

Minutes

July 24, 2019

Ms. Sonnier opened the meeting at 8:31 a.m.

Charter Review Commission Members Present: Judith Center, Ayesha Holmes, James Howard, Deeba Jafri, Stu Kohn, Fred Leong, Margaret Ann Nolan, Dawn Popp, Paul Skalny, Yolanda Sonnier, Chairperson, Carolan Stansky, and James Walsh

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

The Commission members approved unanimously the minutes of the July 11, 2019 Commission meeting.

The members agreed to the following dates for future meetings of the Commission: September 4, 2019, September 24, 2019, October 8, 2019, October 22, 2019, November 6, 2019, and November 20, 2019.

The members discussed issues relating to quorum requirements at the beginning of a meeting and the potential impact on a quorum if a member must leave a meeting early. The current Charter Review Commission Rules of Procedure require two-thirds of the Commission for purposes of considering or transacting business.

Mr. Walsh discussed changing the quorum requirements in the Rules of Procedure to a three-fifths majority, which is nine members or a simple majority, which is eight members.

Mr. Kuc discussed that the body can decide how it wants to define a quorum.

The members discussed changing the Rules of Procedure to require three-fifths of the Commission for a quorum.

Mr. Kohn suggested a simple majority of those present for a quorum.

The members voted on a motion to amend the Rules of Procedure to require three-fifths of the Commission for a quorum. Nine members voted in favor of the motion. Three members voted against the motion. The motion failed.

Mr. Skalny suggested sending a letter to the Commission members discussing the significance of serving on the Commission and the importance of attending as many meetings as possible.

Ms. Sonnier announced that either the County Executive or a representative of the County Executive will attend a Commission meeting in September.

The members discussed the posting of Commission related information on the County web site. Mr. Leong asked if the members have been able to access SharePoint, and whether they see value in SharePoint.

Mr. Glendenning, County Auditor, reviewed a document he submitted with suggested additions and deletions to strengthen the audit function in Sections 212 and 213 of the Charter. He reviewed provisions in the Prince George's County and Baltimore County Charters relating to cooperation with the Auditor, a provision in the Anne Arundel County Charter concerning reports relating to employee theft or fraud in the County government, and provisions relating to inspection of records in Baltimore County, Prince George's County, and Anne Arundel County.

Mr. Glendenning responded to the following questions:

- 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?

Ms. Sonnier welcomed Councilmembers Walsh, Mercer Rigby, Jung, and Yungmann and requested any feedback they may have regarding the Charter. The Councilmembers responded to the following questions:

- 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?

Due to a lack of time to complete discussion of questions nine and ten, Ms. Sonnier requested the members submit in writing to the Commission any additional comments they may

have and any other feedback they may have. The Commission has received written recommendations for changes to the Charter from Councilmembers Mercer Rigby and Jung. She also welcomed the Councilmembers to attend either of the Commission meetings on September 4, 2019 and September 24, 2019.

Ms. Holmes asked the members to submit any comments on how they experienced the budget process and any recommendations relating to the process.

Mr. Leong requested any feedback from the Councilmembers on how to address workload concerns.

Ms. Sonnier welcomed Jessica Feldmark, Council Administrator, who responded to the following questions:

- 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?
- 3) Should the County Council have its own permanent legal counsel?

Ms. Feldmark suggested that Section 209(g) be amended to require that legislation that is passed by the Council be required to be presented within three business days, rather than three calendar days, to the County Executive for the County Executive's approval or disapproval.

Ms. Sonnier adjourned the meeting at 10:55 a.m.