

# CITY OF BEMIDJI

## CHARTER COMMISSION

### ANNUAL REPORT – DECEMBER 31, 2018

*IN ACCORDANCE WITH MINNESOTA STATUTES 410.05, Subd. 2*

#### **June 27, 2018 Annual Meeting**

The Bemidji Charter Commission held the required annual meeting. City Clerk Miller administered the Oath of Office to reappoint Commission member Casey McCarthy (new term ending 06/01/2022). The Commission also held election of officers.

#### **Section 2.03 Council Composition and Election – Review Term of Mayor**

Heinonen stated that he has had questions of why the term of our mayor is two years. Stombaugh stated that only three of 16 charter cities have terms of two years for the mayor. The other cities have four year terms for the mayor. Heinonen questioned whether our council is big enough to serve our community. The 2017 estimated population is almost 16,000 and with the 2020 Census and annexation coming soon, that number will grow. Members discussed the possible need to expand the council by either adding an at large member or adding another ward to the city.

#### **Section 2.05 and Section 4.03 – Review Timeline for Special Elections**

Since the change of the Charter regarding the appointment or special election process in the event of a vacancy, it has been determined that there needs to be time allowing absentee balloting. The last special election took six months to fill the vacancy because of the extra time. It was determined that the timeline in the Charter be reviewed and updated to meet the statute requirements for absentee voting.

#### **Charter Commission Membership**

Miller stated that Ryder did not wish to seek reappointment to another term, therefore, creating one opening on the Charter Commission. Miller also stated that there has been no communication from Newman regarding his membership on the Charter Commission.

**Motion by Meuers, seconded by Stombaugh to contact Caleb and upon no response, a vacancy will be declared.**

#### **July 25, 2018 Special Meeting**

#### **Section 2.03 Council Composition and Election – Review Term of Mayor**

Heinonen suggested that the term of the mayor should be four years. He also suggested adding another At-Large council position. Commission members discussed the issues surrounding the pros and cons of changing the term of the Mayor as well as the possibility of restructuring the council. Motion by Stombaugh, seconded by Jorstad to table the topic for further discussion and input from council members. Motion carried by unanimous vote.

#### **Section 2.05 and Section 4.03 – Review Timeline for Special Elections**

The question of whether the timeline for conducting special elections was consistent with state statute. After further review of the statute and the charter with the City Attorney, it was concluded that the charter is consistent with state statute.

Members discussed the necessity of setting forth a more defined process for appointing council members under the charter created after a vacancy is declared.

**Charter Commission Membership**

There are two vacancies on the Charter Commission.

**September 19, 2018 Special Meeting****Section 2.03 Council Composition and Election – Review Term of Mayor**

Meuers and Heinonen spoke with council members individually regarding the term of Mayor being changed from two years to four years. The responses were split with no unanimous support for the change. It was noted that if the Mayor term is changed to four years it should coincide with the presidential election. Heinonen stated that he has also been able to discuss this topic with the general public and did not receive a lot of negative feedback. He also noted that with the term being only two years, the Mayor seems to always be campaigning. It was suggested that the At Large and the Mayor terms be opposite of each other.

After discussing the council composition, motion by Jorstad, seconded by Heinonen to wait until a new council is seated before bringing this issue to council.

**Charter Commission Membership**

An application was received from Randi Su Tanem. The question came up that Randi Su is Pam Jorstad's daughter. Jorstad stated she doesn't feel there is a problem serving together. Miller stated that after researching with the issue with Felix they could not find anything prohibiting family members from serving on the same commission.

Motion by Heinonen, seconded by Stombaugh accepting the application of Randi Su Tanem to the Charter Commission. Motion carried.

**November 15, 2018 Special Meeting****Oath of Office**

City Clerk Miller administered the Oath of Office to appoint Commission member Randi Su Tanem (term ending 06/01/2021).

**Section 2.03 Council Composition and Election – Review Term of Mayor**

Stowe stated that after comparing the terms of the mayor with cities of the same size, the majority of them have four year terms. Upon discussing the term of the mayor, **motion by Heinonen, seconded by Meuers to modify the Section 2.03 as follows:**

**“The mayor shall be elected at large and shall serve for a term of ~~two~~ four years and until his/her successor is elected and qualified.” Such four year term shall begin in 2020 and each new term will coincide with the Presidential election. Motion carried unanimously.**

The City Attorney and City Clerk will prepare an ordinance for further review by the Charter Commission.

**Campaign Finance Discussion**

Meuers is concerned about the campaign finance reporting during recent campaigns. Meuers feels that the City Charter or the City Council should make someone responsible for checking campaign finance reports for accuracy and completeness. Felix stated that under

Minnesota Statute 211B.32, Subd. (1)(a)(b) provides for a process whereby citizens can file a complaint with the Campaign Finance and Public Disclosure Board. The findings of that process may also be prosecuted by a county attorney. No action was taken on this matter.

**Charter Commission Membership**

An application was received from Ara Charles Gallo to fill the vacancy of the term ending June 1, 2022; upon discussion, **motion by Meuers, seconded by Tanem accepting the application of Ara Charles Gallo to the Charter Commission. Motion carried.**

Respectfully submitted,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Michelle R. Miller". The signature is written in a cursive style.

Michelle R. Miller  
Deputy City Clerk