

Charter Review Commission  
Wednesday, April 10, 2019  
C. Vernon Gray Room  
9:00 a.m.

Minutes (approved)

Ms. Sonnier opened the meeting at 9:00 a.m.

Charter Review Commission Members Present: Judith Center, Ayesha Holmes, James Howard, Tahira Mussarat Hussain, Deeba Jafri, Elgin Klugh, Stu Kohn, Fred Leong, Dawn Popp, Paul Skalny, Yolanda Sonnier, Chairperson, Carolan Stansky, and James D. Walsh

Staff Present: Lynne Rosen, Legislative Analyst, Gary Kuc, County Solicitor, John Gwynn, Assistant County Solicitor, and Theodore Wimberly, Council Administrator (Acting)

Ms. Sonnier welcomed the members of the Commission and thanked them for their participation. She explained that the Charter requires a Commission to meet every eight years and reviewed the purpose of the Commission as stated in Council Resolution No. 18-2019. Although the Commission has a term of two years, the report of the Commission is due on or before May 1, 2020. The bulk of the work of the Commission will be during the first year. Future meeting dates for the Commission will be discussed at the end of today's meeting.

Commission members and staff introduced themselves.

Ms. Sonnier discussed the process for the Commission to adopt Rules of Procedure. She explained that the Commission will vote on adoption of Rules of Procedure at the next meeting of the Commission. She asked if anyone is interested in serving as the Parliamentarian or the Vice-Chairperson of the Commission to let her know. Ms. Sonnier reviewed the Model Rules of Procedure. She requested that any proposed amendments to the Model Rules of Procedure be distributed to Commission members for their review prior to the next meeting.

The Commission members discussed the quorum requirements in the Model Rules of Procedure.

Ms. Rosen reviewed administrative issues for the Commission, including contact information, the Charter Review Commission website and email address, distribution of information to Commission members, research requests, and examples of the process of previous Commissions regarding public hearings, written requests to County elected officials, chairs of County boards and commissions, and County department heads requesting any recommendations for revisions to the Charter and inviting them to speak to the Commission, and meetings to review and discuss recommendations.

Mr. Kuc welcomed the Commission members and thanked them for serving on the Commission. He explained that the Office of Law is the legal advisor for the work of the Commission to the extent that legal input is needed. The Charter allocates power and sets limits

on this power. The Charter is the blueprint for how County government works, and the County Code provides specifics for that work. State law designates the powers of a Charter government.

Mr. Gwynn reviewed the requirements of the Public Information Act (PIA) and the Open Meetings Act (OMA). Mr. Gwynn reviewed OMA requirements for notice of meetings, setting agendas, meeting locations, closing of meetings, keeping minutes, and enforcement of the Act by the Open Meetings Compliance Board and recourse through the judicial system.

Mr. Gwynn and Mr. Kuc reviewed requirements regarding a quorum. The question of what constitutes a quorum will be decided at the next meeting during the discussion of the adoption of rules of procedure.

Ms. Stansky asked about the differences in power among various counties. Mr. Kuc discussed the differences in power depending on the type of local government: charter home rule, code home rule, and commission.

In response to a question asked by Mr. Kohn regarding the role and objective of the Commission, Ms. Sonnier responded that every eight years a Commission reviews the Charter and makes any recommendations for changes to the Charter to the County Council. The County Council will decide whether to accept the recommendations. The Commission will request recommendations from local officials, boards and commissions, and department heads and review those recommendations. It was recommended to also receive input from previously elected officials.

Mr. Kuc reviewed Council Resolution No. 18-2019 regarding the purpose and establishment of the Commission.

Mr. Wimberly reviewed the role of staff for the Commission.

Ms. Sonnier discussed the requirement for minutes of Commission meetings.

Mr. Wimberly discussed that minutes will be action minutes. Anyone seeking additional details about a meeting of the Commission will be able to listen to an audio recording of the meeting.

Ms. Sonnier discussed the possibility of an electronic hub for Commission members to share documents. Staff is researching the feasibility of an electronic hub to share documents. Staff will also distribute charters for other counties.

The members discussed a schedule for future meetings. They also discussed that public hearings should be held relatively early in the process. The members would like input on recommendations for any changes to the Charter from elected officials and Howard County residents as soon as possible. The members also discussed the number of public hearings and their locations. Ms. Sonnier explained that the 2011 Commission held three public hearings, including two regional meetings and one meeting in the George Howard Building. Ms. Sonnier suggested that the Commission discuss the schedule of public hearings at the next meeting. The

next meetings of the Commission will be on April 24, 2019, May 8, 2019, and May 23, 2019 at 8:00 a.m. If anyone is unable to attend a meeting, access via conference call will be available.

Ms. Sonnier discussed action items for the next meeting. It was suggested that the members review the Recommendations of the 2011 Charter Review Commission and the Preamble, Article I, and Article II of the Charter for the next meeting.

The meeting was adjourned at 10:37 a.m.