

Minneapolis Charter Commission Community Meeting Minutes

Thursday, May 7, 2009 - 6:30 - 8:00 p.m.

St. Joan of Arc Church
4537 3rd Ave S
Minneapolis MN 55419

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

Chair Bernstein called the meeting to order at 6:30 p.m., a quorum being present. He thanked St. Joan of Arc Church for allowing the Charter Commission to meet in their facility. He explained that the purpose of the community meeting was to accept public comment on the amendments to the Minneapolis City Charter as proposed by Council Members Ostrow, Remington, and Samuels. Speakers would be allowed approximately 2 minutes each and comments were taken in the following order:

- a) Creation of a City Administrator Position
- b) Elimination of the Board of Estimate and Taxation
- c) Elimination of the Minneapolis Park & Recreation Board

Bernstein requested that anyone who wished to speak, sign in on the Sign-In Sheets available for each topic. He stated that he would first call on people to speak who had not spoken at a previous meeting before calling on those who had spoken at a previous meeting.

Council Member Paul Ostrow summarized the proposed amendments.

City Administrator Position: There would no longer be a City Coordinator position. The appointing authority of the Mayor and City Council would remain the same. All department heads would still be brought forward by the Mayor and approved by the Executive Committee and the Council. The City Administrator would serve at the will of the Council, but the other department heads would serve at the will of the City Administrator.

Elimination of the Board of Estimate and Taxation: There is a slight change in this proposal. The proposal now provides that there would be a change in the membership of the Board of Estimate and Taxation. No longer would the Board of Estimate and Taxation be the Mayor, Council President, Chair of the Ways & Means/Budget Committee, two separately elected individuals, and a representative of the Minneapolis Park & Recreation Board. The Board of Estimate and Taxation would now consist of the membership of the City Council.

Elimination of the Minneapolis Park & Recreation Board: This proposal would replace the Minneapolis Park & Recreation Board as a separately elected semi-autonomous body with an advisory board to the City Council and the Mayor, with the ultimate authority for the decisions as to the park system to be determined by the Council and the Mayor.

Creation of a City Administrator Position

a) Patricia Kovel-Jarboe, 4816 West Lake Harriet Parkway, stated that she was speaking on behalf of the Minneapolis League of Women Voters (LWV). The LWV is a non-partisan political organization that encourages informed and active participation in all levels of government. In 2005 and 2006, LWV Minneapolis studied the city and the independent boards. The 2005 study states, in part: "We discovered in our preparation of this study some criteria that seem to be generally equated with good government. These are accountability, transparency, responsiveness, equity, and accessibility. Other factors such as flexibility, cost effectiveness, diversity, and sustainability were also significantly mentioned. The goal is to balance the criteria in a way that allows for solid decision making and effective governance." Subsequent to these studies, and in consideration of other long-standing positions, LWV members decided to support several items relevant to today's discussion. The membership supports using the current city structure of government with some key changes. City staff, including department heads, should report to one authority so there are clear lines of responsibility. LWV membership was split on whether that should be a mayor with more authority or a city administrator. LWV does not support the current system in which department heads answer to 14 bosses. It frustrates the key values of accountability and transparency in government operations. While LWV has not specifically studied the proposal for a city administrator, as outlined in the proposal, the need for a structure that better incorporates accountability, transparency, etc. still holds. LWV has a position dating from 1965 to consider favorably Charter amendments which (1) Simplify the governmental structure rather than complicate it; (2) Define clearly the lines of authority and responsibility so that the voter understands governmental procedures; and (3) Lead to separation of administrative and legislative functions.

b) Ralph Remington, Ward 4 Council Member, 350 South 5th Street, stated that he believed that the City Administrator is necessary for transparency and the free flow of information. Currently there is a lot of confusion about who reports to who and who gets what information when. This will take away departmental jockeying for council/political favor, clear up reporting confusion, and speed up efficiency and effectiveness. He urged the Charter Commission to support this measure.

c) Paul Ostrow, Ward 3 Council Member, 350 South 5th Street, quoted from three letters the Charter Commission had received. John Moir, former City Coordinator, stated, "The proposed changes to the City Charter would improve significantly the agility to deal effectively with its environment of the City government from a policy and management perspective. Tax policy should be the responsibility of the City Council, not of an independent board. Park and recreation functions are integral parts of city government and should not be left to an independent board." Former Budget Director, Tammy Omdahl, stated, "I support the proposal to create a new position of city administrator, which would oversee all city departments. The present structure makes efficient and effective allocation of resources difficult. A significant amount of staff time is spent by managers, across all departments, managing in effect their 14 different bosses. In a different structure this is time that could be used more efficiently in managing department operations or for that matter, eliminating the number of management positions altogether over time. In my opinion, this change in structure would offer the City Council significantly more control, not less, in making sure that management is delivering effective and efficient service." Tara Barenok, former budget analyst for the city, pointed out that this would improve budget and policy making proposals. That the performance reviews of department heads will be more

professional which will increase employee morale and reduce management chaos. She also emphasized the ability to address policy initiatives in a timely fashion and that departments are incented to remain silo-oriented toward their own business, rather than recognizing city-wide needs and concerns. Responding with urgency to major city-wide initiatives is quite difficult.

d) Jay Kiedrowski, 1012 West Minnehaha Parkway, stated that he had served two terms on the Charter Commission in the 1990's and also served as a consultant to the Charter Commission beginning in 1973. He spent five years as a budget director and Assistant City Coordinator for the City of Minneapolis and was currently an instructor at the University of Minnesota teaching organizational performance and change. The proposals are really about accountability and eliminating unnecessary inefficiencies and ineffectiveness. Anyone who has looked at the city's organization chart knows that Minneapolis is not well structured and lacks clear lines of accountability. As a result, it is inefficient, confusing to citizens, and hurts city employee morale. A simple principle in organizational theory states that careful attention to matching structures to technology, environments, and program development can produce structures that reinforce, rather than thwart, program administration. Minneapolis needs this modernization. A new City Administrator would help to organize the city departments in more effective ways. With this change Minneapolis would finally have a professional administrator responsible for the efficient operation of all city functions consistent with the policy direction of the Mayor and the City Council. The Administrator appointed by the Mayor and the City Council would work on making city programs more effective without having to spend long hours pleasing the competing interests of city hall. Creating a City Administrator position is an accountability, efficiency, and effectiveness Charter improvement that should be supported. This change could save millions of dollars annually within a few short years.

e) Dan Niziolek, stated that he supported putting this measure on the ballot. As a volunteer, he chaired a neighborhood development corporation, and sat on a neighborhood association board. As a city staff person he had worked with the Police Department and Regulatory Services. As a Council Member he had represented the 10th ward. One thing he has seen is the real need to change the structure in the city of Minneapolis, and one of the big issues is the fact that there is not a city administrator who all department heads report to. Imagine yourself as a department head in the city of Minneapolis reporting to a Council Committee which is a subcommittee of the City Council. Basically your boss is 14 people. At any time any of those 14 people can say, can you work on this issue? As a department head, one is constantly being torn and not able to focus on strong priorities to move forward. Look at all the data systems the city has that don't talk to each other. The Police Department has theirs; Regulatory Services has theirs; Animal Care and Control have theirs. If there was a true city focus of everybody working together, these systems would be intertwined. Everyone would be working together to make sure those priorities were achieved. Take this to the voters and move this forward.

f) Barbara Burke (sp?), 4005 Dupont Avenue South, stated that she was against this proposal. The city government works well as it is. The new position is not needed, and she felt that the Council members are responsible. While it might be a way to prevent the situation of no one knowing who to report to, she not believe a city administrator position was needed.

g) Gary Schiff, Ward 9 Council Member, 350 South 5th Street, stated that while he was present to speak on the City Administrator proposal, he first had to take some of his time to say please reject what he thought was an absurd proposal to abolish the Park Board. He didn't believe it was what the citizens wanted. But he did ask the Charter Commission to differ the issues and take seriously a conversation about a different city management system. He was a part of changing the City Charter in 1997. At that time, he collected signatures with a group to put an amendment on the ballot to strengthen the city's civil rights laws. At the time, the Police Department enjoyed an exemption from city civil rights laws. The Charter Commission helped put on the ballot the question of "should all city departments be held accountable to the city civil rights laws?" The voters agreed overwhelmingly. It was one of the steps towards a more accountable Police Department and police culture in the city. He did not believe the city had maximized the potential for citizen satisfaction with the Police Department. There are on-going issues about authority and about whether or not the Police Department truly reflects the culture of the city. When the Council raises questions about use of force policies, or about an action, like what happened with the Republican National Convention in St. Paul, again and again they are told that is none of their business. The Police Department is managed by the Mayor, not the City Council. With a city manager overseeing all city departments, including the Police Department, then in turn the City Council overseeing the city manager, it would give an opportunity for City Council members and their constituents to raise questions about the management of the Police Department. This is not possible today. They are shut out of the conversation. Citizens do not like it, and when he tells them that only the Mayor oversees the Police Department and it is not the role of the City Council, they don't believe it, and they don't like the answer. There should be more transparency and more accountable oversight of all city departments. This is a very valid conversation to have this fall on the ballot. Put this on the ballot, and allow the debate to go forward.

Elimination of the Board of Estimate and Taxation

a) Dean Carlson, 3937 Aldrich Avenue South, stated that listening to some of the former testimony from the supporters of the Board of Estimate and Taxation, one gets the notion that all that stands between Minneapolis and the Chicago-style kind of corrupt city government is the Board of Estimate and Taxation. Most other cities of a similar size, facing many of the same issues, function well without a Board of Estimate and Taxation. These scare stories are just that, scare stories. Democracy functions quite well just as democracy functions in Minneapolis. Some of the testimony about the Board of Estimate and Taxation talks about its independent audit function. What that testimony neglects to mention is that members of the Board of Estimate and Taxation are also the Mayor, City Council President, and Chair of the Ways & Means/Budget Committee. So how independent really are these audits with those members on it? It is not as independent as advertised. Another misleading fact he had heard during the testimony was that without the Board of Estimate and Taxation, the city would have to go to the state to have its bond issues approved, which is true. But every single city in the state has to go through that same process. The Governor has not messed around with anyone's bond issues, so that is really not a valid argument. Practically every city in the state and practically every city in the country survives without a Board of Estimate and Taxation. It is an obsolete organization from a by-gone era and is unneeded.

b) Wizard Marks, 3001 Oakland Avenue South, stated that eliminating the Board of Estimate and Taxation is a big mistake. We have to have people who are willing to sit down

and say this may not be a good idea. She was not impugning the reputation of anyone on the City Council or the Mayor today or in the past, but it is pretty easy to find someone who is willing to play games with your budget and you can't say that the next person who gets elected as a City Council person or Mayor won't be a crook and can twist you in knots forever. The city must have the Board of Estimate and Taxation as a balance. Some say it is not efficient. Of course it's not. Democracy is not efficient. But we need to change the structure of the Board of Estimate and Taxation to include more elected persons, not the Mayor and City Council, so that there is good oversight.

c) Marcia Mariani (sp?). 3222 39th Avenue South, stated that the elimination of the Board of Estimate and Taxation is a big mistake. Without a Board of Estimate and Taxation, there will not be an independent Park Board. An independent Park Board functions because of the Board of Estimate and Taxation. The Board of Estimate is the only thing that stands between the City and the Park Board. The Park Board has assets - land. Without the Board of Estimate and Taxation holding the reins of the budget and making it accountable for the Mayor and the City Council members, there will be free rein at that point to raid the coffers of the assets that belong to the Park Board. Very quietly, very slowly, but surely. With the people on the current Council and our Mayor, the city has lost the Library Board, and neighborhoods don't exist in terms of neighborhood revitalization programs. All those dollars are now in the hands of downtown. Where do you think they are going to put those funds? Not in the Park Board, but in their pet funds.

Bernstein reminded everyone that he was calling people to speak first who had not spoken at a previous meeting.

d) Al Flowers, stated that he had not spoken on this issue before. He was against abolishing the Board of Estimate and Taxation because of the fact that there are other issues that the City Council has not dealt with. Since the last time he spoke, he found out that the tax payers paid \$28,000,000 in settlements. The City has no insurance on that. It is the tax payers' money. He agreed with Council Member Schiff about having the police under the city's control; that's another issue. Council Members Remington, Ostrow, and Benson are getting ready to leave office at the end of this term, and they are trying to make this move and it is a dictatorship if they keep taking over. Remember the libraries. Hennepin County owns them now. Minneapolis doesn't own the libraries. The city has taken over the neighborhood associations. They have taken over everything. That is a dictatorship. That is not a democracy. This proposal should not be placed on the ballot.

e) Chiffon Williams, 2626 Cedar Avenue South, stated that she was a mother of ten. Her concerns were regarding the Park Board because most of the teenagers are outside and there is nothing happening. There are buildings that are sitting unused and she felt that the buildings eventually are going to be sold. East Phillips has one building that used to be the Boys and Girls Club, and the Park Board has it back and there is no work that has been done to the building. There was a gentleman housed at Peavey Park who is being transferred from one park where he has gotten it all together, keeping it calm, and now is being transferred north. They move the park employees around and that is not right when it comes to the young because they are our future and could be getting jobs and training. Idle hands are the devil's playground.

f) Ralph Remington, Ward 4 Council Member, 350 South 5th Street, stated that he was speaking in favor of abolishing the Board of Estimate and Taxation. Most people believe

that the City Council sets their taxes. They have no knowledge of what the Board of Estimate and Taxation even does. It is an antiquated mode of operation that most cities have relinquished. Council members can finally be accountable for the tax rates, which is what the majority of the populace believes, anyway. Finally, it has been stated that the majority of the Council members that support these measures are only doing so because they aren't running for re-election. Are people saying that because they won't be on the ballot, they are more likely to tell the truth about the situation? Or if they were on the ballot, they wouldn't be raising these issues that should be raised because they would be afraid of the electorate? Those are specious arguments. Government doesn't belong to the elected officials; it belongs to the people. Therefore, the people should decide what is best for them. That is why these matters should be put on the ballot. In these dire economic times, creative and resourceful decisions need to be made about where to direct the public's tax dollars. The proposals represent the fiscally responsible yet wholly accountable position of prudence. He supported these measures because he felt it was best for the city of Minneapolis.

g) Paul Ostrow, Ward 3 Council Member, 350 South 5th Street, stated that the Board of Estimate and Taxation is an anomaly. It is extremely rare if not unique in the United States, and it delegates one of the most critical decisions of local government - setting the maximum tax levy - to a board different from the governing body of the city. There have been three objections to this proposal: (1) The Board of Estimate and Taxation provides a vote to the Park Board on the amount of the levy dedicated to their operations. If in fact that is meant to imply that there is some kind of protection to the Park Board, it is minimal and a very imperfect instrument. Very few members of the public even know who the separately-elected members of the Board are; and even fewer have any idea whatsoever as to their position on park funding and the property tax levy. Certainly, when the public elects the at-large members of the Board, few if any even realize that they may hold the balance of the city's levy on park funding decisions. On the other hand, citizens will hold Council Members and the Mayor accountable for the rate of property taxes and park funding. (2) The city may lose some of its bonding authority. While the extent of this concern is unclear, the issue has now been addressed. The proposal now preserves any authority held by the Board of Estimate and Taxation because it simply states that the City Council shall serve as the Board of Estimate and Taxation. This is no different than the Minneapolis Community Development Agency where the City Council continues to meet as the MCDA Board of Commissioners. (3) The Board of Estimate and Taxation's audit function would be compromised by the proposal. Actually, the reverse is true. The current audit function of the Board has been weak, understaffed, and ineffectual. Since the Board of Estimate and Taxation itself has no independent authority to take any action resulting from an audit, the function is marginalized. Having the City Council act as the Board of Estimate and Taxation would allow the city to function like Hennepin County where the audit function reports directly to the County Administrator. The audit function should not be independent from the city's elected officials. What is key is that the audit function is independent from the chief financial officer and the finance department. If the Board's functions are brought into the City, the City could beef up the function and create an audit sub-committee of the Ways & Means/Budget Committee to ensure that the audit function is aggressive and effective. He urged the Charter Commission to put this item on the ballot.

Commissioner Bujold stated that he had read the 110 page report Council Member Ostrow had sent all Charter Commissioners and inquired in what way that 1979 report authored by Larry Perlman supported his proposals?

Ostrow stated that if he had sent only sections of the report, he was concerned that some might wonder if he had somehow edited it in his favor, so he sent the entire document. There are specific portions that relate to the Park Board issue in particular. Other sections reference the City Administrator position.

Bujold requested an email from Council Member Ostrow singling out relevant portions.

h) Jay Kiedrowski, 1012 West Minnehaha Parkway, stated that he supported the abolishment of the Board of Estimate and Taxation. He asked three questions: (1) Can you name the members of the current Board of Estimate and Taxation? (2) If you can, can you say precisely what the Board does? (3) If you can do that, when was the last time that the Board of Estimate and Taxation had any significant impact on the city of Minneapolis? The best he could tell, it was 1975 when the Board of Estimate and Taxation was allowed to simply delay an action that ultimately occurred. So it has been since 1975 that they have actually done something. The Board of Estimate and Taxation is simply no longer needed. The idea of boards of estimate and taxation controlling taxes and debt was a reform concept of the late 1800s. Every city that created one has since eliminated it. Other cities have seen the wisdom in having their mayor and city council take over the responsibilities of the Board of Estimate and Taxation to provide clearer accountability for who is responsible for taxes. As to the issue raised about the independent audit function of the Board, he was the budget director for the city of Minneapolis when that function was given to the Board of Estimate and Taxation. It was an attempt to give them something to do because they didn't have anything to do, and it clearly can go back to the City Council where it had been. Also, it was mentioned that the Library Board now is part of Hennepin County and that somehow the citizens are lesser served. Anybody who is a user of the library knows that the Minneapolis libraries are far better today serving Minneapolis residents than they were previously and it was a positive move for the city. Change is necessary. Abolishing the Board of Estimate and Taxation is an accountability and efficiency Charter improvement that should be supported. This change could save up to \$50,000.

i) Judy Nelson, 3503 33rd Avenue South, stated that she thought that the issue of the Board of Estimate and Taxation should not be on the ballot at this time. The balance of the Board has changed with the library going to Hennepin County. If it is to continue, there should be an option to continue with a more balanced membership. She was in opposition to including the proposal on the ballot. People should look at the issue and come forward with possibilities for the future.

Elimination of the Minneapolis Park & Recreation Board

a) Brian Rice, 10 Second Street Northeast, attorney for the Minneapolis Park & Recreation Board, stated that he had written a letter that was forwarded to all Charter Commission members. The Park Board was created by an act of legislature with the proviso that it only took effect upon a vote of the citizens. That law conferred unique powers on the elected Park Board. One was to develop a park system in and adjacent to the city of Minneapolis. Four of its golf courses lie outside the jurisdiction of the city of Minneapolis. As such, that is not something that a Charter amendment should deal with. Legislative authority is needed to give a city the ability to exercise authority outside of its jurisdiction. A fundamental question is whether a Charter amendment alone is going to be able to sufficiently transfer power to an elected Minneapolis City Council. In his opinion, it can't.

Changing that governance structure will require an act of the legislature. In essence you would have to go back and repeat the order of the Board's creation. The Park Board has the power to mortgage its property. There is nothing he has seen in Minnesota law that allows a local unit of government to mortgage property. It is an extraordinary power the legislature granted to the Park Board because it was a single purpose district. They only could use the money from mortgaging park property to make other Park Board improvements. If that authority is transferred to the City Council, there wouldn't be anything to prevent the city from mortgaging park assets to use for other purposes. Lastly, in 1911 the legislature enacted legislation that facilitated the construction and development of the Minneapolis Art Institute and it conferred on the Park Board the ability to levy a tax throughout Hennepin County to support that institution. Again, a Charter amendment alone transferring that authority to the City Council, in his opinion, just simply wouldn't work.

b) Jeanine Estime, running for Council Member in Ward 8, stated that as a parent, the parks provided many, many activities for children. She sees the need for change in City Hall, but many people would like to see the Park Board continue to be an independent body. She supported the independent Park Board.

c) DelRoy Calhoun, 2644 Harriet Avenue, stated that he was a life-time resident of Minneapolis. He has had the opportunity to work with the Park Board as an independent non-profit, and introduce young people in the neighborhoods to the park system. He was concerned about changing the stewardship of the parks and how they are taken care of. While there may be some room for different kinds of things to happen within the Park Board, he felt the City Council was vulnerable to too much self-interest. He was concerned about the kind of development that could happen. He agreed with what someone else had said about mortgaging the land. The parks are a terrific part of the quality of life in this city and particularly for people who may not be able to afford all of the amenities that cost money. The parks are free. He was opposed to the elimination of the Park Board.

d) Brad Johnson, 2117 West River Road, Park Board Police Chief for the past eight years, stated that his parents always allowed him to go to the park by himself because they knew the Park Police were there and the parks were safe. Before he became the Park Police Chief, he served 25 years with the Minneapolis Police Department (MPD) and ended that career as the commander of the two south side precincts. In 1999, while he was with the MPD, a study was conducted regarding merging the MPD and the Park Police. As a precinct commander, he was happy because he would get more cops and they would be on Lake Street, Franklin, Portland, Park, etc. But during that study it was realized that the two departments had two different and distinct missions. The Park Board Police are proactive. Most of them grew up in the park system as other types of employees, and they love the parks. They do proactive policing. They get in there and work with the kids before the problems start. Parks take up 16 percent of the city land, but less than two percent of the violent crime. When theft from motor vehicles is factored in, it is only three percent of the crime. A lot of talk has been made about redundancies. There is no redundancy when there are two distinct missions. There is talk about saving money, but the 1999 study showed that the savings would be negligible. The first thing the city would do is get rid of the Park Police.

e) Dan Myklebust, 4740 Clinton Avenue South, stated that he was pleasantly surprised about the possibilities of eliminating the Park Board. He is an urban forester by degree. He has worked for a local city and some large cities around the country, all of which had

different forms of government. Park Boards were non-existent except in an advisory standpoint. Things operated fine and on budget. They needed to operate with efficiency because they didn't have the money. The parochial interests of the people on the board are quite self-serving at times. The De LaSalle football field even tied the hands of the City Council because of those parochial interests. He has tried to advise the Park Board, and was turned away. There are too many layers that people have to go through to get their voices heard. Give the residents a voice. The city should listen to the citizens.

f) Judith Martin, 14 Grove Street, stated that she had served on the Minneapolis Planning Commission for fifteen years. Concerns had been raised about efficiency, responsibility, and attention to stewardship that must be considered as the proposal goes forward. However, the debate to date has been to "keep the Park Board as it is or get rid of it". This does not have to be an either/or proposition. Another possibility would be to maintain an advisory Park Board with primary responsibility for the city's many neighborhood parks and community centers, which is what a lot of people really care a lot about; but recognize that the current structure does not always best serve the system's regional parks or park users. Find another structure to manage the city's regional parks such as Three Rivers, Metro Council's Regional Park structure, or some new entity. The system has grown dramatically in the last 25 to 30 years with the addition of the Central Riverfront, and the city has plans to extend this park miles north over the coming decades. This growth has forced the Park Board into a development mode, which is not always completely consistent with the stewarding function of the Park Board. The Park Board in recent years agreed to designate major segments of the Grand Rounds, Riverfront, and big park areas such as Wirth Park as regional parks with significant funding for these coming from the Metropolitan Council and other sources. It has long been reported that the majority of people using large parts of the regional system live outside the city of Minneapolis. These users have no representation at all in the current arrangement, which is not working well for all parts of the system in any case. A rethinking of the current 126 year old arrangement is overdue. Complete abolition might not be the only solution, but something that recognizes the unique quality of the city's regional parks is sorely needed.

g) Bob Bierscheid, 1065 Harriet Lane, Roseville, stated that he was a very active user of the metro parks, particularly in Minneapolis. He recently retired after 40 years of professional work in parks and recreation; most recently as Director of Parks and Recreation for the city of St. Paul. He had worked in five states and served as director in four communities. He has also been afforded the opportunity to examine dozens of park and recreation systems as a part of the National Commission for Accreditation of Park and Recreation agencies. He firmly believed that park and recreation is essential. There is no one right way to do it, but there is a best way, and that is the park district way. There are many reasons for this: (1) The quality of service is noticeably better. In other communities around the country with park districts, they have benchmarks for resource expenditures, park lands preserved and maintained, special features, and outstanding programming. (2) Tax payer accountability. The closer the tax payer can be to the delivery of service, the more efficient, cost effective, and focused are the results. In communities where the economies have been tried by generalizing services, not only has the quality drastically deteriorated, but the cost per service has actually gone up. (3) Both human and natural resource protection is critical. This happens most noticeably when the primary mission includes that function. These precious resources very often disintegrate with land disposal, insufficient management resources, poor operational procedures, and pure neglect. (4) Health and safety are the key elements of a park and recreation system ensuring that

people are both physically and mentally active, socially engaged, and environmental sensitive of the fundamental core values of an excellent system. When public place policing, facility preservation, and the application of human resources to affect these needs are in competition with other municipal services, it is very often a nightmare.

h) Scott Benson, Ward 11 Council Member, 5432 Park Avenue, stated that he did not know if he supported all of the proposals, but he did support having the debate and having the issues placed on the ballot. It is important for the voters of Minneapolis to make the decision, not a joint commission of elected officials, not a study group, not legislative lobbyists, not special interest groups. He had also heard people say that there ought to be a longer, more collaborative process to bring these issues forward. But where were those folks when the League of Women Voters took two years to study this issue in a community-wide process that was open to anyone. The fact of the matter is that people will not focus on this issue in the abstract. They didn't then, and they won't ever. These issues need to be on the ballot in order to have a full debate, and he urged the Charter Commission to place all three of them on the ballot. With regard to the park proposal specifically, he wanted to address the cost saving measures. He was surprised to hear the Park Board Police Chief say that there would not be savings. There are going to be savings; especially from the merger of the police departments. In 2006, the city's Finance Department did a study of what would happen if the two departments were merged and found a savings of between \$500,000 and \$1,000,000 from that merger alone. There are other savings that do not involve cutting front-line staff. If finance, planning, and other departments were combined, and the people that provide supervision and oversight in those departments, he believed that cost savings of between \$2,400,000 and \$3,000,000 would be realized from this proposal. Let the Minneapolis voters hear this debate. Let the Minneapolis voters have their say at a time when they will be fully engaged. Put this on the ballot.

i) DeWayne Townsend, 3222 39th Avenue South, stated, as a disclaimer, that he was running for the Board of Estimate and Taxation. The reason he was running for the Board of Estimate and Taxation was because he believed in a strong, healthy, and independent Park Board. The Park Police have an entirely different philosophy than the City Police. They are kinder and gentler and they know how to handle kids. Also, he has been a longtime member of the Longfellow Community Council, and they have dealt with the Park Board on many, many issues - bicycle paths, the restoration of the river gorge, etc., and had been able to deal with the Park Board on a very equal basis. The Park Board doesn't make people jump through hoops in order to talk to the individual people on the Park Board. The City Council is impossible to talk to. By the time citizens get off work, the City Council is gone. The Park Board has done a great job of keeping the parks in reasonably good condition. Look at the streets and alleys, and then think about what the parks will look like if the City Council takes over.

j) Adam Fajteck, 2814 Colfax Avenue South, stated that he had handed out a list of the top 15 cities in terms of total park expenditure per capita. He wanted to address a major concern that had been expressed over the past several weeks, concerning arguments that moving the policy making functions of the park system into the City Council would lead to significant funding cuts because the city would have to balance the needs of the park system against other priorities. A review of governance models from medium and large size cities across the country that have similar models to the one that is proposed, show that they have consistently made their parks a financial priority. Cities such as Seattle, St. Paul, Sacramento, Long Beach, Cincinnati, Portland, and Raleigh, all have advisory park boards.

They make recommendations to a city council that sets policy. All these cities have continued to fund parks at a high level even while balancing other city priorities. The Minneapolis Park Board is the only elected policy making board from the 15 cities that spend the most per capita on their parks. These proposals are meant to respond to the question that was asked several months ago: How can government improve the use of its resources and service to its citizens? Other cities have shown the ability to balance overall city goals within the realm of funding strong park systems. These proposals are not about efficiency or cost savings, they are about funding both improved service and resources to Minneapolis residents and strengthening the city's reputation as one of the most livable cities. He firmly believed that this proposal will achieve these goals.

k) Barbara Burke (sp?), 4005 Dupont Avenue South, stated that she was originally from Rhode Island, and had lived in Minneapolis for 29 years. In Providence, they do not have a park system like this. She referred to a book "The Society of Architectural Historians: Buildings from Rhode Island" and was surprised to discover that Providence could have had a park system like Minneapolis. They had the same architect, H.W.S. Cleveland who designed the park system for Providence, Rhode Island. Too bad they didn't have a park board because the book stated that if you wanted to see his plan, you had to go to Minneapolis. One of the key pieces of property which the city of Providence owned was a piece of property that overlooked Providence River and the bay. That was turned into the sewage system and is now a toxic dump site. Redundancy is also a good thing. She felt it was good to have redundancy in the Police Department and other areas because it makes for a robust government.

l) Sean Goffin, 1214 50th Street West, stated that this is a discussion about a heritage issue. Every fall he and his wife travel the nation. He has never seen a Theodore Wirth Parkway in St. Louis or a lot of other places. Minneapolis has a wonderful opportunity to keep what they have as whole as possible. He thanked Mr. Rice for pointing out the legal issues. He thought it was very important that those issues be brought to the forefront in any future discussions. He is concerned when he hears individuals who may have agendas bringing up issues that might abolish our wonderful resources. The discussion may be a good thing to have, but he thought that an independent non-self-serving Park Board was a very good thing and it should be kept as it is.

m) Jennifer Beard (sp?), 2540 18th Avenue, stated that she would really like to be able to say something with impact, but didn't know what to say, so she called a woman she new a Park Commissioner and asked for some information. Annie answered her call and gave her a lot of information. She has never been able to call her Council member and get information. The City Council has a lot on their plate. In other cities around the nation, people have to pay to use the parks, and she felt that is what this proposal would lead to. The first thing the City Council would do if they had control of the parks would be to sell Fort Snelling and Theodore Wirth because they are not in the city. The Park Board should not be abolished.

n) Jeremy Cram, 2925 West 47th Street, stated that he was a frequent user of the parks, running around Lake Harriet and taking his kids to the park playgrounds. He thought there were two conversations going on. One is the risks if the Park Board is eliminated. The other is the benefits. There is a separate park board running the state parks and no one has sold those off despite the huge current deficit. The issue is about accountability. If the residents don't like what the City Council does with the parks, they can vote them out. So

accountability is not really an issue. In fact, he thought this would provide more accountability because right now there is a lot of finger pointing going on because the Park Board controls their own budget and when they can't do things, they blame it on the City Council and the Board of Estimate and Taxation. It is time that there is a single group that is accountable for the financing and the upkeep, and that's what this will provide. He didn't know of any other organization where there is one group providing the funding and another group doing the work. One example of the problems is the issue with Wi-Fi. The City Council signed an agreement to provide city-wide internet coverage, then all of a sudden the Park Board stood in way and said the city couldn't install it on Park Board property. There are two different organizations and it doesn't work very well. The city needs the single accountability of one organization, and he believed that should be the City Council.

o) Ralph Remington, Ward 4 Council Member, 350 South 5th Street, stated that this is the issue he felt most strongly about. Implementing these changes would eliminate fiscal redundancies: dual police departments, HR, administrative services, etc. It would establish clear channels of accountability and transparency. Many people don't know and can't distinguish who has proprietary jurisdiction over many functions that the Park Board now performs. He receives frequent calls in his office regarding Park Board issues that he currently can't do anything about. Whether it is Wi-Fi service, skaters and bikers operating on the walking paths, shady lurkers that are hanging around with unspecified purposes on park land, tree stumps, or the condition of park-owned infrastructure. Many people fairly or unfairly haven't a clue as to what the Park Board even does. Unfortunately, most people don't get involved in local politics. They just want something done at the moment that they need something done. This can be modeled after the Planning Commission or the Charter Commission where there is accountability and transparency in open public meetings. These are strong and valued boards that offer great value within the city enterprise. The Park Board could be just like that. There wouldn't be any less scrutiny of park activities but, in fact, there would probably be more. By incorporating the Park Police into the established Minneapolis Police Department (MPD), the city will be better able to address safety disparities in neighborhoods that are routinely plagued by violent crime. The Chief will be able to utilize police whenever and wherever they are needed, regardless of geography, while still being cognizant and diligent about public safety in the parks. This will narrow the safety gap between affluent white communities and impoverished communities of color. The Civilian Review Authority doesn't cover the Park Police, they only cover the MPD. This will create greater transparency and accountability of Park Police behavior. While Minneapolis has a fine park system, throughout the country there are some fine systems and they are all free. Minneapolis doesn't have the only game in town. Let's stop operating as if we are in a vacuum.

p) Ray Harris, 210 West Grant, stated that he has been a citizen of Minneapolis for 80 years. For over 55 years he has been active in various projects at City Hall, as a developer, and other activities. He has developed Calhoun Square, Greeway Gables, and helped with Orchestra Hall. He has worked with the city through the predecessor to CPED. Prior to the MCDA he worked with the HRA. He has also worked with the Park Board on many of those projects. Incidentally, his father was on the Park Board in 1915 with Theodore Wirth. When he heard stories from his father about some of the things that they went through when they acquired the land around the lakes to create the Grand Rounds, the mission of the Park Board was uppermost and the cost of doing it was secondary. The mission of the Park Board is to preserve, protect, maintain, improve, and enhance its natural resources, parkland and recreational opportunities for current and future generations. That is not the

only mission of the city of Minneapolis. They have many other priorities and many other things that they need to be doing. The Park Board would lose its autonomy and would become a much lower priority in what the city is doing, and it needs to be maintained. There are better ways to share services, but the elimination of the Park Board should not be on the ballot or even discussed. He was violently opposed to the elimination of the Park Board.

q) Ed Schwartz, 2825 Brookwood Terrace, stated that the Park Board ought to remain an independent body that serves its own set of functions. The city has a very, very full plate. They have many critical issues to deal with such as the pension funds, for example. The city should finish what they are doing before they start messing around with the Park Board.

r) Lou Moran, 2912 42nd Street West, stated that he was an architect and planner by trade, and a resident of Minneapolis since 1970 because of the park system. The park system is a quality product that is the envy of the world. Those who travel know that Minneapolis parks are second to none. The outstanding vision of the founders of this park system and the bold decisions they made back in the 1800s and early 1900s was directly related to the fact that they had a single focus which was the park system itself and the recreation of the people who lived in Minneapolis. Removing that focus and placing it with the City Council will not yield transparency. At this point, he would not change the process. He would not see the Park Board as anything except a separate entity for the remainder of the history of Minneapolis.

s) Bill Stout, 4340 West Lake Harriet Parkway, stated that it seemed that the discussion is essentially about consolidation; security, and maintenance. He was opposed to the elimination of the Minneapolis Park & Recreation Board and opposed to putting it to a vote unless three things are done: (1) The key Park Board functions and the cost aspects of them are fleshed out and made clear. (2) Address how the mission of the Park Board, the protection, enhancement, improvement, etc. of park land, would be honored going forward. (3) What are the pluses and minuses of the proposal. If the Park Board was eliminated, there is the potential of a decline in parks and recreation because it may be devalued and seen as a cost center with valuable assets. If the above questions are not answered, then this is not ready to be put to a vote.

t) Jason Stone, 1708 East 57th Street, stated that, by way of disclosure, he was a Park Board candidate, and was also a Park Board candidate in 2005. He is also a member of the city's Citizens Environmental Advisory Committee, and a member of the city's Capital Long Range Improvement Committee. Minneapolis has an incredible park system. It is the greatest asset that the city has. What could possibly make us want to put it at risk? Risk grounded in a speculative proposal which is effectively built on personal opinions. The proposed Charter amendment represents the most significant change in the governance of our city in about 130 years, but what analysis has been done, what evidence has been presented to support it, and what facts have been brought to bear? The proposal should be put through rigorous study before it is put before the voters. This is not a time for debate; this is a last ditch effort. There is no evidence, facts, or analysis to support this proposal. As a former manager in the financial sector and executive director of a non-profit, it was expected of him that he vet ideas before he brought them forward. This poses enormous risk to the city. He was very concerned that the casual treatment of the park system perhaps illustrated the casual way in which Park Board coffers will be raided to fill potholes.

u) Marty Demgen, 4230 25th Avenue South, stated that, by way of disclosure, he was also running for the Park Board. He chose to live in Minneapolis and his six children have been born and raised here and had all benefited from the park system. He kept hearing about the uniqueness of Minneapolis government and that it should get on board with Seattle and other cities. He had friends visiting from Detroit and San Diego. They can't walk to their parks. He grew up in Kandiyohi County and was familiar with what can happen when developers don't have a buffer between them and the decision makers. Minneapolis should celebrate its uniqueness and remain unique. He urged the Charter Commission not to place this on the ballot.

v) Matt Moore, 5344 12th Avenue South, stated that he was the president of Minneapolis Off-Road Cycling Advocates, a non-profit that is responsible for creating the mountain bike trail system in Wirth Park. He was also a board member of Trips for Kids Twin Cities, a non-profit that takes urban youth on mountain bike rides. The Charter Commission should not place this on the ballot because the Park Board works effectively to protect the parks. It works effectively with small groups. An independent board is best for the city based on over 100 years of experience. In 2003, Off-Road Cycling Advocates went to the Park Board with an idea for a mountain bike trail. The Park Board was very cautious in approving the project. They listened to concerns from residents, from other user groups, and they made Off-Road Cycling Advocates demonstrate their ability to fund, build, and maintain the trails. The Park Board provided staff to help plan, support, and evaluate the project and plot the course of the trail. The result is the first and best permanent mountain bike trail in the country. It has grown in popularity with residents and families. He gives tours of the mountain bike trail to people from other areas and they have stated that they couldn't build a trail like this in their area because all the land has been developed. The Park Board should be maintained as an independent body because it works.

w) Steve Minn, 1701 Madison Street Northeast, stated that in 1996 he made this proposal to the Charter Commission, but it lost for lack of a second. Tonight's debate is about the challenge and mission of the Charter Commission. The Charter Commission is the gatekeeper of the ballot; responsible for providing the initial access to changes in governance and the possibility for governance change. The Charter Commission is not a decision maker or policy maker about whether the Park Board exists or doesn't exist. They are independent of any political strings to make sure that a reasonable policy is advanced for public consideration. That is their sole purpose. Based on the turnout, the Park Board is very capable of defending itself. The challenge is, is there an opportunity to change governance? Is there an opportunity to save money? Is there a possibility to do it better? He urged the Charter Commission to place this on the ballot. Spend time crafting a reasonable proposal; take time to think about the rational benefits, pros and cons about the proposal, then let the voters decide.

x) Wizard Marks, 3001 Oakland Avenue South, stated that she was inalterably opposed to getting rid of the Park Board. She was raised in Cincinnati and someone tonight talked about how wonderful the park system was in Cincinnati. There were no park police. No one worked in the park. It was just a place to go and scream and yell and not aggravate your mother. In the last 30 years, they covered up a stream in her local park in Cincinnati, which was a mile and a half away from her home, and the stream is tiled over. So Cincinnati should not be held up as a shining beacon. Someone else mentioned that the city hadn't lost anything when Hennepin County took over the libraries, but rather gained everything. What has changed, as an example, is that 2,500 CDs disappeared from Hosmer Library

before the ink was dry on the agreement. 1,500 of them were returned, but, they took the most popular CDs out of the catalog. How many other libraries are being treated the same? Eliminating the Park Board is not a good idea when the citizens have no control. Currently there is someone who is accountable. She can always call her Park Board Commissioner with concerns.

y) Tony Kelly, 2422 Inglewood Avenue North, stated that he was a Park Board employee. In 2002, he chose to move to Minneapolis in strong part because of the park system. After that, he became a Park Board employee. Many of his specific questions were echoed by Mr. Rice. The proposals are very premature. Questions regarding stewardship have not been answered. How the parks interface with state statute hasn't been resolved. In the interests of intellectual honesty, those questions have to be answered before this is placed on the ballot. Go ahead and put it on the ballot. He had every confidence, however, that the citizens of Minneapolis would crush it because the citizens of Minneapolis know that Minneapolis is unique. He extended a thank you to Mr. Moore with Off-Road Cycling Advocates; he had presented a great example of what can be done. That quality of service would not be received from the City Council.

z) Carol Kummer, stated that she had represented Park District 5 since 2002. Currently she served as the Park Board's Intergovernmental Relations Chair. The Park Board has had a very special relationship with the legislature since it was established. Because they are a single purpose district, they can focus exclusively on their mission. The Park Board has secured nearly \$140,000,000 from the state legislature in just 25 years for a variety of park projects. That did not happen by accident. As a single-purpose district they can focus their time and attention on bettering the park system. Also, 10 years ago the Minneapolis Park & Recreation Board was the first public body in the state to call for the constitutional amendment for dedicated funding for parks, the outdoors, and the arts. The Park Board pursued this legislative initiative through the passage by the legislature and then actively campaigned for it. Last fall, the voters of Minnesota approved the constitutional amendment and Minneapolis voters led the way with nearly 75% voting for the clean water, land, and legacy amendment. This is but one example of what an independently elected park board can do. "The History of Minneapolis Parks", by David Smith, stated that the legislature was the guardian angel of the Park Board. The Minneapolis Park Board understands that it has a clear and good working relationship with the legislature, and that is vitally important. The City Council also has a relationship with the legislature; but they are necessarily concerned with basic municipal services, and getting parks to the top of their priority list under such a heavy agenda would be extremely difficult. The people who set up the city over 100 years ago understood the importance of a quality park system. It would be a huge mistake for the citizens of this generation to forget that. She urged the Charter Commission not to place this on the ballot.

aa) Annie Young, Minneapolis Park & Recreation Board Commissioner, stated that as Chair of the Operations and Environment Committee and serving as senior member of the Board in her 20th year of public service, she has been through this before. The citizens love their parks. It is why people live in Minneapolis, and it is why this is a great city to live, work, and play in. The benefits are endless and they are priceless. In her hand she held almost 800 signatures that she and others had collected since Mr. Ostrow came up with this absurd idea. She couldn't imagine a Parks Department in City Hall. There is a huge potential impact of this proposal on poor communities and working families. One of the reasons being given for eliminating the Park Board is to create efficiencies. The City has instituted a

hiring freeze and all levels of government may be forced to lay off staff. She was wary of allowing efficiency to mean the loss of services to the least well off and the loss of good paying jobs. Over the past 126 years, the Minneapolis park system and the Park Board have been recognized nationally as one of the premier park systems and as the number one park system in America. The system is used internationally as a model and has even been described "park nirvana" by a national publication. Would these distinctions remain for next 125 years if the Park Board became a city department? It is not the time to put this on the ballot. More dialogue is needed about the other amendments that are being discussed. Could the City Council really oversee this park system while taking care of all the other city business that is on their plate? She asked the Charter Commission not to place this proposal on the ballot.

Al Flowers stated that he had signed in to speak on this issue at 5:50 and had not yet been allowed to speak. He felt discriminated against. There had been nothing on the sign-in sheets stating that other people would be allowed to speak first.

Bernstein stated he was sorry Mr. Flowers felt that way. Mr. Flowers had spoken at other meetings. There were three other people who had signed in who had not spoken at other meetings, and they would be heard first. Then Mr. Flowers would have an opportunity to speak.

bb) Meg Fourney (sp?), 3401 Zenith Avenue South, stated that in the 80's she was the president of People for Parks and was asked by a group that was comparable to People for Parks in another city to speak to them. It was apparent during her stay that they were envious of the independent Park Board in Minneapolis. Their park system was a department of the city that was continually put on the low end of the priority list as far as budgetary concerns. An independent private sector fund raising group was imperative for them. In order to continue the quality of life in Minneapolis which is central to the parks, we need to continue to keep the Minneapolis Park & Recreation Board independent. The League of Women Voters (LWV) did research this for some time and it was her understanding that their membership could not come to a consensus in forwarding the elimination of the independent Park Board. She trusted the LWV, and felt they used a very thoughtful process with much due diligence. She asked that the Charter Commission not place this proposal on the ballot.

cc) Carol Pass, 2536 18th Avenue South, stated that she was concerned about the financial issue. The Mayor's Blueprint for Youth Against Violence noted that when they opened the parks and extended park use, the number of violent crimes in general went down considerably over one summer. She lived in East Phillips and there were no programs in her park. 78% of the families in East Phillips have children. That is the highest in the city, yet they have no park building. Council Member Benson made the comment that almost \$2,400,000 could be saved with the elimination of the Park Police and consolidating everything. Every homicide apparently costs the city \$3,000,000, for investigations and everything else. This will not save money. We really need the Park Police with their proactive work with kids, we need the programs, we need the park system.

dd) Susan Vikse, 2344 River Pointe Circle, stated that she had heard people say that other cities in the country do not have a park board and comparing Minneapolis with cities that have lovely parks such as Boston, New York, D.C., Seattle, Portland, Raleigh, etc. She had been to all those cities. Those parks in no way compare to Minneapolis parks. Why, if

we are number one and we have been rated number one since the 1930s, would we want to change that and submit to the mediocrity of other cities. She urged the Charter Commission not to place this proposal on the ballot.

ee) Al Flowers, stated that he felt the proposal was a bad idea. Council Member Remington stated that he was from Philadelphia, and their parks are just as good as the parks in Minneapolis. Within days of the passage of the City Charter change, with the grim details of cut backs in city funding due to the nation-wide economic down turn, the parks took a \$3,100,000 hit. They had over 600 employees and went down to just over 100. It's about management. When Council Member Benson talks about saving money, don't forget the \$28,000,000 that this city has paid out in settlements over the last five years.

ff) Jay Kiedrowski, 1012 West Minnehaha Parkway, stated that he supported the parks but didn't support having a redundant set of elected officials. He would prefer that the Mayor and City Council vote on issues relating to the parks. The governance of the Park Board over recent years has simply been embarrassing and ineffective. He was proud of the park system, too, but was not proud of what has occurred recently over the last ten years in the management of the parks. There has been an attempt for the last ten years to improve and create parkways along the north Mississippi River, but he didn't see them. What has the Park Board been doing? How about grass on ball fields? Some parkways in the city are in the same kind of condition as the city's alleys. What has the Park Board been doing about that? This proposal eliminates the duplication of services. Minneapolis has two police forces, two planning departments, two attorneys, two finance departments, two sets of human resource departments. This proposal does not impact the selling of park property as some people have alleged. He was confident that the Mayor and the City Council would manage the parks and recreation in the city as effectively as they run the Fire Department, the City Planning Department, and all the rest of the city.

gg) Judy Nelson, 3503 33rd Avenue South, stated that due diligence has not been done on this proposal and the various implications of what this is and whether or not the City Council can actually do this. This proposal should not be on the ballot because it is not well thought out and the implications are not known. There is no financial efficiency when a group is eliminated that knows intimately how this system works with the communities and the kids and the structures, and is turned over to people who are already overloaded and not very accessible. You may end up saving some money and losing the parks. That is not good efficiency for your money.

hh) Scott Vreeland, 2437 33rd Avenue South, Minneapolis Park & Recreation Board Commissioner, stated that he had listened to every minute of the testimony and had an amendment to propose to the Charter Commission, just as Paul Ostrow had proposed an amendment. The proposed amendment states, "The Minneapolis Charter shall be amended as follows: The Board of Estimate and Taxation shall set the maximum property tax levy for both the City of Minneapolis and the Minneapolis Park & Recreation Board at the same rate on an annual basis. Furthermore, that the net debt bonding for capital projects be directly proportional to the property tax supported operating budgets of the two jurisdictions." It is about the money. We have been watching the elimination of the Park Board happen even with an elected Park Board. The net debt bonding for the future of all our neighborhood parks is zero dollars. We need to have the ability to keep this park system operating and that means we have to have part of the pie. The only way to do that is through his proposed amendment or to have a better relationship with the city. This does

not help the relationship with the city. This has been very damaging. The real issues need to be discussed. We have tough times. This is a maximum levy. If the city gets 8, the Park Board gets 8. It is really the net debt bonding that is so important because every wading pool, every building, everything we have in the neighborhood park system is not getting funded. He disagreed with the earlier speaker; it is important that we look at this real issue. He expected his amendment to receive the same respect that was accorded Council Member Ostrow's amendment.

ii) Mary Merrill Anderson, 1144 Cedarview Drive, Minneapolis Park & Recreation Board Commissioner, stated that this has not been well thought out. Due diligence has not been done. It is not ready for prime time. She quoted excerpts from a speech she made while still Superintendent of the parks: "In an article in the *U.S. News and World Report*, Minneapolis was listed as one of six cities in the world featured in the article entitled 'Cities that Work'. The reason that Minneapolis works, according to the article, was because of the Minneapolis Park & Recreation system. In 1883, when the Minneapolis Board of Trade vowed to create the finest and most beautiful system of public parks and boulevards of any city in America, some city councilmen balked. The city, they insisted, would never extend more than ten blocks in any direction and nature would always be just a short walk away. Why spend public funds on park land? The farsighted prevailed, however, and the Minneapolis park system has evolved into what Alexander Garvin a member of the New York City Planning Commission and author of *The America City: What Works, What Doesn't*, calls the best located, best designed, best maintained public open space in America. He goes on to talk about the features of our park system and he said by design, every home in Minneapolis is within six blocks of green space. The article continues and points out that the success of the Minneapolis Park system is the result of the independent status of the Minneapolis Park & Recreation Board". That has been recognized by experts all over the country. People here have spoken in these public meetings about how important they think the independent status the Minneapolis Park & Recreation Board is. There has been no conversation between the Park Board and the City Council in regard to this issue.

jj) Paul Ostrow, Ward 3 Council Member, 350 South 5th Street, stated that 126 years ago, Minneapolis voters created a semi-autonomous Park Board that still exists today. The voters should have the opportunity to vote in 2009 on whether a model created in the 19th century remains the best model for the governance of our parks as we face the unique challenges of the 21st century. He had passed out a list of twenty different functions performed under the jurisdictions of both the Park Board and the City Council. Over the past 126 years, as the challenges and demands on government have increased, the areas of overlap, waste, and duplication between the city and the Minneapolis Park & Recreation Board have continued to increase. A few examples include the city's solid waste crews drive by the park buildings because the park system wishes to have separate solid waste pickup. Two sets of taxpayer-funded lobbyists are at the capitol representing city and Park Board interests. The city and Park Board spent countless hours resolving a needless dispute about the city's new Wi-Fi initiative. Citizens call 311 and are told that there is no information available about parks on the 311 line. City and park staff quarrel over financial obligations and the Park Board's responsibility to pay stormwater fees and enterprise costs. Separating out the functions of the park system from the rest of the city operations results in the use of precious resources and personnel, not on delivering services, not on improving the parks, but on unnecessary duplication and turf battles. The citizens and the taxpayers are the losers. He had a 1998 report entitled, "Public Works - Minneapolis Park &

Recreation Board Service Overlaps.” Many dedicated public servants for both the Park Board and the city participated in the report. Many of its recommendations have yet to be fully implemented. Every minute and every dollar spent on figuring out who does what and who pays for what is a minute and a dollar that is not spent on park programming for our kids. No financial analysis can fully capture this cost. Finally, while Mr. Rice's comments will be reviewed, everyone should be offended by the notion that the citizens of Minneapolis do not have the authority, by referendum, to choose how they are governed. That notion is undemocratic and flies in the face of our status as a home rule charter city. It is the citizenry, not the elected officials, who are the true owners of the government.

kk) Audie Gillespie, 3225 24th Street East, stated that he represented the people who keep the parks functioning. The reason this should not be on the ballot is the difference between talking to a board who will weigh and consider the comments, or trying to get time with one individual. That would be eliminated by eliminating the Park Board. He supported an independent Park Board because he believed in democracy at its most basic and because of that he didn't think this proposal should be on the ballot. With the equal opportunity to load the room with supporters, almost without fail no one applauds for the movement to eliminate the Park Board. The silence is deafening. The opportunity is there. He hoped the Charter Commission noted that there is little energy and movement to put this on the ballot other than from current and past city council members or city officials.

ll) Lyall Schwarzkopf, 4840 Bloomington Avenue, urged the Charter Commission to place the elimination of the Board of Estimate and Taxation on the ballot. The city needs to begin to integrate financial services with other functions. A third board is not needed. If the responsibility is placed with the City Council, citizens will know who is responsible for property taxes, general obligation bonds, and finance policy setting. The Board of Estimate and Taxation has three different duties, those duties can be delegated to other individuals

The meeting was adjourned at 8:54 p.m.

Peggy Menshek
Council Committee Coordinator