



July 26, 2016

CITY OF SARATOGA SPRINGS
City Charter Review Commission
Music Hall – 3rd Floor
7:00 PM

7:00 PM

CALL TO ORDER

ROLL CALL

SALUTE TO FLAG

WELCOME AND ANNOUNCEMENTS

INTRODUCTORY REMARKS

MINUTES

PUBLIC OUTREACH AND EDUCATION

CHARTER ROADMAP

COMMITTEES

ADJOURN



July 26, 2016

CITY OF SARATOGA SPRINGS
City Charter Review Commission
City Council Room – City Hall
7:00 PM

PRESENT: Jeff Altamari
Ann Casey Bullock
Gordon Boyd
Laura Chodos
Elio DelSette
Devin Dal Pos
Matt Jones
Pat Kane
BK Keramati
Mike Los
Minita Sanghvi
Barbara Thomas
Robert Turner

ABSENT: Robert Kuczynski
Beth Wurtmann

STAFF: Tony Izzo

RECORDING OF PROCEEDING

The proceedings of this meeting were taped for the benefit of the secretary. Because the minutes are not a verbatim record of the proceedings, the minutes are not a word-for-word transcript.

CALL TO ORDER

Chairman Robert Turner called the meeting to order at 7:00 p.m.

MINUTES

Ann Bullock moved and Pat Kane seconded to approve the June 28, 2016, meeting minutes. There was one minor correction. Ayes all.

Ann Bullock moved and Pat Kane seconded to approve the July 12, 2016, meeting minutes. There were a few minor corrections. Ayes all

PUBLIC OUTREACH

Minita Sanghvi said she and Beth Wurtmann had been working on the Facebook page. It is not yet live. Items to be included on the page are: the charge to the commission, link to the City Charter, link to other city charters, agenda, minutes and "events" page. She said PDFs cannot be loaded to Facebook, however, the link to the PDF could be. The proposed blog page would be used for greater detail on matters of interest. The Twitter account has not yet been opened. She said after meetings, some post meeting information would be sent to the newspapers.

Minita Sanghvi said there needed to be some discussion on who is in charge of what social media accounts. There also needed to be some discussion on monitoring the comments. BK Keramati asked if those people commenting could be identified as City residents – it would make for an easier job of taking their comments more seriously. Minita Sanghvi said it was not possible to identify where the person who is commenting lives.

BK Keramati moved and Elio DelSette seconded that it be made clear on the Facebook page that if someone wanted to comment and to have their comments be considered, they must include their name and how to reach them.

Bob Turner said there are two goals concerning social media outlets: 1) to keep the public informed on what is happening during this process and 2) to provide the public with the opportunity to give their opinion or thoughts. He suggested it might be appropriate to have an email address where individuals could forward their thoughts. Minita Sanghvi said there is a Saratoga Springs Charter Commission Gmail account and that email address could be listed on the Facebook page.

Gordon Boyd said he leaned towards letting anyone comment. He said there are lots of people who do business in the City, vacation here, work here, pay taxes here but live somewhere else, etc. Facebook is a place for people to have their voices heard and we should not be restrictive. He said there is a risk that Commission members spend too much time responding to comments rather than doing the charge to the Commission. Barb Thomas agreed. She said we must remember that the comments made are not representative of all the residents.

Elio DelSette expressed concern that because it is difficult to distinguish where people live that we could become discriminatory when reading their comments.

BK Keramati said the use of an email account might be the way to go.

Bob Turner asked about monitoring the site. He said if we start monitoring and curating the site, then it becomes biased and we could open ourselves up to some problems. He said often in the social media the sites are taken over by negative comments and polarizing debates which drives out discussion. He said he simply wanted input. He reminded everyone that there was a previous blogger in the City who terrorized a number of people. He said he wanted input from the public but wasn't quite sure that this was the best way to get it.

Tony Izzo said according to the Freedom on Information Law, anything that gets sent from email or social media accounts could be considered public information and subject to the FOIL laws. He said if the

Commission was to arbitrarily delete items from the social media accounts, it becomes a problem under the Freedom of Information Law.

Minita Sanghvi said it seemed there were two ways to go: 1) Have the accounts completely open for anyone to comment without monitoring, or 2) Use these outlets to post information and not to allow any comment.

Minita Sanghvi moved to amend the prior motion that the Facebook page will be closed to comments and that the email address will be included on the Facebook page so that comments could be directed to the Commission in that manner. There was no second

BK Keramati and Elio DelSette agreed to rescind their prior motion.

Pat Kane moved and Devan Delpas seconded that there be no public posting of comments on Facebook. Ayes all.

Tony Izzo said again anything that the Commission puts out on social media becomes a public document. He said communication through email were appropriate. Bob Turner said he did not believe that the blog was the place for discussion, but rather a place for information to be placed and to provide links to documents for those interested.

BK Keramati moved that the documents that are important to the Charter Commission be on the City website. Bob Turner said that they are, or will be, on the City's web site. BK Keramati asked what was the wisdom to including links to other charters. He said that once we put those links out there, people will think that is what we are considering. He said there needed to be some deliberation on what goes out on social media. There was no second to the motion.

Pat Kane said that we need to take a step back here Minita Sanghvi said that no information has been put out on Facebook yet that wasn't already public information.

Minita Sanghvi moved and Laura Chodos seconded that there will be no public comments allowed on the blog. Ayes all.

After some discussion, it was agreed there would not be a Twitter account right now.

Pat Kane asked if he used his personal Facebook to say something about the Charter Commission could that become considered a public document. Tony Izzo said if Pat Kane was to discuss in detail the business of the Charter Commission, then it was likely that it would be a public document, however, he said he would do some research on that to be sure. He said he would talk to Bob Freeman on this as well.

Bob Turner said the Facebook page should be used to educate the public through agendas, minutes, links to pertinent information, etc.

Barb Thomas said we need to invite people to "like" the Facebook page.

Jeff Altamira asked how it should be handled when people inquire about the Charter Commission's work. Tony Izzo said members should respond in a generic sense without specific analysis and/or opinion. He said it is best to direct them to the public documents.

Gordon Boyd asked when the Facebook page would go live. Minita Sanghvi said it could be live tomorrow.

ROAD MAP

BK Keramati reviewed the conceptual roadmap. He said by no means was this complete. It is a starting point. Items to be added include plans, actions, milestones and dates, etc. We need to review the existing

charter, alternative charters and engage the public. He said reviewing the existing charter and looking at alternative charters must happen on parallel tracks. There is simply not enough time to review the existing charter and then look at alternative charters. He asked if there were other things that should be happening at the same time? It is time for a plan and the public needs to know what the plan is.

Jeff Altamari said poor planning produces a poor product. He said this roadmap is conceptual but recommended that we use this as the starting point. He suggested that it might be necessary to hold a meeting on a Saturday morning for three or four hours, working backwards on the time line. Responsibilities needs to be assigned and there needs to be delivery dates.

Pat Kane agreed. Elio DelSette said this was a nice plan, however, there was agreement at previous meetings that we would review the existing charter before moving on to looking at other charters. He said it seemed to him that decisions had already been made that the existing charter is ineffective. He disagreed and said a complete study of the existing charter needs to be done in order for the Commission to be successful. Jeff Altamari said we must review the existing charter, but he also believed that having a parallel track at the same time reviewing other charters was prudent. Elio DelSette said he did not believe that we could adhere to timelines as it was difficult to do so at these meetings. He again said that we need to study the existing charter to be sure that it is or is not functioning well.

Pat Kane distributed copies of the US Constitution saying that it is only 19 pages and our charter is 52 pages. He believed the charter could be leaner.

Gordon Boyd said this road map sets the stage for review. He said we need to get started and this was a good pathway.

Devin Dal Pos asked at what meeting did the Commission agree to review the existing charter. He said that this roadmap makes sense. He said the Commission does not have a lot of time and it is important to not shortchange the residents.

Laura Chodos said a Saturday morning meeting was a good idea.

Elio DelSette asked if any of the Commission members had read the 1916 charter. He said the size of the document is irrelevant. He said the Chair of this Commission asked that all Commission members do their due diligence and study the existing charter.

Barbara Thomas said that Elio DelSette was making the assumption that Commission members had not read the charter. She said that is not so. She said she liked the idea of doing a parallel review.

BK Keramati agreed that Commission members need to study the existing charter, identify the issues and bring questions forward. He said though that more needs to be done on a parallel track. He said Commission members could be split among the tracks to make better use of time.

Matt Jones said the roadmap makes sense.

Matt Jones moved and Gordon Boyd seconded to adopt the conceptual road map.

Jeff Altamari said we need to set a timetable and assign responsibilities. He said through diligence and monitoring we can stay on time.

Bob Turner said we need to let the public know that this is what we are doing – review of the existing charter, looking at alternatives and keeping the public involved.

Elio DelSette moved to amend the motion to stay with what the Commission was doing from the beginning by reviewing the existing charter first and then looking at alternatives. There was no second.

Roll call vote: Jeff Altamari aye

Ann Casey Bullock	aye
Gordon Boyd	aye
Laura Chodos	aye
Elio DelSette	nay
Devin Dal Pos	aye
Matt Jones	aye
Pat Kane	aye
BK Keramati	aye
Mike Los	aye
Minita Sanghvi	aye
Barbara Thomas	aye
Robert Turner	aye

Motion carried.

Pat Kane said the existing charter could be made easier to read. He believed there was a lot of unnecessary information, i.e. salaries and job duties, etc.. Tony Izzo pointed out that salaries need to be included in the charter or done by local law. Pat Kane said that being so it could be made simpler.

Gordon Boyd said we don't quite know where we stand compared to other cities. He said we could make changes to the existing charter, but there might be some very good ideas out there that should be explored. He suggested that at one of the September meetings we have a roundtable discussion on that matter.

Bob Turner said the real advantage of the roadmap allows us to create separate work groups to study specific issues.

Jeff Altamari said we need to talk to current and past officials. We need to brainstorm and develop a plan.

Bob Turner suggested that could be done. He said he could get a room at Skidmore. Elio DelSette asked if it would be an open meeting. Tony Izzo said if there is a majority, then it must be an open meeting. He said it could be a meeting of a designated subgroup of the Commission, but a specific purpose and the members would need to be identified.

It was agreed that a subgroup of seven members would meet next Tuesday evening between 6:00 p.m. and 9:00 p.m. for a planning workshop. The group would consist of Pat Kane, Matt Jones, Laura Chodos, Jeff Altamari, Devin Dal Pos, BK Keramati and Bob Turner.

Pat Kane moved and BK Keramati seconded to invite all of the living mayors to attend the August 9 Charter Commission meeting.

Bob Turner said we need to have a list of questions for Mayors to review before coming to the meeting. He said those questions could be identified from existing documents.

Elio DelSette asked about having Deputy Commissioners attending the meeting. Bob Turner said we should start with elected officials. Elio DelSette said the Deputies are the workhorses and they have the most contact with the public.

Ayes all.

Tony Izzo said that learning about the charter takes more than just reading it. The interviews will afford the Commission members the opportunity to gain knowledge that cannot be gleaned from reading the charter. He said about two years ago, there was a meeting at the library entitled "On Being Mayor". He said all of the living Mayors attended that meeting. The video is available on You Tube. Bob Turner suggested it might be something good for Commission members to watch. Minita Sanghvi said she would place the link to the You Tube video on the Facebook page.

ADJOURNMENT

Pat Kane moved and Barbara Thomas seconded to adjourn the meeting at 8:50 p.m. Ayes all. There being no further business, Chairman Turner adjourned the meeting at 8:50 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Katherine A. Moran
Clerk