

Charter Commission

March 16, 2023 – 5:30 p.m.

Members Present: Jorstad, Blashill, Dodds (5:33 p.m.), Ravnikar, Heinonen, Meuers, Tanem, Albrecht

Staff Present: City Clerk Michelle Miller, City Attorney Katie Nolting

Chair Heinonen noted a quorum and called the meeting to order at 5:30 p.m.

Approval of Agenda

Motion by Albrecht, seconded by Jorstad approving the agenda as presented. Motion carried by unanimous voice vote.

Public Comment Period

No appearance.

Business Items

Discussion of Ranked Choice Voting

Albrecht noted that a presentation to the council on this topic was provided by FairVote Minnesota at a January 9, 2023 work session. The City was asked to adopt a resolution supporting local control for local elections and ranked choice voting for State and Federal Elections in Minnesota. Legislation is currently being proposed by FairVote Minnesota. Albrecht stated she supports the Charter Commission adopting a resolution. Most of the members of the Charter Commission commented that they support ranked choice voting with Blashill and Jorstad stating that education will be important. Blashill further stated she supports anything to help fill council vacancies sooner. Blashill also expressed concern regarding the costs to the city for either education or implementation. Heinonen noted that supporting this resolution does not automatically require ranked choice voting in Bemidji, it just gives us the option do elections with ranked choice voting.

Motion by Albrecht, seconded by Meuers, that the Charter Commission support the resolution supporting local control for local elections and ranked choice voting for State and Federal Elections in Minnesota. Motion carried by unanimous roll call vote.

Motion by Meuers, seconded by Albrecht, requesting that the City Council adopt a resolution supporting local control for local elections and ranked choice voting for State and Federal Elections in Minnesota. Motion carried by unanimous voice vote.

Discussion of Code of Ethics

Heinonen stated that a code of conduct for the City Council has been discussed at various times by the Charter Commission. At one time, it was stated that elected officials follow the personnel policies. However, upon review of the personnel policies it appears that is not the case. Albrecht noted the City of Edina's code of conduct as a good example. Nolting stated she has other city examples. It was suggested that it would be best if the council create their own code of conduct rather than it coming from the Charter Commission.

Motion by Jorstad, seconded by Meuers, to ask the City Council to adopt a code of conduct within six months or the Charter Commission will act. Motion carried by unanimous voice vote.

Discussion of Council Vacancies and Special Elections

Heinonen commented on the number of council vacancies and special elections and the Minnesota Statute dictating when the city can hold a special election. Heinonen sought input regarding Chapter 2.05 of the Charter regarding the number of days remaining on the term that triggers a special election. Blashill suggested that the council should appoint someone regardless of the days remaining. Meuers commented that the people should have a voice and does not think councilmembers should appoint their own members. Suggestions of different types of interview panels were put forth including members from the Charter Commission, other city committees or citizens. Legal research will need to be done regarding that.

Discussion of Chapter 6 – Review of Administration of City Affairs

Heinonen sought input from the Charter Commission regarding how council meeting agendas are created. Albrecht indicated her perspective is that it is an administrative duty, and that the council can add or remove items at the council meeting. Heinonen referenced Chapter 3.04 that the council shall determine its own rules and order of business. Chapter 6 does have language stating that “the city manager shall recommend to the council for adoption such measures...” but that does not clearly state how the agenda is created. Additional discussion is needed.

Next Meeting

The next meeting is scheduled for Wednesday, June 21, 2023 at 6:00 p.m. in City Hall.

Adjourn

With no further business, a motion by Jorstad, seconded by Tanen, to adjourn. Motion carried unanimously. The meeting adjourned at 7:18 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,



Michelle R. Miller
City Clerk/Secretary