

City of Saratoga Springs Charter Review Commission Meeting Minutes
Monday, June 18, 2001

Harvey Fox reminded everyone that the Historical Society would host a meeting on Thursday, June 28 at 7:00 p.m. at the Casino.

Harvey Fox also informed Board members that City Attorney Jeff Wait had offered his services to the Commission in connection with the Recreation Department.

Lew Benton said he met with Barbara Lombardo, *The Saratogian*, and they discussed the possibility of the newspaper doing a series of articles B each to focus on a particular commissioner and then perhaps a misc. section. He said newspaper has the ability to print the entire charter in tabloid form, however, there would be a charge. He said she needs to know the size and the quantity before she could give an estimate. Lew Benton said he would get back to her with that information and have an estimate for next week's meeting.

Tony Izzo informed Commission members that he had recently been contacted New York City representatives in connection with a possible charter revision they may do. He said they were particularly interested in this Commission's findings on nonpartisan elections.

Tony Izzo said that Kathy Parker, *The Daily Gazette*, had asked to obtain copies of the draft sections of the charter that are to be discussed at meetings. He said he spoke to the NYS Committee on Open Government and according to that office, once a draft document is discussed in public, it becomes public information and must be shared. He suggested that as the sections are to be discussed he would distribute copies of those sections to the interested members in the audience. Margie VanMeter asked if the copies could be taken back at the end of the meeting. Tony Izzo said no. He said it would be necessary, though, for the Commission to provide the changes to the members of the public. Denise Polit said she was concerned about the public receiving this information before the Council members. She said, as a courtesy, the Council members should receive the information at the same time.

Denise Polit moved and Chris Whann seconded that from this point forward, the Commission is to provide to the City Council, those items to be discussed and voted on at each meeting. It was further noted that Harvey Fox would send a memo to the Council members and the County Supervisors on what was discussed and voted on this evening and it will also explain the process for future meetings.

Harvey Fox asked if there were any comments from the audience on this matter. No one spoke.

Ayes all.

C-18d -- FINANCE

Chris Whann read a letter from Vassar Curtis on his concerns of a few sections of the charter that had already been discussed and approved. It was agreed that Vassar Curtis should be given a copy of those approved sections for his review. It was further agreed that his questions concerning quarterly reporting would be discussed during the appropriate section of the charter.

Maintaining a Balanced Budget: Rita Balmuth moved and Denise Polit seconded to approve the section on Maintaining a Balanced Budget as submitted. Ayes all.

Quarterly Financial Reports: Chris Whann noted that in Vassar Curtis' letter he suggested that perhaps the quarterly reports should be made available between 30 and 45 days after the end of the quarter. It was agreed that 45 days would be added to this section. Margie VanMeter moved and Denise Polit seconded to approve the Quarterly Financial Reports section with the previously discussed modifications. Ayes all.

Supplemental Appropriations: Margie VanMeter moved and Denise Polit seconded to approve the Supplemental Appropriations section as presented. Ayes all.

Emergency Appropriations: Rita Balmuth moved and Denise Polit seconded to approve the Emergency Appropriations section as presented. Ayes all.

Transfers of Moneys: Lew Benton said some of the suggested language in this section was a radical change from what currently exists, i.e., roll call vote for transfers. He said language such as this would send a message to the Council that they need to be more accountable in their budgeting. Mark Lawton said that justification would be needed to transfer funds. He suggested that many of the transfers happen due to a lack of discipline in developing the budget. Denise Polit asked if the Commission wanted to include all transfers or should there be a minimum dollar amount. Tony Izzo pointed out that currently there are many transfers and suggested that by requiring a roll call vote on all transfers could make Council meetings quite long. Chris Whann said with a more disciplined process in developing the budget, the amount of transfers would decrease. Mark Lawton pointed out that there would always be unforeseen expenditures that would require transfers though. Harvey Fox asked if the City's budgeting process would be sophisticated enough to handle this process. Mark Lawton said yes. Chris Whann said there would need to be more advance work done at the beginning of the budgeting process.

Mark Lawton said generally speaking, departments try to cover payroll first and, therefore, hold off on buying equipment until the end of the year when they know there are funds available. Denise Polit asked Mark Lawton for clarification concerning the sentence that states there can be no transfers involving payroll, employee benefits and equipment purchases. After a short discussion it was agreed to delete that sentence.

Commission members agreed that all transfers would require a roll call vote.

Denise Polit asked what exactly was an unencumbered appropriation. After much discussion, it was agreed to eliminate the sentence in connection in unencumbered appropriations.

Denise Polit moved and Chris Whann seconded to approve the Transfers of Moneys section with the modifications as discussed. Ayes all.

Payments Prohibited: Chris Whann said he was somewhat concerned with the last sentence in this section. It was agreed to eliminate the last sentence and a portion of the sentence before the last sentence. Chris Whann moved and Denise Polit seconded to approve the Payments Prohibited section with the modifications as discussed. Ayes all.

Construction with Local Finance Law: Denise Polit moved and Margie VanMeter seconded to approve the Construction with Local Finance Law section as presented. Ayes all.

DEPARTMENT OF PUBLIC SAFETY

Commission members reviewed the Department of Public Safety section in its entirety. After a few minor corrections, Chris Whann moved and Denise Polit seconded to approve the Department of Public Safety section with the minor modifications.

ACCOUNTS DEPARTMENT

Denise Polit asked what mandated the Vital Statistics function. Tony Izzo said it was mandated under the New York State Public Health Law. Denise Polit asked about archiving records. It was agreed that archiving should be added to the City Clerk's duties.

It was agreed that under the purchasing agent duties the purchasing agent shall annually maintain and update a compilation of all inventories of city owned personal and real property prepared by city departments and entities and that no purchases shall be authorized for any department or entity which has not completed and submitted an inventory to the purchasing agent.

Chris Whann moved and Denise Polit seconded to approve the Accounts Department section with the minor modifications. Ayes all.

OTHER

Denise Polit said she was somewhat concerned with the reading level of the final document. Commission members said that the readability is dictated by the language used and in some cases would be difficult to simplify the language.

NEXT MEETING

It was agreed that the Commission would meet on both Monday, June 25 & Tuesday, June 26 at 6:30 p.m. and the following items would be on the agenda: C-17c, C-17d, C-17e, C-17f, C-17g; C-16 City Council Powers, C-19 DPW, D-22 Civil Service Commission, C-24 Restrictions upon Council members, C-30 Supervisors, C-25 Deputies & Employees, C-50 City Attorney, Title XI Elections, Title XI Misc. Provisions and Rationale Paper

ADJOURNMENT

There being no further business, Harvey Fox adjourned the meeting at 9:30 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Kathy Moran
Clerk

Approved: