

**CHARTER REVIEW COMMISSION**  
**Wednesday, January 13, 2010**  
**6th Floor Conference Room**  
**Council Office Building**

**Commission Members Present:**

Nancy Soreng, Chair  
Michael Cogan  
Karen Czapanskiy  
Wilbur Friedman  
Mollie Habermeier  
Robert Shoenberg  
Moshe Starkman  
Judith Vandegriff  
Anne Marie Vassallo  
Charles Wolff

**Staff:**

Justina Ferber, County Council  
Marie Jean-Paul, County Council  
Marc Hansen, County Attorney's Office  
Amanda Mihill, County Council

**Guests**

Erin Cunningham, Gazette Newspaper

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Commission Chair Nancy Soreng began the meeting at 8:05 a.m.

**I. Administrative Items**

Ms Soreng announced that Commission Vice-Chair Alice Gresham Bullock resigned from the Commission.

The Commission approved the November 18 minutes. Motion made by Judith Vandegriff and seconded by Anne Marie Vassallo.

In favor: Michael Cogan, Karen Czapanskiy, Wilbur Friedman, Mollie Habermeier, Robert Shoenberg, Nancy Soreng, Judith Vandegriff, Anne Marie Vassallo, Charles Wolff (9)

The Commission discussed the December 9 minutes and made the following changes:

- Replaced the first two sentence of the 4<sup>th</sup> paragraph on page 2 to more accurately reflect Ms. Czapanskiy's concerns.
- Added the question "what is the view of the Human Rights Commission about the proposed Charter amendment?" to the list of questions on pages 2-3.

In favor: Michael Cogan, Karen Czapanskiy, Wilbur Friedman, Mollie Habermeier, Robert Shoenberg, Nancy Soreng, Judith Vandegriff, Anne Marie Vassallo, Charles Wolff (9)

**II. Redistricting Commission**

Mr. Wolff, Chair of the Redistricting Subcommittee thanked the subcommittee members for their efforts. Mr. Wolff presented the subcommittee's research to the Commission as described in a January 11, 2010 memorandum. Mr. Wolff also presented a handout suggesting potential Charter changes related to the Redistricting Commission. These memoranda will be made part of the meeting minutes.

Commission members discussed the pros and cons of making changes to the Redistricting Commission. Commission members made the following observations and comments:

- Some members felt that changing the structure currently in place was a 100% solution to a 1% problem and did not feel that it was an appropriate time to recommend changing the structure.
- The current structure requires Redistricting Commission members to be from a political party that polled at least 15% of the votes cast for Council candidates. Some members felt that this structure excludes 21.5% of the voting population from the redistricting process. (This represents the number of voters registered to third parties or unaffiliated.)
- Some members were concerned that an effort to remove all politics from the redistricting process would leave only voters who are unaffiliated with any party.
- Some members were concerned about reports issued by the Brookings Institute and the Cato Institute that showed that in elections, incumbents have an advantage and almost always win. Other members noted that the reports issued by those Institutes discussed only congressional elections and not local elections; the recommendation to have non-partisanship in redistricting was not based on empirical research, but on belief; and that taking politics out of the process doesn't improve competitiveness, but the public perception of fairness.

Commission members discussed the suggestions outlined in the memorandum on potential Charter changes and whether there was sufficient interest amount Commission members to pursue the issue further. Mr. Wolff was particularly interested in pursuing requiring councilmanic districts to be drawn such that there are "no lines to help or hurt an incumbent, political party, or group".

Mr. Starkman indicated his interest in discussing standards for drawing district lines and was particularly interested in prohibiting district lines to be drawn such that precincts and small municipalities are split. Ms. Czapanskiy noted her belief that the current councilmanic districts do not split municipalities. Mr. Starkman further commented that he may be interested in looking at qualifications similar to those required for Ethics Commission members, but also noted that he did not view these changes as compelling. Mr. Wolff argued that even if there is not a compelling need to change the Redistricting Commission, there may still be better ways to do it.

The Commission took a straw vote on whether there was a need for a Charter amendment to change the way redistricting is done in Montgomery County.

Support an amendment: Charles Wolff (1)

Oppose an amendment: Michael Cogan, Karen Czapanskiy, Wilbur Friedman, Mollie Habermeier, Robert Shoenberg, Nancy Soreng, Anne Marie Vassallo (7)

The Commission voted not to pursue the issue. Chair Soreng thanked the subcommittee members for their research and work on the issue.

The meeting was adjourned at 9:23 a.m.

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