

Clearwater Charter Review Committee 2019

Summary Report

The Charter Review Committee is composed of thirteen citizen volunteers appointed by City Council. The Committee has met on the second and fourth Wednesday since February 11, 2019 and has reviewed every section of the current charter, including the two issues City Council requested the Committee to pay particular attention.

The Committee spent eight meetings reviewing and discussing districting and voting systems, which included two presentations from Dr. Scott Paine of the Florida League of Cities and demographic information from City staff. A public meeting was held on July 10 at which the public was invited to provide input regarding the City's form of representation and election and alternatives. After much deliberation and discussion, the Committee decided not to amend the city's current form of representation. This was not a unanimous decision. The Committee could not come to an agreement on district representation. The Committee also spent considerable time discussing councilmember salaries; there was consensus not to recommend increasing the salaries based on the current duties outlined in the charter.

The following is a summary of the Committee's recommendations:

Article II – Legislative Power

Section 2.01

- Increase the number of councilmembers to seven, including the mayor, and all elected at-large.
- Include language requiring Council to establish annual measurable goals and priorities for the city manager.
- Include language requiring each Council to evaluate the City Manager based on specific criteria designated by Council.
- Include language that increases the amount of property (5 acres) that can be donated or sold for less than fair market value for workforce or affordable housing and uneconomic remainders of land to be sold to an abutting property owner without a bid requirement.
- Remove language pertaining to negotiating a lease with the Clearwater Marine Aquarium as it is no longer pertinent.
- Include language to research and report the environmental impact of all decisions with the goal of reducing our energy consumption, waste generation, our dependence on fossil fuels and production of greenhouse gasses. The intent is to include such statement in agenda items.

Section 2.06

- Increase the timeframe present and former councilmembers may hold any compensated appointed city office or employment to two years after the expiration of the term for which the council member was elected, to be consistent with state law.

Section 3.03

- Require the city manager to present an annual comprehensive report on the financial condition and administration activities of the city at the first council meeting in November instead of September, to include the status of the established goals and priorities.

Section 7.02

- Increase the time between when the charter is reviewed to eight years.

Recommendations of the Committee

The Committee recommends Council consider instituting an independent ombudsman to evaluate disputed proposed developments, educate the residents on process and issues, and potentially represent the residents where appropriate.