

Charter Review Committee Meeting Minutes
HELD ON
February 16, 2022
7:00 P.M.

The regular meeting of the Mechanicville City Council was held at the Mechanicville Public Library, 190 North Main Street, Mechanicville, New York on Wednesday February 16, 2022.

Mark Seber: Called the meeting to order 7:00 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	Absent
	Ann Cerone	Present
	Tony Accetta- Vice Chairman	Present
	Gregg Mansfield-Treasurer	Present
	Nick Rinaldi	Present
	Bob Murphy-Secretary	Present

Mark Seber announced they would be having public comment at this time but are limiting it to three (3) minutes and added the public can make statements but the board is not at a point where they can answer any questions because no decisions have been made as to what direction it they are going.

Public Comment:

Marylou Cebula defined what the City Charter and what a good charter should provide. She stated that she feels changing the form of government that has been proposed is only giving more power to fewer people with less oversight. She stated revising the City Charter is more important than changing the government and if it is decided to change the form of government there should be a financial outline of the costs. She is asking why this is such a rush to get it on the ballot in November, this form of government that the City has now has been this way for decades so what is another year. Marylou Cebula stated that the form of government that City has now makes the City unique and has worked well in the past. She added the City consists of almost half women but there is only one woman on a nine (9) person panel and the resident's median age is 34 and the Council does not reflect the younger generation. She asked Mark if he spoke with the Council on their views.

Mark Seber stated he asked them simple regardless of their views would they agree to move it to referendum if it gets to that point and a majority have told him yes.

Marylou Cebula stated she feels the committee would be better used using the year to revise the charter.

Kim Dunn stated she feels it is the wrong move not having Mike Rubino livestreaming the meeting. She went on to say it was stated at the last meeting there would be a time line and she wants to know where it is.

Mark Seber stated he feels they need to decide what direction they are going and the timeline will be affected by what they decide to do.

Kim Dunn stated she disagrees.

Jim Peluso stated the committee has not even had a discussion yet and process and goals are already being discussed. He went on to say they this is the first committee he has ever sat on a committee where they haven't even had a discussion yet and are expected to answer questions.

Mark Seber stated once the board decided what direction they would like to go in then he would like to come up with a schedule and timeline everything else.

Kim Dunn stated the meeting should have been livestreamed if they were discussed which way to go as that is important to the public and would make it transparent.

Tony Accetta stated he agrees with her but also it was talked about why there is a treasurer on the board. He added he is all for transparency and deadlines but he is hoping to have open conversations as this is only the second meeting of this board. He went on to say he appreciates the questions but would also appreciate given some time to have a discussion.

Jim Peluso added this is a group of citizens appointed by the government to look at the government.

Mark Seber stated he has no desire to rush this process as he knows how important and complicated it is so if they don't make the August deadline they can put it off to next year. He added that is something that will need to be decided in the upcoming months and the plan is not to rush it.

Kim Dunn stated the charter absolutely needs a lot of work.

Mark Seber stated that if you are changing government it is a massive change of the charter so why change the charter if you are going to turn around and change the form of government, because then you will have to turn around and change it again.

Barbara McGuire asked if he would be asking the Commissioners at the next City Council members if they want to put it out to the voters.

Mark Seber stated that would not have to be done until July.

Barbara McGuire asked if the Commissioners have received any information about the different forms of government.

Mark Seber stated only if they have done it themselves. He stated he has never asked them their position he only asked if they would allow it to go to vote to let the public decide what form of government they want.

Barbara McGuire asked if the former Mayor is being consulted since he formed this committee.

Mark Seber stated he has not.

Nick Rinaldi asked what the age of this committee has to do with anything and when talking about the streaming of the meetings his wife watches them and there are never younger people attending the meetings unless they want something. He went on to say that he is 74 years old and has been a volunteer in the City his entire life and is offended by the comment.

Marylou Cebula stated the reference she was making was the committee is making choices for the entire City and was referring to the reflection of the City dynamics.

Ann Cerone stated it would be a vote by the citizens and this board would discuss putting a recommendation out there to vote but it is not the committees decision it is the voters. She went on to say the Charter is going to be re-vamped but like Mark said it doesn't make sense to do the charter and then if we want to change the form of government it would all have to be re-done.

Tom Mahoney stated that he presumes one of the reasons they are entertaining changing the form of government is because the form that is in place in now is more geared to having retired people in office as the assistant get paid more than the Commissioners and if it is done a different way you may get more younger people involved.

Discussion regarding direction of Committee

Mark Seber stated what he would like to do tonight is focus and come up with a decision as to what direction this group wants to move in, whether it is for a government change or strictly a charter update. He added he is a big proponent of government change having been in this form of government for ten (10) years now. He went on to say that running your own department is fine but there is no central plan, everyone is basically doing their own things and he thinks the City needs to focus on a bigger plan to move the City forward. Mark went on to say we have five (5) governments running simultaneously basically, they all have their own budgets and all have their own missions but one doesn't always know what the other is doing. He said he does think it will be more efficient and we need to get more younger people involved in the City government and the way it is now is not the way to do it. He went on to say that younger people who work full time and have families cannot take time out of their day to come in and run a department, it just doesn't work. He asked for other board members points of view.

Tony Accetta stated his thought was he wants to examine the charter first and foremost and he believes there are areas that need to be updated but he is not sure about the change in government

and what like more numbers as to who is in charge of what. He wants to take a look at the charter first, examine it, see where the pros and cons are of it, and if there is a lot of pros to keep the charter where it is with modifications they will go that route but if they do their due diligence and see the changes lead to a different form of government then the change will need to be made. He did go on to say that in the past he did consider running for Mayor but then realized that he couldn't do it efficiently with working a full time job so it is geared to retirees. A good wage will need to be set to have young people to run.

Ann Cerone stated that listening to Tony that makes sense but she thought they could decide on a form of government then make the changes and added it seems that the current form of government does not seem efficient.

Jim Peluso stated it is important to look at the charter as a whole and added he feels the charter should be a government thing as opposed to a policy book and he would like to see what should be revised and run it by the Commissioners and public to see what they think. He stated he is open to look at both the change in government as well as revisions to the charter in a manner to hear the pros and cons.

Nick Rinaldi stated he thinks they should look at both ends of it, and as it was stated there isn't a lot of money but you are not going to get a young established individual to come work for \$14,000 a year. He went on to say both ends of it need to be looked at and see what public wants. He added the committee is not making the decision they are just making the recommendation and let the people tell what they want.

Gregg Mansfield stated they best serve the committee and the City by taking the time to educate themselves as to what the advantages and disadvantages are and to educate the citizens and get their feedback. He went on to say if the decision is made to change the form of government he is willing to wait however long it takes to make sure it is done the right way. He went on to say he would like to talk with the council members, department heads, employees getting a solid education piece to see the advantages, disadvantages, and cost so that they can come up with something that is going to work for the better of the City. He added the Commissioner form of government is restricted to three (3) of the sixty-two (62) cities in the State of New York and maybe they are telling us something that they are not as popular as they once were.

Matt Maiello stated as of right now he can't really say what he thinks is the best option he stated they need to look to see what the costs will be and he did say he does agree there is a lack in the younger generation being involved in the government and would like to look into that more. He added he is in favor of waiting until next year which will give the most amount of time to understand more, and he would like to speak with the current Commissioners and staff at City Hall to see what their thoughts are and get a cost analysis.

Bob Murphy stated he believes that the Commissioner form of government does have a lot of flaws that have already been pointed out and it is important to discuss how we want our community in the future and see the public's point of view. He added as of now he is not sure what form of government would be best but is interested in hearing information for due diligence to get that going and he stated he feels he likes schedules and deadlines so he is all for having a

target date for the election in the fall but it can't be an end all and if it doesn't work out it could be the following year.

Commissioner Fred Hosley stated he is insulted that everyone out there thinks younger is better and went on to say that they last City Council was a joke and it does not work with a Commissioner form of government when no one talks to anyone else but the group that is there now is 100% different. He added just because someone is retired it does not mean they are dumb and can't contribute.

Mark Seber stated he thinks it is more of an opportunity for broadening the availability of serving the community. He added he opinion is if you have a city council you would allow people with a full time job to get involved with the government because that is all they would have to do is serve on the City Council and would not have to be there on a regular basis but right now a younger person with a family and full time job is very difficult to get involved. If you have just a City Council you would increase the number of people who would be interested in participating, and you would broaden the pool.

Jim Peluso stated that when you take the occupation part out of and make it a Council person now you are taking about government so you can get more of a diversity which is a strength of a Council over a Commission.

Mark Seber stated he is hearing that everyone wants more time and if it needs to wait until next year then they will wait and/or not. He stated he is also hearing that everyone wants to reach out to staff and Commissioners and in the next couple of meetings they can go over the charter and get the pros and cons. He stated they will schedule another meeting for March.

Jim Peluso asked if the City could set up emails for the committee through the City.

Barb McGuire asked if the public would be able to email them.

Mark Seber said the emails are public information and stated that text messages on their private phones related to this committee are able to be FOIL'd. He stated he will look into getting everyone set up with a City email.

Gregg Mansfield asked if they could possibly make a decision on the livestreaming.

Mark Seber stated he spoke with Mike Rubino after the meeting and he is more than willing to do it.

Tony Accetta asked if they need to get a budget for that.

Mark Seber stated he would talk to the Commissioner of Finance about setting aside some funds for this committee.

Jim Peluso asked if the City Attorney is willing to field some research if presented to her.

Mark Seber stated he has a meeting scheduled with her but she is more than willing to work on the charter with the committee. He added he would like to schedule the next meeting on March 10th @6:00 at the Senior Center.

Bob Murphy stated there is funding opportunities that will help with funding.

Mark Seber stated he did speak with the Department of State and they said they don't fund charter revisions. He added if there was a change in government they would also incorporate some shared services if it goes in that direction.

Bob Murphy stated he would look into it.

Tony Accetta stated that he mentioned on the appendix the list of questions to revise the City Charter in New York State, he asked if that is something they can approve and send out to the Department Heads so they have time to answer the eleven (11) questions.

Mark Seber asked if everyone was in agreement to begin with the eleven (11) questions and he will make them available and explain why they are receiving the questions.

Everyone was in favor

Meeting Adjourned: 7:56 P.M.

Moved by: Tony Accetta