

Home Rule Charter Revision Commission Minutes
January 17, 2019
5:30pm
Council Chambers, City Hall

Members Present: Nancy Turbak Berry, Dan Gabriel, SaLena Engels, Byron Callies, Melanie Hodorff, Nate Graf, Tom Beadnell, Kyle Lalim, Greg McDonald, Angie Reppe, Deb Ernst, David Vanderweide, Jeannie Vanderweide, Kristen Henderson, Chris Wilson, Mark Roby (via phone), Carla Roby, Jason Buechler, Buffy Heesch, and Chris Carter

Members Excused: Roger Whittle

Chairperson, Kyle Lalim, called the Home Rule Charter Revision Commission Meeting to order.

Motion was made and seconded to approve the January 9, 2019 minutes. All voted in favor and motion carried.

Approval of the agenda was made by Byron Callies and seconded. All voted in favor and motion carried.

Explanation of Commission Working Rules: Roberts Rules of Order, Revised

Byron Callies motioned to utilize *Roberts Rules of Order, Revised* as the governing document for the Home Rule Charter Revision Commission. Motion seconded. All voted in favor and motion carried.

Determination of Quorum

City Ordinance regulates a quorum is constituted by 11 members.

Other Issues as Deemed Necessary

Chairperson Lalim specified the Home Rule Charter Revision Commission's objective is to hear from individuals outside the community with experience in the Council/Manager form of government. The commission encourages input from the community and for residents to contribute to the process as ultimately, it is the community who will decide this government's format through the voting process should the commission make that recommendation.

According to the International City County Management Association, 2014 statistics show that 52% Council/Manager style is used in communities with populations of 10,000 to just under 25,000 and 62% of communities utilize that form of government in populations of just under 25,000 to just under 50,000. This is the fastest growing form of government in the United States and is said to free up elected bodies to establish policies which are carried out by an appointed manager and administrative staff. The manager is accountable to the entire council for the satisfactory implementation of council policy and day-to-day administration of municipal affairs. The Home Rule Charter Revision Commission's task is to come up with their recommendation

regarding this form of government. Lalim stated that the Council/Manager form of government was not on this meeting's agenda intentionally as to concentrate on some of the related procedural items affected should the group decide to recommend a change to the Watertown governing structure, changes that will ultimately be decided by the voters. Lalim stated that with a large group 100% agreement regarding every item is not the goal, but rather a consensus. Per, City Attorney, Matt Roby, a change from full-time Mayor to City Manager or change in the number of council members would occur at the next election cycle which would be June 2021.

The National Civic League City Charter model as well as a listing of City Council Liaison positions were given to the commission members to use as resource tools for upcoming meetings. Jeff Weldon, retired City Manager from Brookings, was contacted and will be calling in on January 31, 2019 for a Question and Answer session. The Brookings Mayor has also agreed to attend a meeting in the future. Barry Stock, Retired City Manager from Savage, Minnesota who has over 35 years of experience has also agreed to a call in meeting in February. In addition, City Manager of Aberdeen, Lynn Lander, has also been reached out to.

Public Comments

Public comment was made [inaudible]

Discussion/Action Regarding Auditor vs. Finance Officer, ref. Home Charter Section 3.04

Mark Roby stated the suggested change is due to the City of Watertown having a Finance Officer rather than an Auditor position. Mark Roby motioned to change the wording from "Auditor" to "Finance Officer" in Home Charter Section 3.04. Motion seconded. All voted in favor and motion carried.

Discussion/Action Regarding Public Works Director

Home Rule Charter does not address whether the City of Watertown has a Public Works Director. The City of Watertown had a Public Works Director which was eliminated several administrations ago. Currently, the Mayor is acting Public Works Director. The commission was in consensus that the Public Works Director position is not a requirement by the Home Rule Charter for recommendation to be placed on ballot, but rather an administrative decision.

Discussion/Action Regarding Number of City Council Members

Currently, Watertown has five (5) wards, with two (2) elected council members per ward and one (1) at-large elected Mayor. A concern regarding a change brought forth was if citizens would still be assigned a council member to contact should they have concerns if an at-large council were to be in place. A reply directed towards this concern was made stating, while your council person may no longer be your "neighbor", citizens would be able to address a council member. Another apprehension addressed was regarding the issue of having at-large councilmembers, which in doing so may cause one area of town to have dominance of the Council. A statement was made regarding the importance of having representation per ward regardless of the number on the Council and keeping the number at-large to one (1). The

discussion of the Mayor being a tie-breaking vote if the council number should change was mentioned as well as if the Mayor were to be elected at large or if the Mayor could be selected from one of the members elected to the council. Election stats show that there are three wards that have a great number of registered voters who turnout to the polls and a few wards that do not perform as well. Therefore, the risk remains having a concentration of elected Council members from one or two particular wards within the community. Chairperson Lalim stated that in a comment made by Barry Stock, Retired City Manager from Savage, Minnesota a challenge of having a higher concentration of City Council members is the difficulty in communication. The City Manager runs the day-to-day operations and the Council is the oversight. The efforts are challenging to keep the lines of communication open to enable the Council to stay up on the task of overseeing. The issue of creating ward boundaries was presented to City Attorney, Matt Roby. Determination was made that wards are set by City Ordinance with the ward lines most recently being changed in 2011. Even if the council members are not elected by wards, it is still necessary to have wards for election purposes. A statement was made that the City Manager position needs to be addressed prior to discussing the number of City Council Members. If the direction were to go toward a City Manager position, one City Council member per ward, one at large, and the Mayor as a tie-breaking vote was suggested as an option. One commission member perceived having two council members per ward allows for proper representation of the citizens of Watertown while only having one council member may be too large of a burden to be placed on one individual. Councilmen, Glen Vilhauer detailed the liaison position responsibilities City Council Members hold. Chairperson Lalim reiterated that this open dialog, regarding the number of City Council Members, is to spark questions to be directed in upcoming meetings towards those guests experienced in a City Manager form of government. Councilmen Don Roby stated that having ten council members helps spread out the workload as many hours can be dedicated to the City Council position. While he is a big proponent of a City Manager position, this does raise a yellow flag. If you have a full-time job, it is very difficult to put a lot of time into City Council. The current structure limits who can put time into the job and because of that, you are limiting your pool of those who will run for Council. History shows at one time, of the 5 council seats up for election, four were uncontested and a total of 400 votes were cast in that election. He stated that this is not what we want to see in our city. On that point, he continued, if a City Manager were decided upon, he would agree to reduce the council. If you have ten council members in the current configuration, you limited the number of people who will run by virtue of the workload. Another matter regarding recommending a City Manager is how much it will expand the budget. Stated was the belief that administratively you may end up saving money, but it was questioned in a more immediate sense, how will changing the size of the council effect the budget? Each Council Member receives an approximate \$10,600 yearly stipend. City Council Members are also refunded for conferences that they attend. A discussions was held regarding what work load, if any, would be taken off city council members should the City Manager form of government be made. A remark was made that the difference between a City Manager and a Mayor is that a City Manager would be prequalified coming into the position with experience, education, and the understanding of budgets where as a mayor may be elected with no prior experience. It was brought to the attention that the commission is getting in a pattern of saying Mayor *or* City Manager which is a mischaracterization of the issue. Most of the time you still have a mayor who is now and still could/should be a member of the City Council. The main reason to go to a City Manager would be professionalism; someone who is trained, skilled, and

has experience. No presumptions should be made that there would no longer be a Mayor should a City Manager be hired.

Unfinished Business

New Business

The next three meetings will be held in Council Chambers at 5:30pm on Thursday, January 31, 2019 / Tuesday, February 12, 2019 / Thursday, February 28, 2019

Other Business

None

Motion to adjourn was made and seconded. All voted in favor and motion carried.

MR/jm