



City of Tacoma

Charter Review Committee Minutes

March 25, 2024

5:30 p.m.

747 Market Street, Tacoma WA 98402, Conference Room 220A

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 5:33 p.m.

Roll Call

Present: 10 – Nicholas Carr, Patrick Fischer, Bryan Flint, Jason Gauthier, Andre Jimenez, Melissa Malott, Latasha Palmer, Andrea Reay, Stephen Wamback, and Lok Yin Wu

Absent: 5 – Katie Baird (excused), Maricres Castro, Silong Chhun (excused), Rebecca Stith (excused), and Diamtris Winston

Committee Member Castro arrived at 5:35 p.m. and Committee Member Winston arrived at 5:47 p.m.

All Committee Members participated virtually.

Welcome

Chair Wamback requested to modify the agenda and reverse Items 6 and 7.

Committee Member Castro arrived here, at 5:35 p.m.

Approval of Minutes

Committee Members discussed draft language sent to staff versus back to the Subcommittee for review. The minutes from the March 7, and March 11, 2024, meetings were approved.

Public Comment

There was no Public Comment.

Miscellaneous Subcommittee Report

Disposition of City Owned Property

At approximately 5:38 p.m., Chair Wamback turned the floor over to Gauthier to present for the Miscellaneous Subcommittee. Gauthier presented on the disposition of City owned property which is in Section 9.1 of the Charter. The Subcommittee proposed amendment was to add language in the Charter that would allow the City to sell or dispose of waterfront property to public agencies with guaranteed public access, use, and benefit. With this proposal the Subcommittee aims to align the Charter with the City’s long-term goal of providing public access and use and benefit to publicly owned waterfront property through the transfer of waterfront property to other public agencies for management.

Gauthier started out his presentation by answering questions brought forth by Committee Members at a previous presentation such as, clarity on the City’s definition/interpretation of “public use, access, and benefit”, shoreline management act, real estate contracts between the City and Puyallup Tribe, and questions on City’s surplus land policy. Towards the end of his presentation Gauthier mentioned that Hunter George, from Metro Parks Tacoma, and Steve Victor, Chief Deputy City Attorney, are on hand to help answer questions from the Committee.

Discussion ensued on waterfront property land leases, tribal land trust, how the “guaranteed purposes of perpetual” language can ensure future access, and other possible language options to ensure future access to shoreline properties.

MOTION: Carr moved to forward the recommendation to staff for review and drafting.

SECONDED BY: Jimenez

ACTION: Voice vote was taken and carried. The motion was declared adopted by majority consent with Malott and Reay abstaining.

Police Accountability Subcommittee Report

Police Accountability

At approximately 6:00 p.m., Jimenez presented the topic of police accountability to the Committee as a Whole. He reintroduced the problem statement the Subcommittee created to guide them through their work on tackling the police accountability issue. Jimenez took a step back to address some concerns brought up by the Committee during the prior presentation of this topic. He then presented the Subcommittee’s new proposed language recommendation to create a section in the Charter for the Office of Police Accountability and oversight committee. Jimenez then presented the proposed language, composed of four paragraphs which talked about the establishment and staffing of the committee, authority of the committee, exercising the committee’s authority, and interactions with the Office of Police Accountability and oversight committee both internally and externally.

Discussion ensued on formally recognizing the Community's Police Advisory Committee's prior work on the issue, legislative power to actually get full access to information, language change from police to policing, the necessity of placing this in the Charter, appointment terms, direct link between the committee and the Office of Police Accountability, and the change from a broad oversight committee to the Office of Police Accountability.

MOTION: Carr moved to advance the recommendation to staff for legal review and drafting.

SECONDED BY: Flint

ACTION: Voice vote was taken and carried. The motion was declared adopted by majority consent with Reay abstaining.

Power of the People Subcommittee Report

At approximately 6:25 p.m., Chair Wamback opened the conversation by reminding the group that this the first presentation on topics from the Power of the People Subcommittee and with three Committee Members absent, it may not be possible to move these recommendations to staff.

Campaign Finance

At approximately 6:28 p.m., Palmer started out her presentation for the Power of the People Subcommittee on the topic of campaign finance and recognized the individuals who helped the Subcommittee in tackling their topics. Palmer then introduced the Subcommittee's first proposed recommendation which is democracy vouchers. The goal is to empower residents to support campaigns, run for office, and empower the City Council through an expanded diverse candidate pool.

Palmer gave a brief explanation on democracy vouchers and then asked her guests Cindy Black from Fix Democracy First and Jazmine Smith from Washington Bus to share their thoughts and experiences with democracy vouchers. Both highlighted positive results such as increased public involvement and engagement in the process, expanded diverse candidate pool, direct interaction between candidates and constituents, and an increase in voter turnout.

Palmer then continued with her presentation discussing some of the benefits of democracy vouchers such as it's been widely used by candidates in Seattle, increased donation percentage, diversification of donor class, increased likelihood to vote, and makes campaigns affordable and competitive. She then presented the Charter language recommendation by the Subcommittee for democracy vouchers and added that a creation of an Elections Commission is required to oversee the creation and implementation of a democracy vouchers program.

Discussion ensued on funding the implementation of democracy dollars, what's included in the cost, is there prohibition in the current Charter to implement, different forms of public financing, using democracy dollars versus regular campaign donation, is the Charter the right vehicle for this program, process guidance on whether or not democracy dollars can be done through

Charter or ordinances, can the Pierce County Auditor facilitate the implementation in Tacoma, lessons learned from years of implementing this in Seattle, resources available, has this topic been brought to Council's attention, understanding the fiscal impacts, and possibly including this in the Committee's final report but not in the Charter.

Break

The meeting recessed at 7:11 p.m.

The meeting reconvened at 7:25 p.m.

Power of the People Subcommittee (Continued)

Charter Review

At approximately 7:25 p.m., Palmer continued with the Power of the People Subcommittee's presentation on Section 2.25 of the Charter and the Subcommittee's recommendation is to change the time interval between Charter reviews. Palmer then presented the proposed language to reflect the suggested Subcommittee updates including changing the word commence to conclude, reducing the review process frequency from 10-year to 9-year intervals, changing the word citizen to residents, changing the word freeholders to electors, as well as the addition of language to increase the timeframe of the review process to 12 months and the Committee's ability to revise and/or appeal, reject, or modify recommended amendments.

Discussion ensued on the suggested length of time for the review process, collective bargaining agreement provision and language, residency requirements, balancing empowering the Council and residents, possible language to increase the frequency of the review process, publishing the Charter report, document accessibility/source material translation, and increasing the length of time to review the Charter could increase participation especially to those who have limited time available to do the work.

After Committee discussion, the Subcommittee took the topic back for further work. Palmer requested for Committee Members to email her their suggestions for the Subcommittee to review, discuss, and possibly include in their recommendation.

Initiative and Referendum

At approximately 8:00 p.m., Jimenez presented on the initiative and referendum process for the Power of the People Subcommittee. The Subcommittee's recommendation is to increase the number of days to collect signatures from registered voters in Section 2.20 of the Charter and adding language in Section 2.22 that addresses competing initiatives, legal fees, and declaratory judgement.

Discussion ensued on the work the Committee is doing to empower Council and changes in the initiative and referendum process could undermine that work, lessening the burden to the public in the initiative and referendum process, implementation challenges, clarity on ordinances that are not effective immediately, and possible legal challenges.

Other Subcommittee Reports and Discussion

At approximately 8:29 p.m., Chair asked the Committee for items up for discussion at the next meeting. Some of the topics are the continuation of the Power of the People Subcommittee presentation, Climate Commission from the Administrative Subcommittee and possibly an item from the Police Accountability Subcommittee. Form of Government Subcommittee briefly reported on the topic of transition that the Subcommittee is working on.

Staff Update

No update from staff.

Other Business and Homework

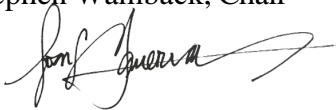
No other business and homework.

Adjournment

There being no further business, the meeting was adjourned at 8:36 p.m.



Stephen Wamback, Chair



Joan Taverna, City Clerk's Office