

City of Clearwater

*Main Library - Council Chambers
100 N. Osceola Avenue
Clearwater, FL 33755*



Meeting Minutes

Wednesday, September 13, 2023

4:00 PM

City Hall Offices - 600 Cleveland Street, 6th Floor

Charter Review Committee

Roll Call

Present:7 - Gladys Andrews, Bill Jonson, Travis Norton, Ryan Cotton, Mike Riordon, Cory Chase, and Jonathan Wade

Absent: 4 - Nathan Hightower, Karen Cunningham, Patricia Rodriguez, and Kathy Milam

Also Present: – David Margolis – City Attorney, Rosemarie Call – City Clerk, and Nicole Sprague – Deputy City Clerk

1. Call To Order

The meeting was called to order at 4:11 p.m. at City Hall Offices, 600 Cleveland St. Ste 600, Clearwater

2. New Business

2.1 Districting Presentation - Kurt Spitzer

Consultant Kurt Spitzer provided a PowerPoint presentation. He reviewed common types of district systems and said Pinellas County has a hybrid system of four single member districts and three at-large seats. This system allowed the County to create a minority influence district in the southern portion of the County. He said this system allows for the majority of the electors to vote for the majority of the commission, the three at-large seats and one single member district seat.

In response to questions, Mr. Spitzer said policy decisions would have to be made, for example, how many districts are needed, before research may begin. He said community data is loaded into software where it can be determined if it is possible to create districts. He said the time-consuming part is getting council and community consensus. He said a true minority majority district may not be possible to draw but there are other factors, such as economic status, to consider when drawing district lines. He said he does not think districts lead to partisanship. He said creating districts does not involve party affiliations. He said the cost to create districts ranges between \$30,000 - \$50,000.

Discussion ensued with a comments made that artificial intelligence (AI) could be used to create districts. It was said that it would be worthwhile to recommend to Council to conduct a feasibility study to include single member districts and expanding the Council to include minorities. It was said that running in an at-large race without districts and a March election, those who get Chamber of Commerce support and support from other organizations will have a better chance of getting their name out to the

public. Those that do not have name recognition or are not known in the community will have a harder time raising funds. Districts might open up an opportunity for a minority to get elected.

Discussion ensued regarding Council's discussion regarding run-off elections at the work session on September 5, 2023. A comment was made that Council knew the Charter Review Committee had discussed the issue and had voted down the idea. It was said the Committee should draft a letter of concern to Council to let them know the Committee does not feel like they are being heard.

Concerns were expressed that Council provided the City Attorney direction to draft ballot language at a work session where public input is not taken. It was said that because no vote by Council was expected, the work session was an appropriate place for Council to discuss the issue and provide feedback. There was Council consensus for the City Attorney to draft ballot language at that work session which will come back as an ordinance that will have two public hearings.

The City Attorney said he will present Council with ballot language in October for the March 2024 ballot, if approved.

Member Andrews moved to write a letter to City Council expressing the Committee's dissatisfaction with Council not waiting for completion of discussion and recommendations from the Charter Review Committee, knowing that election process discussions are in process. The motion was duly seconded and carried unanimously.

2.2 Discuss amending the charter to include language that requires continuing education for elected officials.

Vice Chair Jonson provided draft charter verbiage regarding continuing education for elected officials. He said he wants Council to follow a professional governance process that considers facts and alternatives.

In response to questions, Mr. Jonson said it would help Council better understand the budget process and benchmarking data from other cities. New councilmembers need to understand the importance of setting strategies.

A concern was expressed that Council is a part-time job and imposing additional education requirements could be a burden and that less younger people would pursue running for office.

A comment was made that continuing education should be encouraged and that newly elected officials should be made aware of the education resources that are available.

Member Wade moved to recommend to Council that they discuss continuing education for new councilmembers from Florida League of Cities and FEMA. The motion was duly seconded and carried unanimously.

- 2.3** Discuss modifying language addressing the removal of the city manager, addressing the uncertainty of the Manager’s decisions during the interim between the two separate meetings when only three councilmembers vote initially for termination (place city manager on administrative leave and appoint acting city manager).

Discussion deferred to the next meeting.

3. Citizens to be heard regarding items not on the agenda: None.

4. Adjournment

The meeting adjourned at 5:35 p.m.

Chair, Charter Review Committee

Attest:

City Clerk