



January 19, 2017  
CITY OF SARATOGA SPRINGS  
Charter Review Commission  
City Council Room - City Hall  
7:00 PM

**CALL TO ORDER**

**WELCOME AND ANNOUNCEMENTS**

**PUBLIC COMMENT**

**INTRODUCTORY REMARKS BY BOB TURNER**

**APPROVAL OF MINUTES**

**DISCUSSION OF MERITS OF COUNCIL-CITY MANAGER VERSUS COUNCIL-  
MAYOR FORMS OF GOVERNMENT VERSUS HYBRID-DISCUSSION TO INCLUDE**

- 1. Improve government efficiency and responsiveness to citizens and businesses**
- 2. Reduce political influence in day-to-day operations.**
- 3. Eliminate the influence of political money in day-to-day operations**
- 4. Increase government accountability**
- 5. Make government more transparent**
- 6. Other**

**ADJOURN**



January 19, 2017  
CITY OF SARATOGA SPRINGS  
Charter Review Commission  
City Council Room – City Hall  
7:00 PM

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

ABSENT: Elio DelSette

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.

### **PUBLIC COMMENT**

Chair Robert Turner opened the meeting for public comment.

John Safford, Saratoga Springs said he has read all of the minutes of this Commission's meetings and he is impressed with the time and effort the Commission has put into this in hopes that something like this would be passed. He is a strong believer that you don't fix something unless it is broken and he would have to be a lot more convinced that something is broken before he voted for something like this. However, some really good ideas have been brought forth, so in the event it does not pass, he asked whether a list of suggestions could be given to

the City Council that they could use to make changes. Jeff Altamari said yes, a committee has been working on that. John Safford said it looks like the Commission is moving toward a strong Mayor or a City Manager form. In the case of a City Manager, he understands there will be seven City Council members and they have the power to elect a Mayor or a City Manager. Pat Kane responded that the Commission is not there yet; that is one version being discussed. Nothing has been voted on yet. He said a vast majority of City Councils have an elected Mayor. John Safford said he prefers a City Manager.

Pat Kane explained that many changes require referendum. For example, changes that may usurp someone's power can't be done by the City Council; to have those kinds of changes in the Charter requires a referendum which is what we are preparing. However if what we put before the voters is turned down there would be a whole host of things we would recommend but no one is obligated to follow our recommendations. However there are a lot of changes that could not be done in a Commission form of government. For example, a Ward system could not be set up because the Commissioners have individual duties. He clarified that the Commission is calling them districts, not wards.

There being no one else wishing to speak, Chair Robert Turner closed the public comment period at 7:05 p.m.

### **INTRODUCTORY REMARKS**

Robert Turner said that Pat Kane and he were at the City Council meeting last Tuesday and he updated the City Council about what the Commission has been doing and what we are thinking. He said Pat Kane talked about our budget. Pat Kane talked about our budget and thoughts on holding a special election. The Commissioner of Finance talked about the budget. They proceeded with a robust discussion about the merits of a special election and the legal issues at stake. They also discussed case law on budgeting for a special election and on the feasibility of the Mayor submitting a budget transfer. He was advised by Mayor Yepsen that the City Council may hold a special meeting to discuss this issue.

### **APPROVAL OF MINUTES**

R. Turner asked for approval of the January 12 minutes.

**Barbara Thomas moved and Laura Chodos seconded to approve the minutes of the January 12, 2017 Charter Commission meeting as presented.**

**Ayes all**

Devin Dal Pos asked about the budget presented to the Council. Robert Turner responded that this was the budget the Commission approved 14-0 on January 10, 2017 for legal consultants, outreach and clerical services, not to exceed \$46,000. He said that on January 10 the Commission also approved 12-2 a budget not to exceed \$37,000 and the date of May 30 for a Special Election. Robert Turner said after the Commission voted, he notified the Mayor and she distributed the information to the Council on the 13<sup>th</sup> of January.

### **UPDATES FROM SUB-COMMITTEE CHAIRS**

Drafting Committee: Matt Jones reported that the Drafting Committee did not meet because City Hall was closed on Monday January 16<sup>th</sup>. They plan to meet on January 23. Jeff Altamari said

he has not communicated with Matt Jones but he has gone through the Charter and separated which items should go to Code and which should go to Charter. There will also be a list of suggestions to improve the Charter.

Outreach Committee: Beth Wurtmann reported that there have been two press releases, one about the special election and one on proposed changes to the City Charter. They will continue to send press releases to the Saratogian to update and keep them posted. They are also working on an easier website address so the public can communicate with the Commission.

Barbara Thomas asked if there could be a link from the City's website to the Charter website. The Commission gave consensus that it would be a good idea. Robert Turner suggested that someone from the Outreach Committee contact Susan Armstrong.

Charter Review: BK Keramati reported that they are working on a report that will contain all the information they have received on the current charter in a concise format for the Commission by February 1. The document will be for people to use as a reference to determine why we want to change the Charter.

Pat Kane noted that all resulting materials and final documents should go on the website. It is good stuff and there should be a link from the City website to bring people up to speed as to what we have done. We need to keep everyone happy and informed. Some of the research we have done is helpful and has taken a lot of work and as a result we are well informed, however he is willing to line up anyone that any of the Commission feels we still need to speak with.

#### **DISCUSSION OF MERITS OF COUNCIL-CITY MANAGER VERSUS COUNCIL-MAYOR FORMS OF GOVERNMENT VERSUS HYBRID**

Robert Turner advised that at the last charter meeting the Commission agreed on a 7 member City Council with 4 from neighborhood districts and 3 elected at large, to serve 4 year terms with a limit of three terms each. He has been in touch with Robert Batson from the Albany Law School Government Center and he has asked the Commission to review various items and have a conversation should begin with a City Manager form or a strong Mayor form and the reality is that what you see as the two forms can almost morph towards one another for an additional choice. Mayor Myrick of Ithaca is a good example of a third alternative; he is a strong Mayor with a Chief of Staff that functions like a City Manager. The Mayor brings political accountability, City Managers provide administrative competence. Cities seem to be trending that the Council Manager form is the most popular for smaller Cities with a 10k to 30k population. Larger cities prefer a Mayor-Council form.

Robert Turner clarified that what leads to Charter reform is not scandal, but the demands for increased accountability and it is often the result of growing pains. He advised that what we might want to consider in choosing one form over the other is whether or how that form will:

- 1) Improve government efficiency and responsiveness to citizens and businesses
- 2) Reduce political influence in day-to-day operations
- 3) Eliminate the influence of political money in day-to-day operations
- 4) Increase government accountability
- 5) Make government more transparent
- 6) Other

Barbara Thomas wants to discuss the checks and balances within the form.

Pat Kane stressed the importance of online services and the ability to keep people informed through them. BK Keramati said that the list was distilled from a list of 15 criteria. Pat Kane wants to discuss the handling of employees and employee performance.

Mike Los commented that he loves the affiliation of a City Manager with the ICMA and the balance of executive power with administrative power.

Gordon Boyd said this criterion is excellent; checks and balances, accountability, transparency. We should discuss the executive branch in relation to the rest of the government, the legislative and executive, how the executive will respond to the legislative body. The executive shows leadership in creating an overall program that shows coherence and this is good to keep in mind- a Council with an Executive heading it up.

Pat Kane said we have looked at the things we thought were important and looked at the financial side of the house and the principles we have are rock solid in the current Charter and we have to move that with us. It was legendary in 2001 and it works. Any problems the City has had since were because of the national economy or the loss of VLT money. We should bring the financial component of the current Charter with us no matter what happens.

Beth Wurtmann asked to be refreshed on the structure of Batavia and of Corning. She said both have Mayors yet they have a City Manager-Council with a Mayor.

Robert Turner said in a Mayor-Council form, the Mayor is Chief Executive Officer and gets to supervise day to day operations, set the budget; the Mayor has veto power and executive power. He noted there are many hybrids including one where the ability to appoint and remove department heads resides with the Council and the Mayor's role is to play a ceremonial head.

Gordon Boyd compared it to a school board- the Council hires a manager- it is a hybrid, based on what the community needs; if we exclude some group they will not have a voice at the table. It is the people who sit on top of the pyramid. He said whatever a City Manager recommends does not really matter, the job of the City Manager is to do what the Council wants.

Beth Wurtmann asked for comments from the Commission on the hybrid option of having a full time Mayor with a hired Chief of Staff. Pat Kane said that a citizen who runs for Mayor must live in the City. Within the City Manager form, the Council gives the marching orders and, other than the City Attorney, everyone reports to the Council. He suggested looking for someone that has experience running the show. If you want the day to day responsibility to be shouldered by someone other than the Mayor, it should be a City Manager.

Jeff Altamari asked what the common population was for a classic ICMA City Manager. He noted that managing a City of 12k has to vary from managing a City of 30k. Pat Kane said many Cities have City Managers especially newer cities.

Robert Turner said that a strong Mayor form like New York City has a certain amount of administrative expertise; they are blended according to the amount they have. They will drive that policy expertise and those races are going to be expensive and break down on party lines. The skills that lead someone to be a good campaigner do not break down into that same person being a good manager or being good at managing a large budget and 400 employees.

Gordon Boyd said that government is more complicated now than 40 years ago; the Governor wants county leaders to be placed on the ballot this November. With a population of close to

30k, we are not any more complicated than the Village of Ballston Spa is; we just have more figures to the left of a decimal point.

Minita Sanghvi is concerned that a weak Mayor has limited power and no veto power; she feels it might open up more bickering and create the type of power towers we see now. If the Mayor is strong with a City Manager, it would be better.

Pat Kane suggested addressing the capabilities of a Mayor.

Robert Turner said we could consider how much power we want to centralize; determine how much responsiveness and accountability to shift to executive power.

Beth Wurtmann said that in the interviews we learned that the public conception is that the position of Mayor of this City has more power than the position actually has. Robert Turner said that the difference is formal powers versus informal powers. If a Mayor has leadership, vision, political savvy and the respect of the Council, then that is powerful. In Ithaca, Mayor Myrick's power stems from his personality. The Mayor of Canajoharie has been there 26 years and clearly runs the show, and she is articulate in setting a vision; the power of a Mayor will be a combination of formal and informal powers. Currently, if a Mayor's popularity drops, there is nothing they can do. Beth Wurtmann added that in our system, the Mayor has only one vote, there is nothing they can do beyond that.

Barbara Thomas noted that here and in surrounding areas, officially within state law, the Mayor is authorized to sign a number of documents. Here, the Mayor signs all contracts and runs some of the departments of the City so the position is not totally weak. Robert Turner said that nationally, a super-weak Mayor form is dying. People want to feel someone is in charge. Minita Sanghvi commented that no matter what we decide, she does not want a weak Mayor situation.

Gordon Boyd said there is a reason to have a Mayor; the question is what you want to place under the Mayor. If one department can't perform a task efficiently or completely, who is held accountable- you have accountability when you put something under one head.

Pat Kane said there should be an obligation for the Mayor to bring an idea or an issue to the Council before running with it.

BK Keramati wants to see the operations of this City become divorced from the personality of this City. The terms strong or weak when applied to any title do a disservice to it; he does not want the definition included either way. He is driven to a City Manager form because of the ICMA countenance and professionalism of a trained individual with the tools to run a City like ours, not changed by every elected Council. He is leaning strongly toward a Council/Manager with a Mayor. Minita Sanghvi agrees. Jeff Altamari said that technology is changing quickly. The current Commission form does not lend itself easily to that. We need to catch up to where we should be; think about the future, technology and long term planning. Robert Turner said it is worth noting that one thing Managers do well is to provide leadership; articulate a vision of where we need to go, provide a specific set of skills. Professional City Managers have a list service that provides a giant pool of expertise at their fingertips; they possess completely different skill sets from that of most Mayors.

Devin Dal Pos said the City Manager works from a best practice scenario, a Mayor works from a political scenario. To manage a City effectively, the format of City Manager would provide the best service to the City. If you go to hire, you get the best resume in the process, but you do not

necessarily get the best resume in the political process. If we can provide the best governance for this City, we could hire someone from outside the City to be City Manager. If you look around the City there is a small pool to pick from. It does not make sense to expect administration and legislation from the same person. The Mayor should be elected at large; they are the face of the City. With a City Manager and a Mayor, you have the best of both worlds in that mix; two very easy things for people to wrap their heads around; it is tangible, not abstract.

Matt Jones mentioned that he is a former member of the Saratoga Springs School Board. He said that when he served they were charged with hiring a superintendent; it was an enjoyable experience and it is a chance for part of a larger population to serve and it is inexpensive to run for a seat on the Board. There was not a lot to argue there; the notion of planning a budget was to invest now or ignore it and face it later. Political influence was limited to contact with the individual committee and the committee Chair would report or they could come to the Board meeting. He wants democracy not bureaucracy; there should be a clear defined place to go with questions or concerns.

Robert Turner said that there was a situation with an illegal Bed & Breakfast that was reported to the Mayor, then Accounts, then to Public Safety Code Enforcement, and then the City Attorney and no one in City Hall thought it was their responsibility. He said as another example, curb cuts fall under the Mayor through Planning, and the Department of Public Safety and the Department of Public Works. It seems you need the permission of every Commissioner except Finance to get anything done or to get anything approved.

Gordon Boyd said he was appointed to the City Center Authority in 2001 by Mayor Klotz and the priority item for the Authority at that time was to expand the City Center, but then 911 occurred and the financial uncertainty that followed placed expansion on the back burner. After a few years, he was asked to lead a task force to examine the re-development options of the Maple Avenue lot and they came up with an option that included development with parking below it and they brought it to the Commissioner of Public Works who came up with an RFP and some great proposals were received but because the DPW Commissioner was not getting along with the Mayor and she had the majority of votes, the project went nowhere. Now, it is in the works again but it is controversial and 16 years later it is still not done. He agrees that there is a risk to having a calcified bureaucracy that is the other side of the coin to having a unified administrative structure with leadership that can actually move the pieces around on the chess board and make things happen.

Devin Dal Pos said that a customer service focus must be created.

Robert Turner said that with neighborhood districts there will clearly be a person to call about issues such as water in the basement or streets not being plowed. He said it was striking that when we spoke with elected officials serving in City Manager form of government, none of them thought that City Managers were taking away power, in fact they thought having a City Manager was empowering for them because it defined parameters and helped them set strategic goals for their city. Each of the City Managers mentioned that when there are issues the call often comes to them. They in turn go to the pertinent department head which starts the process of finding the cause and solving the problem. If that request is ignored, and the City Manager does not respond to the initial contact, the City Manager could be fired.

Pat Kane said if you call City Hall about a problem, you have one person to call but with a City Manager form, there are four people to call, including your neighborhood representative, the at-large representative, the City Manager and the Mayor. It is the best customer service scenario,

four options, and four chances to solve the problem. He said currently some of us might be able to pick up the phone and get problems solved but it depends on who you are, who you know and where you live, he is unsure whether the folks in Geysers Crest get the same response. We need more citizen engagement and we need to get all customer service issues out of the political arena. We have a 21<sup>st</sup> century community and the current Commission form of government is not a solution to any of the problems we have. He said additionally, with a City Manager scenario, we have the option to get an award winner, the best of the best because we do not have to sell someone on living here, we can attract the cream of the crop.

BK Keramati said that as the newest City resident at this table, he hears a lot about how great this City is and he agrees but there are things that do not work well and no one wants to talk about them because they are proud of Saratoga. He talked about wanting a no parking sign near the corner where he lives and he was shifted from department to department so he got lost. He wonders if some things do not happen because departments do not work well together or if it was simply that there is a reason he can't have a sign there. Things do not get addressed well sometimes which precludes things from getting done. People do not know where to go, to whom to go, or how to address problems

Devin Dal Pos said he has done business all over New York State and has experience in many types of scenarios. The most responsiveness he receives is when he goes into a town to bring business there. If a business wants to come into this City or if it wants to expand within this City or wants to invest here, it is not clear who they come and talk to or how they can shepherd that project through and whether they have any chance of getting something approved because right now it does not exist. We are at risk in this City of losing a major employer for that dysfunction. This does not happen in other areas of this state. He can go into a town, meet with the Planning Department and they get the City Manager or the Mayor or whoever is running the city involved and they facilitate the process and that is the kind of responsiveness that brings sustainability to any community and highlights competitive ability. The City of Saratoga Springs is in competition for business, jobs, dinners, conferences and everything with other areas, cities and with other states. For example, people want to take AYCO out of Saratoga Springs to somewhere else so we should not put our heads in the sand saying we are a great City and everyone wants to be here. They may want to be here but we are making it really hard for them to want to stay here so that is why he wants to bring a better scenario here for sustainability and long term economic viability for the City.

Mike Loss said we have spent a lot of time flushing out the benefits of a City Manager and some of the trade-offs have been discussed, but because not everyone believes in the City Manager and a lot of people have spoken out against it, we should take a little time to flush out the benefits on the other side.

Beth Wurtmann questioned what the voters are ready for. There are five leading the charge on educating the community once we make our recommendations and we must educate. We may have passionate convictions but the model we are talking about is quite different from the model we have and there is a big question as to how much change our community is ready for. She would like to hear what the Commission members think the community is ready for regardless of what we determine is best for the City.

Ann Bullock said she was leaning towards the Mayor-Council scenario because that it contains terms that are at least familiar to the public. A Mayor and a Council sounds similar to what we have; although it is a different format and structure in fact, but at least it does not sound completely foreign. She said BK Keramati convinced her yesterday that a professional



background and affiliation with an association like the ICMA would not be foreign to most voters because many of us in our day jobs are familiar with or have a professional background and probably belong to a professional organization so that should not be foreign to many citizens of this City. The Mayor-Council form has the advantage of having some familiarity that voters would understand and find comfortable.

Beth Wurtmann said we should think about not only our ability to educate, but how to deal with criticism and concern about people that might lose their jobs with this scenario including deputies and council members. Robert Turner said it would be worth contrasting; we have part time Council members and each has a deputy running the show. People ask how deputies are chosen and it is typically people who ran someone's campaign and their primary criteria are their political skills, not necessarily their administrative skills or competence. He said when they spoke with the Mayor in Canandaigua, as to whether she negotiates with the collective bargaining units and she responded that she does not because the City unions would get really involved in politics and would put a lot of pressure on her, so she assigns that responsibility to the City Manager. The City Council in turn tells the City Manager to get tough and keep the tax cap below 2%. In this case what you do not have is the political pressure of specialized interest groups that are going to be contributing to the campaign of the person who is going to be negotiating their contracts.

Beth Wurtmann said she is talking about the press, the conversations on the sidewalks, the criticisms we will receive. She wants to raise these points since the direction in which we seem to be leaning may cause an issue or the city may be ready for it; she wants to make sure the City voters have enough information to decide.

BK Keramati believes that the citizens of Saratoga Springs are sophisticated and these are reasonably easy concepts to get across; he is not worried because the outreach committee can put together presentations and good material and literature that people will understand to educate them on what our reasons are for this and he is optimistic that it will work.

Devin Dal Pos asked what the Commission feels about the chance of getting everything passed in a special election versus in a general election. Robert Turner replied that there is no data or evidence and the situation is not comparable to the School Board or to a Primary; we should concentrate on the bigger constitutional issues than whether five deputies could lose their jobs. Devin Dal Pos said they know that is a possibility every two years.

Gordon Boyd said that would not come into play until the end of 2019 and deputies taking office in 2017 know it is a two year contract anyway so we are not truncating their lives. He was leaning toward an elected, strong Mayor but he found the City Manager form compelling especially after our meeting with Jason Molino and Mark Ryckman. He agrees with Devin Dal Pos that we do not have a single point of contact for persons coming in wanting to do business with this City. He said currently there is a public facility that wants to build a public parking structure on a public lot and it has taken 16 years so far and it is still not done and conferences are an integral part of our economy. There is also a private company with a public purpose that wants a parking lot and might leave taking 300 jobs with them, and if they leave restaurants will close because that private company spends a lot of money downtown. This is part of our economy but there is not a one-stop shop to start the wheels turning for a constituent or a would-be constituent.

Robert Kuczynski said that looking at the parameters on one of these options to take to the voters, in practical terms, one thing not on the criteria or implied was the financial impact. Voters

will look at that short term, so if we can provide in our persuasive argument that a City Manager will bring additional cost savings, it will help with the electorate.

Pat Kane agreed that it would help if they were provided believable, substantiated numbers. He added that the Mayor should be a dynamic Mayor, not necessarily one with absolute power, but one that will present us well at the County; one that has community support and the skills to carry themselves well. Many of us have discussed how many people could run under the Commission form and it is very limiting because most do not feel capable. But within the Council-Manager form there are a lot of people that could run. In this room alone a lot of people could be a dynamic Mayor, and hold office and not give up their job. In the Council-Manager form with a dynamic Mayor people would not have to make a gigantic sacrifice to run for office. The more we can keep the possibility open for people to run for all offices, the better off we will be. Currently, there is an enormous amount of money spent on a campaign and it would be even more so if there was a strong Mayor system, yet if the selection is dissipated from one to 8, it is less expensive. A City Manager-Council form with the City Manager being a credentialed appointee that handles financial matters and labor contracts, and the Mayor and Council being elected is a very inclusive form of government

Devin Dal Pos said one of the negatives we need to realize is that inclusiveness would be seen by special interest groups as a huge negative but for public interest at large it is a huge positive.

Robert Turner said one of the survey questions was where there were possible conflicts and in the strong mayor-council form there are more conflicts. He said one of the City Managers discussed how in the last six years, the City had gone from Democrat to Republican and back yet there had been a relatively consistent amount of continuity. In our current form of government, deputies and leaders come and go and that lends itself to often re-inventing the wheel and change for the sake of change. Administrative issues do not and should not be politicized. Routine items such as how is payroll done, how do we handle risk and safety and personnel policies should not be repeatedly examined and subject to the whims of the latest political deputy. From our survey we learned that half the deputies are good and half not so much. Administrative functions are just that, no different than plowing and leaf pick-up; we all pay taxes and we should be able to receive routine services without it being political, no matter who is in office.

Pat Kane said when he thinks about how government operates, he pictures a dimple, a pothole and a sinkhole when analyzing how the government handles problems. It comes down to the use of our resources. For example, the issue of the parking garage mentioned earlier is a sink hole due to 17 years of inactivity when the needs are high. We need to come up with a form of government that is as smooth sailing as possible. It will have flaws because humans are involved. We want to try to come up with an efficiency and effectiveness that makes things as smooth as possible. Think about issues in our current form of government that are sinkholes but if they had been handled differently, the issue would be not bigger than a pot hole. We must try to develop a system where we can avoid continuously dumping resources into something without accomplishing anything. Having more professional and community involvement would provide smoother operations, a smoother surface to work with. He said at one point he advocated for a strong Mayor over the commission form of government but because this Commission interviewed and spoke with many people including key stakeholders, employees, and former office holders and not one person indicated that we need a strong mayor. We need to centralize our focus on government but we should not put all of the power in one person's hands because that limits us as a community and most importantly, it is not as conducive to smooth sailing as it would be if there were a City Manager and a dynamic Mayor and six others

to integrate the needs of Geyser Crest, the Eastern Plateau, and the rest of the City to make all of us feel proud and well served. He hopes that we do not have to get there combatively. There is a passion and a desire to educate people and we have five months to do it. This is not something brand new to cities of our size, it is tried and true. He said the City Manager/dynamic Mayor and Council form is also expandable and we should always encourage growth and development. Development should address the true needs of the City. Devin Dal Pos commented that the government officials should actively identify the needs of the city, advertise to bring in the developers and do it. Pat Kane said we should embrace development, not be stagnant or lose ground as he feels the City is now. Growth is happening all around us and our form of government should be open for the many talented people to become involved in it and that is why he supports the City Manager form.

Matt Jones said in identifying this as the direction to go in, we have to try to sell it and we will be criticized and challenged so we have to have our eyes wide open. The City Manager form had negative connotations in Schenectady and Troy. Data is helpful, so a poll might be useful to us in determining what the people would support. In this City, a strong Mayor concept could be identified with easier than a City Manager.

Robert Turner said to be clear on the problem of strong versus weak, in section 203 of the model charter the discussion on strong or weak ignores the role of what a Mayor actually does. However the model charter essentially states that because the Mayor is freed up from the administrative day to day issues within City Hall, it gives them more time to be a political and policy leader. Within the model, three facilitative roles that provide the leadership opportunities are identified. First, they (Mayor) get to coordinate all the activities of the other City Council officials and to liaison with the City Manager. Secondly, they can identify and set goals for the Council advocating for the adoption of policies to specifically address the City's problems. Thirdly, the Mayor can spend a lot of time going to the county and to the state and doing a lot of things so being free of administrative responsibilities empowers them to function as a true leader and facilitator. They would be on the policy side and not burdened with the many steps of implementation.

Matt Jones said we need to determine not which one is best because there is obviously a consensus forming here, but which one is achievable so we should conduct a poll to determine what the people want and what would pass. .

Pat Kane said the Council asked the same question and polls are not free or cheap but they may be worth doing. The only way we can do a poll and is to have all of our information ready in February. It is not bad to do a pulse check and to let people know what we are thinking and why and it is anonymous, and he would help coordinate it.

Minita Sanghvi said that before a poll is done, the outreach committee should be given the opportunity to do its job. The idea here is the committee will educate the public and will reach many people. It seems unfair to do a poll and decide based on those results without giving the outreach committee time to do their job. We as the Charter Commission should decide what we think is best and have the faith that we can communicate that to our constituents.

Devin Dal Pos said the Commission must remember it is our job and we have been empowered and charged to do this and we have spent an enormous amount of time and effort getting ourselves educated to be the best resource for the decision.

Gordon Boyd said he accepted the risk that this might not pass when he got on this Commission. We are volunteers with no equity in the outcome except as residents of this City and he was determined from the beginning that we must put the best proposal we could come up with on the ballot and if people do not like it, it is still a great City. It may have its problems and no way to effectively solve them, but we could assuage that with some recommendations to the City Council for improvements to the existing form of government. We have chronic problems here that could potentially cost the City a lot of money such as not building the City Center parking garage or failing to keep AYCO here and that would show up on our sales tax receipts which will impact our property tax bills because sales tax off-sets property tax. We also have an affordable housing problem and he has learned recently that the City has settled a federal lawsuit with the Andersons over housing discrimination and the amount of money if about 30 times what we are talking about spending on a special election. There is also an infrastructure issue that a couple of years ago impacted the ability of our fire department to fight a fire in some row houses on Woodlawn Avenue and they had to get water from over a quarter of a mile away because that infrastructure problem was never addressed. It has been brought up that the City could gain a lot having increased recreation space for organizations to come into town for tournaments since we have the hotel space and the investment to do that would pay for itself in room tax and sales tax revenue. These are issues that could be tackled successfully if we had a leadership structured government that could execute on a plan. Instead, we have been responding to this proposal and that proposal and it has never been put together in the form of a cohesive plan.

Pat Kane said that the past is good and it is important not to forget what has been accomplished in the past but we should focus on putting together a constitution that allows us to be proud of our past but will serve us best in the future.

Barbara Thomas said the Commission has heard from City employees and people on the street that there are problems that just do not get solved, that do not get attention and if you are not someone fairly well connected politically, it is hard to use the existing silos and because there is not coordination between the five silos, even when you use them, often you do not get the desired results. Saratoga Springs is a very good City but, probably because of a lot of other circumstances and not because of the structure of its government. She said that Mechanicville has not been economically assisted by their Commission form of government. The City Manager form may be more effective in solving a lot of our problems, most importantly for long range planning and coordination.

Laura Chodos stated that this is a successful City with a big budget like a corporation and we should treasure it and run it professionally which is why she likes the idea of a City Manager. We have this great success but we must not be too cocky about it because the competition is growing all around us and this is important. We have a future but competition will make it that much more difficult for us to be successful and do all the things we need to do such as getting an additional water source; we could make a list of things we should do and all of them are expensive. Because of the challenge of more competition, she is looking at changing to a more professional form of government, and we are large enough to have a full time Mayor and a City Manager and the Mayor should be given specific powers and not just meet and greet, give awards and sign documents; they are elected to be the face of our City and she supports the City Manager form of government.

Beth Wurtmann said she is realistic and does not want to put something out there that will be voted down. The points of professionalism, long term planning and aspects that will not be turned over every four years must be emphasized. Pat Kane suggested that if the Commission

follows what has been previously discussed, the Mayor will be both a County Supervisor and our Mayor. We need someone who has a lot of skin in the game, not someone who just shows up at a City Council meeting. A full time strong Mayor has too much power. Minita Sanghvi pointed out that at the last meeting it was suggested that the two at large Council members could be county supervisors. Pat Kane said it has not really been decided; that was one of the scenarios. Robert Turner mentioned that a survey will give you a door step opinion that may often be a guess and not really reflective of reality.

The Commission discussed having a straw vote. Tony Izzo counseled that it is preferable that each Commission member state their opinion. The opinion poll went as follows:

Robert Kuczynski:	Council Manager
Mike Los:	Council Manager
Devin Dal Pos:	Council Manager
Barb Thomas:	Council Manager
BK Keramati:	Council Manager
Pat Kane:	Council Manger
Laura Chodos:	Council Manager
Minita Sanghvi:	Council Manger, but not a weak Mayor
Robert Turner:	Council Manger, Dynamic Mayor
Ann Casey Bullock:	Council Manager, whatever kind of Mayor that works
Gordon Boyd:	Council Manager
Matt Jones:	Council Manager, but he has not given up on the Commission form
Beth Wurtmann:	Council Manager, Dynamic Mayor

Robert Turner said the next meeting is January 24 and then January 26. He asked the members what they want to address at those meetings. The members collectively came up with Finance, who has the power to do what with the money; the role of Mayor, the City Attorney and the Recreation Commission. He asked if the Commission members wanted to interview or speak with anyone else, or if they wanted someone to come in and speak. Pat Kane said that everyone seems to be good with what the City Manager does. He said this is a work in progress; we leave here tonight with a lot of good ideas and now we must start condense our thoughts.

### **ADJOURNMENT**

**Matt Jones moved and Pat Kane seconded to adjourn the meeting at 9:10 p.m.** Ayes all. There being no further business, Robert Turner adjourned the meeting at 9:10 p.m.

Respectfully submitted

Nancy L. Wagner  
Clerk

Approved: 02-02-2017