

CHARTER REVIEW COMMISSION
Wednesday, December 14, 2011 – 8:00 a.m.
6th Floor Conference Room
Council Office Building

Commission Members Present:

Molly Mahoney Matthews, Chair
Mark Feinroth, Vice-Chair
Diane Nash Dillon
Wendell Holloway
Guled Kassim
Thomas King
Albert Pearce

Staff:

Justina Ferber, County Council
Marc Hansen, County Attorney
Marie Jean-Paul, County Council

Commission Members Absent:

Jeannie Cho
Mariana Cordier
Pamela Mason
Jerry Pasternak

Commission Chair Molly Matthews called the meeting to order at 8:10 a.m. She announced that Amanda had a baby girl on December 13.

I. Administrative Items

The Commission unanimously approved the minutes of the November 9 meeting.

II. Discussion

Commission Chair Matthews noted the Commission had less than five months before the May 1 deadline for its report to the Council. She brought the timeline printed on the agenda to the attention of Commissioners. Commissioners discussed the drafting of the report. Staff noted that Commissioners may want to break into task groups or subcommittees to write position papers or drafts on various issues for the first draft the report.

The speaker did not show up for the discussion on “Council Structure” so Commissioners continued their discussion of issues for report. (Later it was discovered that Ms. Linna Barnes of the League of Women Voters who was to be the guest speaker had left a message on Amanda’s voice mail yesterday that she would be unable to attend the meeting due to a medical issue and of course Amanda was out on leave.) From now on staff will check with guest speakers the day before they appear before the Commission.

Commission Chair Molly Matthews asked Commissioners to review the list of issues and to comment on issues they felt should be considered for the May report.

Potential issues raised

1. Allow a special hiring authority for people with disabilities (Councilmember Phil Andrews)
2. Council structure
 - Increasing the size of the Council by 2 district members (Councilmember Phil Andrews)
 - Abolish Council districts (former Councilmember Esther Gelman)
 - Having a 4-year Council President term (Commissioner Jerry Pasternak)
3. Collective bargaining and the authority for the County Executive to fund or not fund the bargaining contracts
4. Provide for the removal of a Councilmember by a vote of 6 Councilmembers for a serious violation of the Ethics law (Councilmember George Leventhal)
5. Remove the fire tax from the Charter §305 property tax limits (Councilmember George Leventhal)
6. Adjust budget deadlines (Human Resources Director Joseph Adler).

On issues 1 (Hiring of People with Disabilities) and 2 (Council Structure) there was general consensus that the Commission continue to study these issues for possible recommendations in the report. Staff will forward to Commissioners reports/discussion by previous charter commissions on the issue of Council structure.

On issue 3 (Collective Bargaining) Commissioners agreed to wait until a final court decision on the law suit between the unions and the county government before pursuing the issue further.

On issues 4 (Removal of a Councilmember) and 6 (Adjusting budget deadlines) additional information is needed before pursuing further. Staff will forward to Commissioners the budget calendar and budget process discussion from the FY12 budget documents.

On issue 5 (Remove Fire Tax from 305) Commissioners did not feel this issue should be considered. If the Commission were to pursue the issue, it would have to thoroughly study Section 305 including other possible exemptions and there was no interest in doing a study at this time.

The meeting adjourned at 9:00 a.m. Staff will reschedule the guest speaker for another meeting.