



ST. GEORGE CHARTER COMMISSION MEETING 2

MEETING MINUTES

WELCOME & ROLL CALL

Councilman Ryan Heck, Commission Chairman, called the meeting of the St. George City Charter Commission to order at 5:30 p.m. on Wednesday, September 18, 2024.

John Snow initiated a roll call and attendance was recorded. Chairman Ryan Heck, Vice Chair Patty Cook, Norman Browning, Josh Hoffpauir, Chris Meyer, Erin Monroe, Kimberly Plant, Jason DeCuir, Rubin Patel, and Gerry Tarleton were present and voting members of the commission, with Andrew Murrell absent.

Chairman Heck called for and led the Pledge of Allegiance.

APPROVAL OF MEETING 1 MINUTES

Tarleton moved to approve the minutes. Monroe seconded the motion. With no opposition, the minutes were approved.

DISTRICTING UPDATE

Chairman Heck and Vice Chair Cook provided information on a recent meeting with the city's demographer. Heck and Cook shared that the city is likely to have five geographic council districts and asked the commission to work from this number.

KEY POINTS OF DISCUSSION

Heck introduced John Snow with Emergent Method to lead the commission through several key points of discussion related to the charter. Snow presented the commission with required decision points including a discussion on the considerations of the mayor, the council structure, term limits, and enumerated positions in the charter. Snow restated the commission's decisions at the last commission meeting to move forward with a council-manager form of government, a popularly elected mayor, and the existence of at-large seats. Snow also introduced the plan for the next commission meeting, to discuss and review a working version of the draft city charter.

Role of the Mayor Considerations

Snow presented commission members with alternative roles the mayor could take in the council-manager form of government, noting that the provided options are not the only roles the mayor could have. Snow then opened the conversation to allow commission members and members of the public to express their thoughts and opinions.

Heck referenced the city currently operates under the Lawrason Act with positions that include the mayor, a board of aldermen, a chief of police, a city clerk, and a tax collector.

Browning suggested the mayor and vice mayor could be the two at-large positions.

Hoffpauir expressed interest in the mayor taking on a hybrid form of the roles Snow provided. He also emphasized the importance of having a city leader who can operate with a city manager. Browning agreed with Hoffpauir's hybrid suggestion.

Plant noted the mayor could be a full-time or part-time position. Heck expressed an interest in it being a full-time position.

Cook expressed concerns with the mayor having the power to vote as a member of the council. She reminded the commission that the city is in a unique position and cannot perfectly compare itself to another city and requested Mayor Yates' opinion on the topic.

Yates described his experience as mayor and listed several important details that he is actively involved in and sees being a mix of responsibilities for the city manager and mayor in a council-manager form of government. Yates emphasized the mayor should have some connectivity to the council with the ability to present ordinances and serve as the primary representative of the city to the public. He highlighted the uniqueness of St. George and the importance of finding a practice that fits it best. He expressed an interest in pursuing public partnerships with other government entities. He also noted the mayor should have emergency declaration powers and be able to appoint chairs and co-chairs to boards, commissions, and committees.

DeCuir noted the city needs a mayor to have one concise message being pushed out to the public, especially in times of emergency.

The commission collectively discussed which positions would have the authority to set items on a council meeting agenda.

Snow introduced the concept of vice mayor or mayor pro tempore.

Tarleton expressed concerns about having the council decide who the vice mayor will be. He made the point that the vice mayor needs to understand what to do if they must step in for the mayor.

Meyer brought up the point of not leaving the role and duties of the vice mayor to chance and that having a position written on paper will prevent confusion and uncertainty in case of an emergency.

Snow advised the commission to seek custom options that suit the city while also maintaining simplicity to remain grounded in practices that have been successful in the past.

The commission agreed on using the term mayor pro tempore instead of vice mayor, having the council members appoint the position from amongst themselves, and constructing an outline of the position's scope of work in which the person would step in for the mayor in the case of an emergency.

Monroe motioned to approve the council members appointing the mayor pro tempore and defining their role and scope of work. Patel seconded the motion. The motion carried with opposition from Browning.

Snow consolidated the conversation and presented to the commission the decisions they were reaching. He outlined the role of the mayor as someone who presides over the council and does not have a vote on council items, including in the event of a tie vote among the council. The commission agreed that the mayor, any council member, and the city manager shall be able to submit items to be placed on council agendas. The commission also reached an agreement on board, commission, and committee appointments with the mayor who appoints the chair and/or co-chair(s) and leaves the other positions to be appointed by the council.

Tarleton motioned to approve. Hoffpauir seconded. The motion carried without opposition.

Council Structure

The commission reached consensus for two at-large council positions and five district council members.

Meyer motioned to approve. Monroe seconded. The motion carried without opposition.

Terms

Patel emphasized the importance of having terms of either 2 or 3 years to encourage consistent change in perspectives.

DeCuir made the point of having 4-year terms with 2 or 3-term limits. He addressed that historically when term limits are introduced there is the opportunity for positive change, but with the caveat that institutional knowledge can be lost.

Members of the public expressed an interest in 4-year terms with 3-term limits.

The commission consented to 4-year terms with 3-term limits for council members and the mayor.

Tarleton motioned to approve. Hoffpauir seconded. The motion carried with opposition from Patel.

Enumerated Positions

Snow presented a list of positions that could be enumerated in the charter. He opened the conversation up to the commission to discuss further.

Heck suggested the positions that should be enumerated include mayor, council members, and city manager. He also opened the possibility of considering enumerating a city attorney, city clerk, and chief of public safety.

Heck expressed the importance of a council administrator role and the support it brings to a plan of government. The commission agreed that the position of city clerk would not be enumerated but encourage its creation by ordinance.

The commission agreed to the importance of a public safety officer and the benefits it provides to a plan of government. They discussed whether it should be an elected or appointed position.

A member of the public expressed concerns about having the position be elected in the case that the public is unsure or unaware of who they are voting for. Heck expressed concerns about this scenario. The commission decided to table this conversation for a later date.

Heck presented the concept of a city attorney to act as legal counsel for the council members, mayor, and city manager in the case that such support is needed. Heck also noted the option to outsource legal representation.

DeCuir made the point to address the benefit of having a full-time attorney who is knowledgeable and able to dedicate time to the city. He also highlighted the attorney's role of overseeing the litigation portfolio.

The commission came to a consensus on having the enumerated positions of mayor, city manager, council members, chief of public safety, and city attorney. The exact roles and responsibilities of each position will be decided by the commission at the next charter commission meeting.

PUBLIC COMMENT

Members of the public were frequently provided with the room to speak and express their opinions throughout the meeting.

NEXT STEPS

The city will hold the next charter commission meeting on Wednesday, September 25, 2024, at 5:30 p.m.

The next community meeting will be on Tuesday, October 1, 2024, at 5:30 p.m.

ADJOURNMENT

Monroe moved to adjourn. Tarleton seconded the motion. With no opposition, the motion carried.