

Charter Review Committee Meeting Minutes  
HELD ON  
June 22, 2022  
6:00 P.M.

The regular meeting of the Charter Review Committee was held at the Mechanicville Public Library, 190 North Main Street, Mechanicville, New York on Wednesday June 22, 2022.

Mark Seber: Called the meeting to order 6:00 P.M.  
Mark Seber led the Pledge of Allegiance to the Flag.

Roll Call:	Mark Seber -Chairman	Present
	Matt Maiello	Present
	Jim Peluso	Present
	Ed Morcone	Present
	Ann Cerone	Absent
	Tony Accetta- Vice Chairman	Present
	Greg Mansfield	Present
	Nick Rinaldi	Absent
	Bob Murphy-Secretary	Present

Mark Seber stated the committee has invited former Commissioners and Mayors to come and discuss the charter, how the government operates in the City, and ideas on how things can be improved and he thanked them for attending the meeting. He went on record to say that former Mayor Baker, former Mayor Patrick Hildreth, former Accounts Commissioner Michelle Duell, Former Accounts Commissioner Kim Dunn, former DPW Commissioner Jack Messori and former Public Safety Commissioner Barb McGuire were all in attendance. He went on to say he would like to give each one of them a minute or so to give an overview of what they thought about reviewing the charter and the two possible ways the committee thought this could be done is by taking the charter and making it more current and up to date and more efficient and easier to follow or moving the government into a different form of government whether it is a strong Mayor, City Administrator or however that can be done. He commended the Committee on their hard work as they have met with several entities of the City.

Former Mayor Baker stated he feels the charter definitely needs to be revised and he suggested a strong Mayor form of government adding that when he came into office in 2014 the City was on the verge of bankruptcy and thanks to former Commissioner Gilheany and the other Commissioners working together the City is doing very well financially now. He added he took the lead and spoke with the other Commissioners about their spending and they all were receptive and worked together but he feels there needs to be someone in charge to take the lead and technically with the form of government the way it is now, the other Commissioners did not need to be receptive and could of done what they wanted.

Former Mayor Patrick Hildreth stated he agreed with Dennis and there needs to be someone in charge because with the form of government that is currently in place there are 5 separate

entities, they all have their own budgets and can spend them the way they want to, and there is no control. He went on to say things are behind the times in the City, he stated the City needs a strong Mayor form of government, someone in charge so if there is a problem you are going to one person.

Former Commissioner Barb McGuire stated she has some ideas of things in the charter that should be changed. She went on to state her concerns which are attached to the minutes.

Former Commissioner Michelle Duell stated she feels it should be changed to a City Manager with someone that has a master's degree in public administration, and that voting and electing people to positions that they are not qualified for is detrimental to our community. She went on to say she feels one central human resources unit is needed and not have it be a Commissioner.

Former Commissioner Kim Dunn stated the Charter needs to be strengthened, and stated there are people in office that don't follow the Charter and they don't understand their roles. She also thinks the Finance Commissioner needs to have more control over the budget and should have some college experience. She went on to say if people are not going to follow the employee handbook it is pretty much useless and she thinks a strong Mayor form of government could turn into a dictatorship depending on who is in office. She ended by saying the Charter needs a lot of work.

Commissioner Seber stated they are all in agreeance that regardless of what form of government they decide to present the Charter needs to be strengthened.

Former Commissioner Jack Messore stated he agrees with the others that there is a lot wrong and too much leeway in each department especially with spending.

Commissioner Seber stated that anything over \$10,000 needs Council approval but otherwise everyone has their own budget and can spend it how they want. He added he did not invite the current administration because the committee has spoken with them individually. He went on to say the committee has done a tremendous job and have done their due diligence and he is hoping in the next couple of meeting they will be able to decide what way they would like this to go.

Jim Peluso stated after speaking with individual there are no concrete policies within the City which is appalling the City has gone this long without them and each department seems to have their own way of doing things and the transition from one Commissioner to another is a whole other issue that is not spelled out.

Kim Dunn agreed since she asked several times for the policies and procedures but there never was any but there definitely needs to have them set in place.

Tony Accetta stated he is hearing a lot about education specifically for the Finance Department and went on to say it should be universal across the board.

Jim Peluso stated one of the things they are finding in a small City it is hard to find someone qualified to run for the Commissioner of Finance or Commissioner of Accounts with a specific skill set or you have to hire that expertise and spend a lot of money doing so. He went on to say that if you are looking for qualified people with certain requirements it may not happen in a small city with 5200 people.

Michelle Duell stated if you want good quality, educated people you are going to have to pay for them.

Jim Peluso went on to say the question has come up if the Commissioner need to hire Deputy's with certain qualifications.

Commissioner Seber stated that is you have a strong Deputy it makes the situation much easier. It was also discussed that due to the salaries offered it limits the amount of people to run even further. He went on to say that it would be cheaper to go with a strong Mayor form of government as opposed to a City Administrator.

Michelle Duell stated that paying a City Administrator would possible eliminate hiring other side contractors.

Commissioner Seber stated if they get to that point that is a conversation that needs to be had.

Tony Accetta asked Barb McGuire if she thought if they had a separate department from HR monitoring PTO would it save money.

Barb McGuire stated that someone working for City Hall that doesn't work for a particular department should be reviewing time sheets.

Michelle Duell stated that could be easily resolved by having a computerized docket.

Commissioner Seber stated it has been a common discussion about having a separate HR.

The discussion was had about changing the name of the Office of Public Safety to the Office of Parks and Recreation.

Both Barb McGuire and Kim Dunn stated the time cards are very vague and don't have any accountability.

They discussed other things that need to be looked into like confidentiality and training.

Jim Peluso stated the committee was advised to have the public involved in the process and is wondering if there are any suggestions how to get the public out to give their input. He added about having a quorum at the library, fire department, or senior center.

Greg Mansfield suggested the school auditorium.

Jim Peluso stated suggestions on how to get people involved would be appreciated.

Someone suggested opening meetings to public comment.

Commissioner Seber stated they would be doing that and the reason they have not thus far is it was important for the committee to go out and do the work they have been doing and learn how the government operates and then get input from the community. He added in the past few months if there were questions they were not able to answer them at that time but now that they have done their due diligence they are more aware of the process.

Bob Murphy stated that at any public engagement it will be important how any of the information they have collected is presented so people are aware of what has been uncovered and possible solutions for them.

Tony Accetta stated he is looking forward to opening up to public comment but stated he was not for having public comment in the past, he went on to say they were bombarded with questions the first night and the committee barely knew each other or even know what they were looking at so they needed to do their due diligence first so they have answers for the public. He went on to say he feels he has a better understanding of how things run and is ready to have a public forum but added he is concerned about having very few people showing up.

Kim Dunn suggested social media and suggested putting the meeting dates in advance for the next meetings.

Jim Peluso stated they need to figure out how to get more people involved in the government and added the one thing they do know is Mechanicville and Saratoga are the only two Commission form of government and no one else has chosen to have the Commission form of government. He added Saratoga is different than Mechanicville because they have the luxury and income to hire Deputy's with hire salaries to run their departments.

Commissioner Seber stated he believes the staff at the City does an excellent job.

Jim Peluso stated that the concern is when those people leave how do you get qualified people.

Commissioner Seber thanked everyone and stated they are all learning a lot. He announced the next meeting is August 3<sup>rd</sup> at 6:00 pm at the Mechanicville Public Library.

Motion to Adjourn: Tony Accetta

Seconded by: Greg Mansfield

Meeting Adjourned: 7:03 pm

The City Attorney should not be hired without a contract. Our attorney does not have one. Hard to decipher what responsibilities they have and the job expectation. Also, the City Attorney should not be able to receive the same raise as City Hall employees. When hired, it should be for a specific amount, with no benefits. When they go on vacation, they should not be receiving any salary, regardless of whether or not they would be able to telecommute. The City attorney should not be appointed if there is any conflict of interest, or a relationship in any way including having superiors who's firm represents any City Council in any way. ~~This would be a conflict~~ <sup>This would alleviate any</sup> <sup>impropriety.</sup> <sup>member</sup>

Full time Commissioners should not have unlimited sick and vacation time. They should start off with two weeks PTO, and earn time each pay period. They also should have to fill out time sheets so that there is no question as to whether or not they are entitled to PTO.

The Charter does not provide for any Commissioner to have to produce any doctor's notes while out on sick leave. There is no indication that after a certain period of time a doctor's note is warranted (usually after three days). Nor is there any specific time period in which a Commissioner who is out on sick leave would have to file for disability. As it stands, they can just be out for any period of time and collect their regular pay. We have disability insurance.

The Charter does not provide that a salaried, part time, on call employee, while out on sick leave or on vacation, will not receive their pay. This should be changed to reflect that while out of the area, or incapacitated, they will not be paid.

The Mayor, per the charter, has the discretion of either filling in for another Commissioner or appointing someone to fill in the event that a Commissioner is unable to fulfill their obligations. If the Mayor, (as they have in the past) fills in, there should be no pay (as it's been in the past). Right now, the Charter does not state that if the Mayor fills in that there would be any remuneration. It seems inconceivable that a part time Commissioner can hire themselves and then be paid. Is it even legal to work and overlap two jobs at the same time? If a part time Commissioner is filling in part time, they should not get double what the other part time Commissioners get.

The Charter should also state that a Commissioner only has jurisdiction over the hiring and full/part time status of that hire, for their office only. No other Commissioner should be able to dictate for any other office.

The Charter states that the Commissioner of Public Works shall have the power to make arrests and/or issue appearance tickets for offenses against the law and against City ordinances. This is obviously problematic.

The Commissioner of Finance and their Deputy should be required to have credentials. Maybe a specific number of credit hours in accounting, a degree, etc. This office handles millions of dollars. Substitution of a degree could be allowed if they had a certain number of years of experience in the same type of work, but nonetheless would still have to show some course work.

Change the name of the Office of Public Safety to Parks and Recreation.

stormwater from gutters & Sump Pumps  
to Street or yard