



King County

Ron Sims
King County Executive

CHARTER REVIEW COMMISSION

Mark Yango
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King County Charter Review Commission
Meeting Minutes – September 12, 2007
Seattle Municipal Tower, 5:30pm-7:30pm

The September 12, 2007 meeting of the King County Charter Review Commission was called to order by co-chair Governor Mike Lowry at 5:34 p.m.

Commission members in attendance:

Mike Lowry, Co-chair
Lois North, Co-chair
Trisha Bennett
Doreen Cato
Jim English
Dan Gandara
Bryan Glynn
John Groen
Kirstin Haugen
Tara Jo Heinecke
Gregg Hiramawa
John Jensen
Terry Lavender
Gary Long
Sharon Maeda
Allan Munro
Sarah Rindlaub
Mike Wilkins
James Williams

Absent:

Juan Bocanegra
Darcy Goodman

Staff:

Mark Yango, Charter Review Coordinator
Corrie Watterson Bryant, Project Manager, Charter Review Commission
Becky Spithill, Project Manager, Charter Review Commission
Charlotte Ohashi, Administrative Assistant, Charter Review Commission

Council and PAO Staff:

Rebecha Cusack, Council Liaison to the Commission

Joanne Rasmussen, Council Committee Staff Liaison to the Commission

Mike Sinsky, Senior Deputy Prosecuting Attorney, Prosecuting Attorney's Office

Jennifer Stacy, Deputy Prosecuting Attorney, Prosecuting Attorney's Office

Nick Wagner, Council Co-Liaison to the Commission

1. Opening Remarks and Legal Presentation

Mike Lowry made introductory comments and asked for approval of minutes from the July 31, 2007 meeting. The minutes were approved as written.

Mr. Sinsky gave a brief report on I-25, the citizen initiative to place a measure on the ballot that would amend the charter to create an elected Director of Elections. He explained that the council did not adopt I-25, and instead sent the matter to the voters for consideration. In accordance with language in the initiative and amendment procedures in the charter, the proposed amendment would follow a two-step process. The November 2007 ballot will first ask voters whether to place the charter amendment on the ballot at the next general election. If approved, the actual charter amendment proposal would then be put before the voters in November 2008. If voters opt to amend the charter at that time, a special election for the Director of Elections would occur in February 2009.

Mr. Sinsky explained that, under this two-step procedure, the actual charter amendment could not be before voters until November 2008 – the same general election that will include council-approved charter revisions proposed by this commission. This timing does not preclude the Commission from issuing charter recommendations regarding an elected Director of Elections, though the commission should be careful to act within the scope of its charter authority. Mr. Sinsky further explained that the law does not restrict individual members from taking a position either in favor or in opposition to the initiative if they do so in their individual capacity.

Mr. Sinsky also noted that the notion of amending the charter by initiative resulted from a recent Supreme Court decision. Language in the charter is somewhat ambiguous regarding the process such initiatives need to follow. The 2-step process is largely a result of this difficulty.

Gary Long asked what portions of the charter deal with the initiative process. Section 230.50 is the relevant section.

Bryan Glynn asked whether the State Supreme Court's decision required that the charter include a process for amendment by initiative. Mr. Sinsky indicated that the court did not appear to mandate such a charter process and that their decision turned on an interpretation of existing charter language. Lois North commented that the Freeholders did not intend for the charter to be amended by citizen initiative. The court decision created the possibility for a 2-step process which, in Mrs. North's opinion, will confuse the voters.

Mr. Sinsky encouraged the commissioners to utilize the county e-mail system for their commission business. He noted that your official emails are subject to public disclosure. The staff will re-send a notification to commissioners' personal addresses on how to use the county's email system.

2. Presentation of the Subcommittee Process

Mr. Yango and Ms. Watterson Bryant proceeded to give a presentation on the subcommittee process. The presentation included details of roles and responsibilities for subcommittee members, executive staff, council staff, and PAO staff; expectations for subcommittee members; a description of the issue tracker and library; a timeline of subcommittee work; and a full breakdown of subcommittee member assignments.

A discussion ensued about serving on multiple subcommittees. The outcome of this discussion was that members could serve on more than one subcommittee, so long as they dedicated sufficient time and resources as required by each subcommittee. If commissioners are willing to be full members of multiple committees, they will also have voting rights on each of those committees.

3. Subcommittee Breakout Sessions

The subcommittees convened separately to elect chairs and vice-chairs, set a meeting schedule, and prioritize charter issues.

Notes of Subcommittee Breakout Sessions:

Governmental Structure Committee

Chair: Tara Jo Heinecke

Vice Chair: Sarah Rindlaub

Lead Staffer: Mark Yango

Meeting schedule:

5:00pm-8:00pm – New County Office Building 116

Mon, Oct 15

Mon, Oct 29 (if needed)

Mon, Nov 19

Mon, Dec 10

The governmental structure subcommittee convened for the first time and selected a Chair and a Vice-Chair. Discussion ensued regarding the schedule of subcommittee meetings. Once that was clarified, Mr. Yango suggested 6 issues to focus on as we begin the subcommittee work and the screening of the issues. These issues included:

- Partisanship
- The Initiative Process
- Elected/Appointed Officials – (Elections Director, Sheriff, Auditor)
- CRC Recommendation Process

- Instant Runoff Voting and Preference Voting

Subcommittee members agreed that these issues are the top five priority issues that need to be examined in great detail. The first two issues they asked Mr. Yango to focus on were partisanship and elected/appointed officials.

Both Commissioner Heinecke and Commissioner Bennett brought up the issue of the King County Library System. However, it was agreed that the Regional Governance Committee will be examining that issue.

Commissioner Gandara raised a concern on a personnel issue that needs to be addressed in the governmental structure subcommittee. The subcommittee agreed to listen to the issue.

Regional Governance Committee

Chair: Bryan Glynn

Vice Chair: Doreen Cato

Lead Staffer: Becky Spithill

Meeting schedule:

5:30-7:30pm – NCOB 124

Mon, Sept 24

Mon, Oct 1

Mon, Oct 29

Mon, Nov 5

Mon, Nov 26

Mon, Dec 3

Mon, Jan 7

Mon, Jan 28

Mon, Feb 4

In their review of the Regional Governance issues, subcommittee members expressed concern that some of the issues assigned to the Regional Governance Subcommittee were more appropriate for the Governmental Structure Subcommittee, specifically, the issues involving the Sheriff's Office and the budget. [Note: The primary charge of the Governmental Structure Subcommittee is to address issues involving elected vs. non-elected positions, in addition to electoral issues broadly conceived. Any issues having to do with departmental procedure or council operations have been assigned to Regional Governance. Part of the reason for this is to ensure that no one subcommittee is overwhelmed with issues.]

Members of the subcommittee agreed to review the issue tracker and identify those Regional Governance charter issues that they thought most important. Each member agreed to email Becky, by Thursday, September 20, a list of three to five issues that he or she believes the subcommittee should consider addressing over the next several months. One of the objectives of the September 24 meeting will be to come to consensus about the three to five issues that the subcommittee will take to the full commission.

Members of the subcommittee agreed that they will be addressing many issues involving Regional Committees. The subcommittee proposed that these issues be rolled up under an umbrella category characterized as "changes to regional committees." The subcommittee asked Becky to prepare background information on Regional Committees.

Rural/Local Issues Committee

Co-chairs: John Jensen and Terry Lavender

Lead Staffer: Corrie Watterson Bryant

Meeting schedule:

5:30-7:30pm – NCOB 118

Thurs, Oct 11

Thurs, Nov 8

Tues, Dec 4

Tues, Jan 8

Tues, Feb 5

The rural/local subcommittee convened for the first time, and selected John Jensen and Terry Lavender as co-chairs. The committee set its meeting schedule. Then Ms. Watterson Bryant presented a summary of comments that had been submitted by the public on rural/local issues.

The committee discussed the major issues before them, including rural representation, Unincorporated Area Councils, and land use/development.

John Groen noted that the changes we suggest to the charter should look to the future, not just respond to today's problems.

The group agreed that staff should research the question of how other similar county governments around the country have handled similar challenges of rural representation and services. The committee also agreed that part of their process should be to reach out to interested rural citizens and organizations to gather input.

The subcommittees reconvened to report on their breakout sessions. The entire schedule of meetings was shared with the group.

Mr. Lowry asked if there was any other business to consider.

Rebecha Cusack noted that the council's Financial Advisory Taskforce has recommended that the council consider two charter amendments. They relate to 1) changing the budget transmittal deadline dates (Section 410) because of biennial budgeting and 2) eliminating the allotment requirements in Section 475 of the charter (*note: the subject of the second amendment was corrected by Ms. Cusack on 9-25-07; the audio transcript reflects that the second amendment addressed capital financing*). The full council will be discussing these amendments shortly, and may request that the CRC take them up for consideration.

Co-chair Lois North adjourned the meeting at 7:30pm.

Next Meeting: Wednesday September 25, 2007

Respectfully submitted by Corrie Watterson Bryant