

# Howard County Charter Review Commission

APPROVED MINUTES

Date: Thursday, October 13, 2011

Time: 9:03 a.m.

Place: C. Vernon Gray Conference Room

Commission Members in attendance:

- Donna Richardson
- Michael Davis
- Sharon Ahn
- Cindy Ardinger
- Regina Clay
- Thomas Coale
- Edward Cochran
- Charles Feaga
- Alice Giles
- Yvonne Howard
- Steve Hunt
- Sang Oh
- Andrew Stack
- Joshua Tzucker
- James Walsh

- Ms. Richardson opened the meeting.
- Minutes were approved unanimously
- Members requested that staff provide summaries of public testimony in the chart of issues
- Members reviewed the chart of issues
  - §202
  - Mr. Coale suggested there was not an overwhelming amount of testimony that suggested that this was an issue or concern
  - Dr. Cochran stated that at large member would allow people more avenues for assistance; an at large position should be recommended
  - Mr. Walsh disagreed with the at-large concept commenting that state legislature and congressional seats are districts; some at-large and some districts will create a two tier legislature and be less efficient

- Mr. Oh suggested the question is whether the County has grown to the point where 7 members are needed; he believes the County has not
- Mr. Tzucker suggested that the Council member concerns about the number of constituents per district could be addressed by increasing the staff; Council member position should remain at part-time to avoid the self selection of only people who can afford to live in the County on Council salary; part-time allows for variety of people
- Ms. Clay suggested that it is not necessarily a concern of the constituents, it is more of a concern by the elected officials that they are stretched
- Mr. Hunt suggested that if the Council feels stretched they should consider more staff, and the commission could suggest that the Council add more staff.
- Mr. Oh suggested that the lack of public comments on the issue may suggest that the constituents do not feel underrepresented.
- Ms. Richardson called the vote on increasing the number of districts
  - Vote was unanimous to not recommend increasing number of districts
- Dr. Cochran suggested that the Commission recommend that the Council establish a commission to study the number of council districts
  - Dr. Cochran moved to recommend in minority report
  - Vote was 5-7 by show of hands, motion failed.
- Ms. Giles stated that the Council may see a rapid increase in population due to BRAC and New Town
- §202(g)
  - Commission voted unanimously to remove from Chart
- §208(h), 209(c), 209(d), 210(b), 604
  - Commission voted unanimously to approve this recommendations
- §209(d)
  - Commission voted unanimously to approve recommendation to change time limit to post emergency legislation from 4 hours to 12 hours
- §209(h)
  - Commission voted unanimously to approve recommendation to extend the life of a bill to 125 days
- §611
  - Commission voted unanimously to approve recommendation to exclude grants from lapsing appropriations
- §906 & 907
  - Commission voted unanimously to approve recommendation to eliminate Charter conflicts with the Maryland Public Information Act
- §202(f)(1)

- Commission voted 11-1 to strike occupation from district decision
  - Mr. Oh dissented stating that even it remained, the Office of Law would direct the Redistricting Commission to follow the Supreme Court decision not to consider occupation when drawing district lines
- §501(b)
  - Commission voted unanimously to approve recommendation of technical correction
- §615
  - Commission voted unanimously to approve recommendation of technical correction
- §701(c)
  - Commission voted unanimously to approve recommendation of technical correction
- §211(a)
  - Mr. Hunt stated that Russ Swatek recommended that the number of signatures needed be 3% of the votes cast for the last County Executive
  - Mr. Walsh suggested that there should be a cut-off: number of votes or registered voters as of specific time
  - Mr. Walsh provided statistics extrapolated from the Board of Elections information
  - Ms. Ahn asked for information regarding the history of why the numbers were chosen
  - Mr. Tzucker suggested that the concern from the citizens over the number of signatures required may decrease because of new technology that would make it easier to obtain the signatures
  - Commission members agreed to defer the discussion and decision on this section to the next meeting.
- Meeting adjourned at 10:47 a.m.