

Minneapolis Charter Commission Minutes

Regular Meeting

Wednesday, February 3, 2010 - 4:00 p.m.
Room 319 City Hall, Minneapolis, Minnesota

Commissioners Present: Bernstein (Chair), Bujold, Clegg, Dolan, Ferrara, Jancik, Kadwell, Lichty, Metge, Remme, Rubenstein, Stade, Street

Commissioners Excused: Connell, Lazarus

Also Present: Dana Banwer, Assistant City Attorney

1. Roll Call

Chair Bernstein called the meeting to order at 4:08 p.m. Roll call was taken.

2. Adopt Agenda

Commissioner Metge moved adoption of the agenda. Seconded.

Adopted upon a voice vote.

Absent - Connell, Lazarus.

3. Approve Minutes of January 6, 2010

Commissioner Ferrara moved approval of the minutes of the meeting of January 6, 2010.

Seconded.

Adopted upon a voice vote.

Absent - Connell, Lazarus.

Not on Printed Agenda

5. Proposed legislation to change the date of the primary election.

Judy Schwartau, City of Minneapolis Elections Specialist, was present and summarized proposed legislation to change the date of the primary election and the effect on the deadline for Charter ballot questions. Federal law requires a 45-day absentee voting period to accommodate those who are overseas, including the military. Moving the primary to an earlier date will accommodate that timeframe; however, ballot production for the general election will also have to take place earlier. In the past, the deadline for a Charter petition was 12 weeks before the general election day, with a maximum 25 days following that date to allow for signature validation by Elections Department staff and to allow the petitioner to obtain additional signatures if necessary. If the Charter petition deadline remained at 12 weeks before the general election day, it would impinge on ballot production. The deadline to produce a ballot 45-days before the November election moves the production to mid-August, shortly after the newly proposed Primary, the second Tuesday in August.

Ferrara stated that even though there is no longer a primary for the city election, the City of Minneapolis is still responsible for conducting a primary in state, federal, and county elections.

Schwartau stated that she was referring solely to a ballot question for the General Election ballot. There is a proposal to add to the legislation a change to Chapter 410.12 requiring

that a signed petition be submitted 17 weeks prior to the general election, rather than 12 weeks. The 12-week deadline was approximately five weeks prior to the September Primary date; the 17-week deadline would put the deadline approximately five weeks prior to the newly proposed August Primary.

Bernstein noted that this was important information for the Commission to consider with the current work on the redistricting question because it will affect the timeline to place a Charter amendment question on the ballot.

Rubenstein added that the change would also affect the timeline of the proposed Charter revision. The Council work group had planned to make its best efforts to return the document with their proposed changes early in the summer.

Bernstein stated that while Council Member Hodges hadn't promised, her best estimate was that the document would be returned to the Commission by June.

New Business

4. Redistricting Process: Workgroup update.

Bernstein stated that while he had been unable to attend the first task force meeting with Council Member Gordon, one of the things that came out of the meeting was a request for staff. A letter to Council Member Gordon had been drafted by Commissioner Clegg requesting staff support presumably from the City Attorney's Office, the Elections Department, or the City Clerk's Office. The task force's work would be facilitated by background research, including the history of the current Minneapolis Charter provisions regarding redistricting, redistricting procedures and processes in other municipalities, and the available literature on best practices on redistricting and selection of redistricting commissions or appointments.

Ferrara moved approval of the letter as written. Seconded.
Adopted upon a voice vote.
Absent - Connell, Lazarus.

Clegg updated the Commission on the Redistricting Task Force meeting with Council Member Gordon which was held on February 1. They had discussed the type of information that would be needed to make an analysis. At the next meeting they will discuss outcomes that would be either desirable or not desirable related to adopting a different methodology or keeping the existing one. Council Member Gordon will schedule the next task force meeting.

Rubenstein added that they had also discussed what standards would be valuable in both the process and the content of the redistricting and what, if any, Charter amendments would be necessary.

Ferrara noted that another topic of the next Task Force meeting would be the subject of community meetings. There was also discussion about involving other Charter Commissioners in the meetings, yet remaining aware of the Open Meeting Law requiring the meeting to be noticed if a quorum of Charter Commissioners were to be present.

A member of the public inquired whether the task force meetings were open to the public.

Dana Banwer, Assistant City Attorney, stated that the task force was designed to study the issue and ultimately make recommendations to the Charter Commission. Since the task force will not take any formal action, it is therefore not subject to the Open Meeting Law. However, the public could contact the Clerk's Office for information regarding the meetings.

Bernstein stated that Council Member Gordon was coordinating the task force meetings, and he suspected that Council Member Gordon would be amenable to the public attending the meetings. He suggested that anyone wanting to attend the task force meetings contact Robin Garwood, Aide to Council Member Gordon.

Discussion ensued on when the community meetings should be scheduled. Clegg noted that it would depend on what the task force ended up recommending. If they recommend that nothing be changed, community meetings may not be needed.

Bernstein thought that Council Member Gordon had requested that the Commission hold community meetings to obtain public comment on the redistricting process itself and suggestions for possible changes.

Street suggested charging either Chair Bernstein or someone else to work with Council Member Gordon's office to schedule the public meetings, rather than waiting a month to have a discussion about scheduling them.

Ferrara stated that the topic of community meetings was on the agenda for the next task force meeting.

Metge requested that the Commission be respectful of citizens' time and allow 30 to 45 days notice.

Clegg stated that before community meetings are scheduled, the task force should at least have some options to put before the public.

Clegg moved to adjourn. Seconded.

Adopted upon a voice vote.

Absent - Connell, Lazarus.

The meeting was adjourned at 4:29 p.m.

Peggy Menshek
Charter Commission Coordinator