Flint, Jimenez, Winston, and Wu attended virtually.

Committee Member Castro initially joined virtually and then arrived in person at 6:15 p.m.

Approval of Minutes

The Committee asked clarifying questions regarding the content of the proposed minutes and proposed minor changes to the February 5, and February 8, 2024, minutes. Discussion ensued on the proposed changes, and the minutes were then adopted.

Public Comment

There was no Public Comment.

CRC Discussion and Recommendations

Form of Government and Council/Mayor Issues

At approximately 5:47 p.m., Chair Wamback opened the discussion on form of government focusing on Council/Mayor issues. Chair Wamback went over topics the Committee had general consensus on from previous discussions such as term limits, full-time Council, the authority to hire their own staff, as well as the possibility of hiring independent counsel.

Discussion continued on the idea of an ombudsman or independent auditor reporting to the Council, options to empower Council to ensure their effectiveness and that they are compensated fairly, the Citizen Commission on Elected Salaries (CCES) and how the Charter language is inconsistent with State law. Chair Wamback then reviewed other topics related to Council such as number of Council meetings, continuing a meeting without a quorum, official newspaper of the City, Council investigative language not in the administrative section, penalties for non-compliance, initiative process, referendum on ordinances, why must the Council review a recommended amendment before they go to a public vote, changing the word “freeholder” in the Charter and neighborhood Council.

Committee Member Winston arrived here, at 6:35 p.m.

After discussion, the Committee as a Whole agreed on five proposals related to the Council. Those topics are clarification on term limits, moving towards a full-time Council, giving Council authority to hire staff, fixing language around CCES to match State law, and fixing language in Section 2.25 relating to the review of the Charter.

Break

The meeting recessed at 7:00 p.m.

The meeting reconvened at 7:13 p.m.

CRC Discussion and Recommendations

Form of Government and Council/Mayor Issues

At approximately 7:13 p.m., Chair Wamback reopened discussion on form of government and Council/Mayor issues, focusing on the five Council-related proposals the Committee as a Whole identified.

The first discussed was a proposed language change to Section 2.25 of the Charter. The Committee proposed a change to the word “freeholder” whenever it is substantially mentioned in the Charter. A similar request was made for the word “citizen” versus “resident.” Thumb vote was taken and carried. The motion was declared adopted by unanimous consent. The Committee agreed to move this proposal forward to staff for legal analysis and language drafting.

Discussion then moved to the proposed language change around the CCES and how language in the Charter is inconsistent with State law. Thumb vote was taken and carried. The motion was declared adopted by unanimous consent. The Committee agreed to move this proposal forward to staff for legal analysis and language drafting.

The Committee discussion then moved to the proposal of Council hiring their own staff. Members suggested using the language from the 2014 Charter Review Committee as a starting point. Thumb vote was taken and carried. The motion was declared adopted by unanimous consent. The Committee agreed to move this proposal forward to staff for legal analysis and language drafting. A supplemental idea of having the City Clerk report directly to the Council

was suggested. The Committee requested legal opinion on the ramification of this possibility. Thumb vote was taken and carried. The request was declared failed due to lack of support.

The Committee as a Whole then discussed the proposal to add language in the Charter to make Council full-time.

MOTION: Gauthier moved that staff draft language to create full-time Council with appropriate salary and benefits.

SECONDED BY: Carr.

ACTION: Thumb vote was taken and carried. The motion was declared adopted by unanimous consent.

The last proposal up for Committee discussion was the topic of term limits. Committee Member Carr proposed for staff to draft language on three terms for Council Member and two terms for Mayor and eliminating the 10-year language. Discussion ensued on the pros and cons on elected officials being in power for long periods of time. Thumb vote was taken and carried. The motion was declared adopted by unanimous consent. The Committee agreed to move this proposal forward to staff to draft language and perform legal analysis.

Upcoming Meeting Planning

At approximately 7:59 p.m., Chair Wamback discussed the updated timeline. Chair Wamback explained his vision on workflow, and his goal that by the next extended public comment meeting, the Committee will have recommendations drafted for the public to comment on. The Chair reminded members the topic for the next meeting is exclusively on form of government.

The Committee agreed the next extended public comment meeting will be in Council Chambers, and scheduled for Thursday, April 18, 2024. Discussion ensued on feedback from the community who participated and translation of the Committee's work.

Chair Wamback requested all Committee requests for staff assistance are channeled through him.

Other Business and Homework

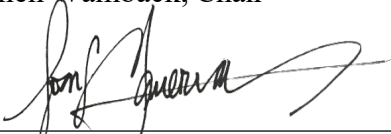
At approximately 8:37 p.m., Chair Wamback requested the Committee reach out to the Council Member who nominated them and request a sit down to chat and give a quick update on the work done by the Committee so far. Those who were selected through the study session appointment process were asked to reach out to a Council Member of their choosing, and staff can assist in connecting them.

Adjournment

There being no further business, the meeting was adjourned at 8:41 p.m.



Stephen Wamback, Chair



Joan Taverna, City Clerk's Office