

Present:

Vince DeLeonardis, Chairman
Deputy Commissioner Michael Sharp, Vice Chairman
Deputy Commissioner John Daley, Secretary
Commissioner Peter Martin
Commissioner Michele Madigan
Commissioner Skip Scirocco
Deputy Mayor Lisa Shields
Deputy Commissioner Joseph O'Neill
Deputy Commissioner Maire Masterson

Absent:

Commissioner John Franck

Recording of Proceeding

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

Call to Order

Chairman Vince DeLeonardis called the meeting to order at 4:32 PM.

Welcome and Announcements

V. DeLeonardis announced that J. Daley would take the minutes for this first meeting and the Commission would be hiring a clerk to take the minutes at future meetings.

T. Izzo delivered oaths of office to the members of the Commission for signature.

V. DeLeonardis delivered an opening statement. The certificate filed by the mayor creating the Commission states that this Commission should only consider changes that result in the retention of the commission form of government. The Charter Commission has the power to recommend the addition or abolition of offices, powers, or employees. He stated that the Commission will present its recommendations for consideration by voters in the November 2018 general election. He pointed out that these meetings will contain a supermajority of the members of the City Council and, as such, they will be treated as city council meetings. However, he asked that all council members agree not to discuss or make any motions related to any city business besides the charter. The council members present agreed to this.

M. Madigan agreed, and requested that the Commission limit public comment at its meetings to the topic of the charter. V. DeLeonardis said public comment at charter commission meetings would be limited only to discussion of the charter.

V. DeLeonardis indicated that all Charter Commission meetings will be held in the evening and will comply with the New York State Open Meetings Law. He stated that the Commission would file a document containing its recommendations with the county board of elections in the first week of September 2018. He indicated the Commission had the benefit of the work of prior commissions to look to. He reiterated that the form of government will remain the same.

Public Comment

V. DeLeonardis opened the floor up for public comment.

No one came forward to offer any public comment.

Discussion Items

V. DeLeonardis said the first item of discussion would be the timeframe of the Commission and its meeting schedule. He indicated that meetings would be held on alternate weeks from City Council meetings. The dates he announced are:

April 10, 2018

April 25, 2018

May 9, 2018

May 23, 2018

June 13, 2018

June 27, 2018

July 11, 2018

July 25, 2018

August 14, 2018

August 25, 2018

Meetings will commence at 4:30 PM. V. DeLeonardis indicated these ten meetings would be initially established, but that the Commission can add additional meetings if it so chooses. He asked the Commission members if they would like to discuss public outreach.

P. Martin indicated he would have to check his schedule to make sure some of the dates work. He suggested the possibility of use of video conferencing be considered and noted there are methods of video conferencing that comply with the New York Public Officers Law. He also noted that public education would be an important role of the Commission.

V. DeLeonardis stated the Commission would discuss necessary professional services.

M. Madigan stated that communications would be one such needed service. She said the Commission needed to determine its methods of communication. It also has to establish a budget that includes a clerk, legal assistance, and public relations services. She noted that any communications from the Commission should be out to the public within twenty-four hours of the Commission taking an action.

M. Sharp said the Commission could utilize the web for this. He said he will work with the city's information technology department to implement this.

M. Madigan noted that agendas should be published online before all Commission meetings.

P. Martin asked whether this meeting was being broadcast. M. Madigan said that the meeting was being streamed online.

V. DeLeonardis noted that the Commission might consider having a treasurer in order to begin a conversation about its budget. M. Madigan suggested M. Sharp be made treasurer. Attorney Izzo advised the Commission that there was nothing under state law that prohibited M. Sharp from serving as the treasurer and the vice chair, as the relevant state law only mandated that the Mayor designate a chair, vice chair, and secretary.

M. Madigan moved that M. Sharp be named treasurer to the charter Commission.

S. Scirocco and J. Daley seconded the motion.

Ayes:

V. DeLeonardis; M. Sharp; J. Daley; P. Martin; M. Madigan; S. Scirocco; L. Shields; J. O'Neill; M. Masterson

Absent:

J. Franck

M. Sharp was named commission treasurer by a vote of 9-0.

P. Martin suggested that J. Daley be made the clerk of the Commission, because he was appointed by the mayor as Secretary of the Commission and it would be a cost savings. M. Madigan suggested retaining a separate clerk so that all Commission members could need to be focused on the discussion. S. Scirocco agreed with M. Madigan saying that, while J. Daley could do the job, it may be too distracting from the discussion.

P. Martin asked how the clerk of the prior charter Commission was paid.

M. Madigan said she thought it was a fixed amount per meeting and noted a clerk was not a major expense.

All members of the Commission agreed that the Commission would hire a clerk to prepare minutes and administer the recording of proceedings.

V. DeLeonardis noted that the Commission needed to reach out to the individuals who would serve in the professional services roles required by the Commission. The question of what services would be required was opened up for discussion.

V. DeLeonardis asked the members if the Commission would be following the city's standard purchasing guidelines. All members agreed it would.

The Commission agreed that it would need outside legal services and a clerk

V. DeLeonardis noted that the city's purchasing policy would allow the Commission to obtain quotes from three different law firms. V. DeLeonardis stated that he would reach out to three law firms to obtain quotes and the Commission agreed.

P. Martin said that he would review candidates and recommend an individual to serve as clerk to the Commission and the Commission agreed.

M. Masterson left the meeting at 4:56 PM.

V. DeLeonardis asked if the Commission thought it would require any additional professional services.

S. Scirocco said that he would look into entities that could conduct polling for the Commission. M. Madigan stated the Commission should look into public relations (PR) services. She then suggested that such PR services may be able to be provided by a law firm. The Commission discussed the educational and media components of PR and whether a PR representative should be present at all Commission meetings. V. DeLeonardis concluded that any PR professional retained should be present at all Commission meetings.

V. DeLeonardis recommended that the Commission designate subcommittees. The Commission agreed. He recommended there be at least three subcommittees – drafting, research, and outreach.

The Commission considered adding a subcommittee on finance and additional subcommittees as necessary. V. DeLeonardis stated that in addition to a revised charter, the Commission should produce a statement of financial impact.

V. DeLeonardis, P. Martin and L Shields agreed to serve on the subcommittee on drafting.

M. Madigan and L. Shields agreed to serve on the research subcommittee.

S. Scirocco, J. Daley, L. Shields and M. Madigan agreed to serve on the subcommittee on outreach.

The Commission discussed whether the outreach subcommittee should look into crowd sourcing of public opinion, and authorize polls and surveys. S. Scirocco noted the subcommittee on outreach would become of particular importance toward the end of the charter review process.

M. Madigan suggested that the research subcommittee could look into the polling, surveys and findings of prior Commissions. She also said she would reach out to former mayors, commissioners, and members of charter commissions like attorney Matt Jones for ideas.

V. DeLeonardis said he would reach out to J. Franck and M. Masterson to see if they were interested in joining any committees.

V. DeLeonardis said the next item of discussion would be the procedure for the Commission's review. He noted there are 14 sections that make up the charter. The Commission then discussed the general structure of the charter. The Commission agreed that the current structure of the charter makes sense, especially since the administrative duties it already lays out will be the subject of discussion. V. DeLeonardis suggested that terms of office and term limits could be discussed at a future meeting of the Commission. M. Madigan suggested the city attorney's role, real property, and the capital budget as potential additional topics for the charter Commission to review in the future.

V. DeLeonardis asked that individuals assigned to find providers of professional services find those professionals by the Commission's next scheduled meeting on April 10, 2018, so that the Commission's budget can be discussed and brought to the City Council.

M. Sharp stated the city's information technology department would have the Commission's website up and running before the next meeting.

M. Madigan suggested that each subcommittee could give status updates.

V. DeLeonardis stated the Commission would also discuss its budget at the next meeting.

S. Scirocco asked how the Commission would work through the charter as a whole. Members of the Commission discussed reviewing the charter in the order in which it currently appears.

P. Martin suggested the Commission leave time toward the end of the charter review process to make final decisions on recommendations, as opposed to making decisions week by week. He also suggested that each member of the Commission make recommendations for change, in the context of future commissioners, not themselves, and all Commission members should seek changes that are best for the city as a whole. M. Madigan agreed with P. Martin.

V. DeLeonardis raised the question of when any recommended changes would go into effect.

T. Izzo stated it depends on the changes the Commission wants to make. Changes related to city governance could go into effect in 2019. Changes related to commissioners' salaries could only go into effect in 2020. M. Madigan suggested that the Commission needed a legal opinion on this question and that such questions demonstrated the need to retain legal counsel.

S. Scirocco asked how recommendations for changes will be determined. V. DeLeonardis said on a vote by vote basis of the Commission.

L. Shields asked the chair to confirm that six members constituted a quorum of the charter Commission. V. DeLeonardis confirmed.

S. Scirocco asked whether the Commission could submit limited changes to the charter this year and reconvene after the November 2018 election if it wanted to recommend more changes to the charter. V. DeLeonardis stated the Commission would cease to exist at the November 2018 election and that it must submit its recommendations to the county sixty-two days prior to the November 2018 election.

S. Scirocco asked if the Commission would be submitting an entire new charter or a list of proposed changes. V. DeLeonardis indicated it could be either.

S. Scirocco noted that the Commission may want to come back next year. P. Martin noted that this is a mayor appointed Commission and the mayor could potentially bring the Commission back after the next election, in her sole discretion.

V. DeLeonardis confirmed that and also noted that the City Council always has the option to recommend charter changes for consideration by the electorate on its own accord.

The Commission then discussed how to start prioritizing sections of the charter for review. They discussed the need for public outreach.

V. DeLeonardis said that at the April 10 meeting, the Commission would not dig into the charter section by section, but rather start a general dialogue, which the public should be a part of.

M. Madigan noted the importance of public feedback to the work of the subcommittee on research as well.

L. Shields noted the need for milestones to structure the Commission's work.

V. DeLeonardis opened the floor back up for additional public comment.

Public Comment

Bonnie Sellers stated "she'd see you on Thursday."

Matt Jones identified himself as an attorney who had worked with the previous charter commission. He said one of the most effective methods that commission used was to draft language for each proposal it was considering. He said this gave it an immediate for to start with. He also stated that such language should be specific. He said a purely legal review of the charter was necessary and this reinforced the need for counsel. He offered to share the work of the previous commission's subcommittee on drafting. M. Madigan agreed. V. DeLeonardis also agreed saying any changes would require review.

V. DeLeonardis submitted a letter from a member of the 2001 charter commission and requested that it be posted on the city's website.

V. DeLeonardis adjourned the meeting.