

Minutes

July 11, 2019

Ms. Holmes opened the meeting at 8:39 a.m.

Charter Review Commission Members Present: Judith Center, Ayesha Holmes, James Howard, Tahira Mussarat Hussain, Deeba Jafri, Stu Kohn, Fred Leong, Dawn Popp, Carolan Stansky, and James Walsh

Staff Present: Lynne Rosen, Legislative Analyst and John Gwynn, Assistant County Solicitor

To avoid potential quorum issues in the future, Ms. Popp suggested that everyone respond upon receipt of the agenda and unapproved minutes if they will be attending the next meeting.

The Commission members approved unanimously the minutes of the June 20, 2019 Commission meeting.

Jeff Bronow, Chief, Division of Research, Department of Planning and Zoning presented information on how the population in Howard County has changed by councilmanic district since 2010 and future projections for population growth in Howard County by councilmanic district. Mr. Bronow discussed that the goal of redistricting is to rebalance the population. He reviewed a table and chart that summarized the Howard County population by council district in 2010 before the most recent councilmanic redistricting. The total countywide population in 2010 was 287,085. Between 18 and 22 percent of the total was distributed in each of the five districts. The 2018 population is estimated to be 322,992. The population by council district is fairly well-balanced at between 19 and 21 percent each of the total countywide population. The population is expected to grow to close to 367,000 by 2031, an average of 2,586 residents per year over the 17-year projection period. This is an average annual growth rate of 0.75%. Population growth in Howard County is slowing. From 2010 to 2018, the population grew by about 35,900 residents, representing a 1.5% average annual growth rate. Mr. Bronow reviewed a chart that shows the 2018 to 2035 population by council district and a map that shows the current council districts that were drawn after the 2010 census.

Mr. Bronow discussed that when the next Councilmanic Redistricting Commission works to rebalance the population based on the 2020 census, there may not need to be a lot of rebalancing because the population may still be around 20 percent in each district. County departments plan for the provision of services based on population projections. The amount of future growth will reduce in the future. The Route 1 corridor and the Columbia Villages will be the sites of future development. There is limited development planned for Route 1. There is not much vacant land on Route 1. There will be redevelopment on Route 1. There will also be resales of homes. The trends from the past 40 years are being reversed. There will be more townhouses and apartments built rather than single family homes. The trend will be more people in each unit. The General Plan will be revised in the next couple of years, so everyone will have

an opportunity to discuss the future of Howard County. In the future, there will be more redevelopment rather than new development.

Mr. Bronow discussed with the Commission members questions relating to household demographics, the 2020 Census, and the role of the Councilmanic Redistricting Commission to rebalance councilmanic districts

The members approved unanimously the minutes of the June 20, 2019 Commission meeting.

The members discussed the following questions for the Councilmembers, Council Administrator, and County Auditor during the July 24, 2019 meeting of the Commission.

FOR THE COUNCIL MEMBERS:

- 1) The Charter currently allows the filing of a referendum petition within 60 days after a law is enacted. Should the timeframe for filing a referendum petition be extended and by how much?
- 2) Is the time between the date of election and the first Monday in December adequate time to prepare for office?
- 3) Should the County Council have its own permanent legal counsel?
- 4) Should the office of a Councilmember be considered part-time or full-time employment?
- 5) Is the current number of constituents in your district the appropriate number for you to effectively provide constituent services? If not, should the number of councilmanic districts be increased? If the number of councilmanic districts should be increased, how many districts should be added? If the number of councilmanic districts should be increased, would you recommend at-large seats or additional districts? How should additional districts be drawn?
- 6) Should the current term limit of three terms of office for a Councilmember be changed? If yes, what should be the term limit?
- 7) Should a Councilmember be able to serve an additional term of office, if it is not a consecutive term?
- 8) Should the Councilmembers serve as members of the Zoning Board?
- 9) If you could change anything in the Charter, what change would you recommend?
- 10) Should Columbia be incorporated?

FOR THE COUNCIL ADMINISTRATOR:

- 1) How does a member of the public access the Journal of the County Council that is maintained under the County Council Rules of Procedure?
- 2) How does a member of the public access the indexed book of laws enacted by the County Council that is kept under Section 210(a) of the Charter?

FOR THE COUNTY AUDITOR:

- 1) What audit procedures, if any, are performed to monitor conflicts of interest or other ethical concerns of Howard County elected officials, appointed officials, or employees?
- 2) Are there any changes to the Charter you would recommend to strengthen the audit function?

The members had no comments on Section 302(i)4.

Ms. Stansky discussed the addition of an audit function to Section 302(i)5.

The members had no comments on Section 302(i)6.

Mr. Walsh discussed that Section 302(i)7 is sufficiently broad to include an audit function.

Mr. Howard discussed the intent of Section 302(i)4, 5, 6, and 7 to ensure that people are doing their jobs.

Ms. Holmes asked if there should be included in these provisions protection for someone who comes forward believing that something is going wrong.

Mr. Howard discussed federal whistleblower laws that protect someone coming forward.

Ms. Holmes discussed adding this to the list of parking lot issues. Would a person assume they have federal whistleblower protection?

Ms. Center asked if the federal whistleblower law applies at the local level.

Mr. Walsh discussed that if there is a violation of federal law it may apply, but if a violation of State law, it may not.

Mr. Howard asked if there is a State whistleblower law.

Mr. Gwynn responded that he will research this issue.

Ms. Holmes tabled additional discussion.

The members had no comments on Section 302(i)8 and 9.

The members discussed Section 302(i)10 relating to the appointment of the Chief Administrative Office and the heads of all offices and departments by the County Executive.

Ms. Popp discussed Council Resolution 51-2019 introduced by Councilmember Yungmann that would have required the County Executive to appoint, subject to confirmation by the affirmative vote of a majority of the members of the Council, the Chief Administrative Officer and the heads of all departments which are subject to his or her supervision and control under the Charter or by law.

Mr. Kohn commented that the Resolution failed. He asked for the issue of confirmation by the Councilmembers of the Chief Administrative Officer and the heads of departments to be added to the list of questions for the Councilmembers.

Ms. Popp discussed that because the members have already voted on this issue, why should the question be asked.

Mr. Kohn discussed that he would like to hear why Councilmember Yungmann introduced the Resolution.

Mr. Howard discussed that there is video of the Council discussion of Council Resolution 51-2019.

Ms. Stansky discussed the perspective of one Councilmember who is a member of a political party different than the party of the other Councilmembers.

The members discussed not putting this question on the list of questions for Councilmembers.

Ms. Popp suggested putting the question in a category of asking if have time to discuss.

The members had no comments on the remainder of Section 302(i) and Section 303.

Ms. Holmes adjourned the meeting at 9:53 a.m.