

Minneapolis Charter Commission Minutes

July 2, 2014 - 4:00 p.m.

Room 317 City Hall, Minneapolis, Minnesota

Members Present: Commissioners Clegg (Chair), Cohen, Ferrara, Garcia, Heinle, Johnson, Kozak, Lickness, Metge, Peltola, Rice, Rubenstein, Sandberg, Schwarzkopf, Street
Also Present: Burt Osborne, Assistant City Attorney

1. Roll Call

Chair Clegg called the meeting to order at 4:03 p.m. Roll call was taken.

2. Adopt Agenda

On a motion by Rubenstein, seconded, the agenda was adopted as amended to include a new Item 4a and to hold the Public Commentary period immediately before Item 5.

Absent - Ferrara, Johnson.

3. Approve minutes of regular meeting of June 4, 2014

On a motion by Peltola, seconded, the minutes of the meeting of June 4, 2014 were approved.

Absent - Ferrara, Johnson.

4. Chair's Report

None.

4a. Task Force

Heinle presented a proposal to form a Task Force to review various recommendations that had initially been proposed for the Plain Language Charter but not included in the final revision due to their possible substantive nature. Metge suggested that the Commission also consider following through on their previously stated goal to encourage community engagement regarding the changes. Clegg stated that an action to form the Task Force would be taken at the next meeting. Those interested should contact Commissioner Heinle.

Public Commentary

Clegg opened the Public Commentary period. The following individuals addressed the Charter Commission:

- a) Bob "Again" Carney, Jr., 4232 Colfax Avenue South, spoke in opposition to an increase in filing fees. He was concerned about the unnecessarily early action. The current vote counting method used by the city for Ranked Choice Voting, which eliminates people based on the number of first rankings, should be reconsidered. The Charter Commission initially proposed an amendment to increase the filing fees to the City Council for a 13-0 vote and is now following a new process to place it on the ballot without conducting another hearing.
- b) Dave Bicking, 4200 Cedar Avenue South, spoke in opposition to an increase in filing fees. Those who feel the filing fees are too low should deal with it at the state level. There were 22 candidates in 2001, and that didn't cause any problems. People are not anxious to raise fees, to have fewer choices, or to put more money into politics. The Charter Commission should determine whether there is any interest before placing this on the ballot.

- c) Captain Jack Sparrow, 3522 Bloomington Avenue South, spoke in opposition to an increase in filing fees. As an Occupy activist and a former candidate for mayor, he has been trying to get money out of politics. Money has a corrosive effect on democratic governments. A filing fee for those that can afford it and signatures for those that can't is similar to a poll tax. Raising the filing fee is adding another barrier to public office and putting money into politics rather than taking it out.
- d) Mike Griffin, Director of Campaigns, FairVote Minnesota, 7 Barton Avenue Southeast, spoke in support of an increase in filing fees. Ranked Choice Voting is designed to have no primary election to narrow the field in order to provide voters with more choice on the ballot in November when turn-out is higher and more diverse. However, the large number of candidates for mayor in the last election, many of whom seemed to be running recreationally, was unnecessary, added to the cost, and delayed tabulation of the ballots. FairVote Minnesota supports a \$500 filing fee for mayor when combined with the statutory option to collect a minimum number of signatures.

There being no one else present wishing to speak, the Public Commentary period was closed.

Discussion

5. ACTION ITEM - Filing Fees for Municipal Office:

Consider proposed amendments increasing filing fees for municipal office, for transmittal to the City Council to be submitted to the voters of the City of Minneapolis.

Chair Clegg provided a brief history of the previous proposed filing fee amendments that had been transmitted to the City Council for adoption by ordinance. When the proposal was before the City Council in 2013, some of the members were campaigning for offices governed by the Charter and they did not want to take action on the amendment at that time. Last month, the proposal failed because the Council vote was 11-2. The Charter Commission has held a public hearing on the issue and has allowed public commentary on the issue at all meetings. Action taken at this meeting will allow the question to be placed on the November ballot.

Lickness moved that the filing fees be set as follows:

Mayor - \$500

Council Member - \$250

Board of Estimate and Taxation Member - \$100

Park and Recreation Commissioner - \$100

and that the Chair be authorized to transmit the amendment to the City Council to be submitted to the voters of the City of Minneapolis. Seconded.

Rice moved to amend the proposed filing fees as follows:

Mayor - \$250

Council Member - \$125

Board of Estimate and Taxation Member - \$100

Park and Recreation Commissioner - \$100. Seconded.

Schwarzkopf moved to amend the proposed filing fees as follows:

Mayor - \$100

Council Member - \$100

Board of Estimate and Taxation Member - \$50

Park and Recreation Commissioner - \$50. Seconded.

The Commission discussed the following:

- a) Current filing fee levels in comparison to the expense of running the election.
- b) Many voters, particularly seniors, were overwhelmed at the number of candidates on the ballot.

- c) Community groups were unable to hold candidate forums due to the number of candidates on the ballot, and many residents expressed disappointment in not having the opportunity to hear all candidates speak.
- d) Increasing fees is not intended to deter anyone from running for office.
- e) The filing fee for Mayor in St. Paul is \$500.
- f) Raising filing fees above the minimum threshold for filing a campaign finance disclosure report will provide more transparency.
- g) Candidates have the option of the petition process provided by State Statute if they cannot afford or choose not to pay the filing fee.
- h) The filing fees have not been raised for 60 years.

The Schwarzkopf motion lost by a show of hands.

The Rice motion lost by a show of hands.

Peltola moved to amend the proposed filing fees as follows:

Mayor - \$500

Council Member - \$250

Board of Estimate and Taxation Member - \$50

Park and Recreation Commissioner - \$100. The motion lost for lack of a second.

The Lickness motion to amend the filing fees as follows:

Mayor - \$500

Council Member - \$250

Board of Estimate and Taxation Member - \$100

Park and Recreation Commissioner - \$100

and that the Chair be authorized to transmit the amendment to the City Council to be submitted to the voters of the City of Minneapolis, was adopted upon a roll call vote as follows:

Ayes: Ferrara, Heinle, Garcia, Johnson, Lickness, Metge, Peltola, Rubenstein, Street, Clegg (10).

Noes: Cohen, Kozak, Rice, Sandberg, Schwarzkopf (5).

On a motion by Peltola, seconded, the meeting was adjourned at 4:47 p.m.

Submitted by: Peggy Menshek, Charter Commission Coordinator