

NEWTON CHARTER COMMISSION
Wednesday, June 15, 2016
7:00 p.m. – City Hall – Room 222
MEETING MINUTES

Present: Chair Josh Krintzman, Vice Chair Rhanna Kidwell, Bryan Barash, Brooke Lipsitt, Jane Frantz, Howard Haywood, Anne Larner, Karen Manning, Chris Steele

The meeting was called to order at 7:00pm.

Approval of Minutes: June 1

Larner made a motion to approve, Lipsitt seconded. (9-0)

Article 7

Commissioners did not support direct reference to the Chapter 705, Acts of 1975 legislation in the charter so the Collins Center developed new language for Section 7-1 that focuses on planning-related structure versus operations.

The Commission will take a straw vote on Article 7 at the June 29th meeting.

Article 5 and 6

The Collins Center reported that recent charters have included a greater emphasis on financial planning. Anne and Bryan recommended that the city include a five-year forecast of the financial condition of the city. In recent years, the city has had five-year plans and the comptroller, the Collins Center, and others think this is good idea to codify this practice in the charter.

Anne noted that state law controls the budget process. The Newton charter language in this article is broad, providing flexibility to the city in the development of the budget and this has worked well for the city.

Section 5-1: No change.

Section 5-2 (Action on the Budget): Anne and Bryan recommended that a public hearing be held before the City Council votes on the annual budget. The Commission discussed the pros and cons of having such a public hearing (audio: 0:45-1:03)

Barash motion to add section requiring public hearing. Larner second. Motion rejected 2-6 (Krintzman, Kidwell, Lipsitt, Frantz, Haywood, Manning and Steele opposed)

Section 5-3 (Capital Improvement Program): Recommended new language will state that mayor and City Council are stewards of the city's physical assets. The section states specifically what assets and inventory the city will report on annually. The

Commission discussed how specific the language should be. Anne and Bryan will revise the language for the Commission to review at the June 29th meeting.

Section 5-4 (Contracts.): No change.

A new section will be added establishing an independent audit. This is another area where the city has made progress and adding this provision will codify this practice.

Commissioner Haywood had to leave.

6-1 (Reorganization Plans by City Council) This section was removed.

6-2 (Reorganization Plans by Mayor): The Commission discussed what constitutes a reorganization and how it is defined. Bryan said that it is not usually included in charters.

Other changes or additions: Brooke led a discussion about including legal counsel for the City Council in the charter. She suggested the 2% of the prior year's amount of the law department as an amount for outside legal counsel. The Commission discussed how or where the amount should be included.

Brooke made a motion that the City Council will receive a 2% of the prior year's law department budget when it needs outside legal counsel, Rhanna seconded. (3-5, No: Frantz, Krintzman, Larner, Manning, Barash; Haywood absent)

Bryan made a motion to add language in the transition section that sets the initial amount for outside legal counsel for the city council at 2% of the prior year's law department budget, and to incorporate in the charter that the city council could amend the amount by ordinance. Anne seconded. (8-0; Haywood absent)

Term Limits

After a discussion of school committee term limits, the Commission decided that this item needed to be part of a larger discussion of term limits for the mayor, city council, and school committee at the July 12th meeting.

Number of Wards

There was strong consensus that there should not be any change in the number of wards.

Proposed Prohibitions on Holding Multiple Elected Office

The Commission decided that the elected officials should not serve on a charter commission.

The meeting adjourned at 9:35pm.