

***AMENDED MINUTES**

CHARTER REVIEW COMMISSION

A meeting of the Charter Review Commission was held on Wednesday, December 16, 2009 in the Employees' Lounge, City Hall, Cranston, Rhode Island.

The meeting was called to order at 7:00 P.M. by the Chair.

Present: Michael Mulcahy, Chair; Randall Jackvony, Vice-Chair; Holly Scripsack, Frank Mattiucci, Steven Carrera, John DeGenova; Alfred Notarianni, Simeone Parente; Nathan Canaan and Francis Donahue.

Absent: Ronald D'Agostino.

MINUTES OF THE LAST MEETING:

On motion by Mr. Carrera, seconded by Mr. Mattiucci, it was voted to dispense with the reading of the minutes of the last meeting. Motion passed unanimously.

Chair welcomed Steve Stycos, School Committee Member and stated that he was asked to attend this meeting to give the Committee members insight on proposed changes to the Charter regarding the School Department.

Mr. Stycos addressed the proposed changes. He stated that he agrees with the elimination of City-Wide seats. The City-Wide person tends to be someone who is well-known or has money. The idea of people being appointed by the Mayor or Council President, he does not like because the members should not be appointed, they should be elected. He would like to see more Wards seats.

Mr. Jackvony presented a copy of revised proposal to his original proposals.

Chair asked Mr. Stycos what could be done to help improve communication between the City and Schools and what the state of communication is at this time. Mr. Stycos stated that the present status is pretty good. With former Mayor Laffey, there were communication issues and sometimes became rather contentious. He does not see communication as a huge problem. Communication pretty much depends on the Superintendent.

Mr. DeGenova what his opinion on the proposed change, which has not been discussed by this Committee, regarding the City Council approving School contracts. Mr. Stycos stated that it is not a good idea, particular with the way the Law is now.

Mr. Canaan stated that what is wrong with the way negotiations are held is why is it that the Unions can tell the City what they want and the City cannot tell the Unions what we can afford.

Mr. DeGenova asked Mr. Stycos if he finds that seven members is a good number or should we have more. Mr. Stycos stated that there isn't a lot of interest of people running for these positions. These are enough seats at this time.

Mr. DeGenova asked Mr. Stycos his opinion of appointed positions as opposed to elected. Mr. Stycos stated that he is not in favor of appointed positions.

Chair asked Mr. Stycos his opinion of having two extra members, one being appointed by the Mayor and one being appointed by the Council President. Mr. Stycos stated that they would probably be seen as the voice of the Mayor or Council President. He would like to see them all being elected members.

Chair asked Mr. Stycos what could be done to help make more people run for School Committee positions. Mr. Stycos suggested eliminating At-Large seats and making seven members District seats. He does favor School Committee being paid a small stipend.

Chair stated that having a member appointed by the Mayor and a member appointed by the Council President, there would be better lines of communications between the School Committee and the City Council and between the School Committee and the Mayor. Mr. Stycos stated that the system is not working well. There have been School Committees in the past that have approved large amounts of expenditures and they have no accountability. Chair asked what would be the solution to this. Mr. Stycos suggested a possibility of sending two tax bills, one from the City and one from the Schools. Mr. DeGenova stated that you would have to hire another Finance Director, another Auditor, essentially creating a brand new department.

Mr. Mattiucci stated that he thinks the system is working fine. He thinks the problem lies at the State (funding education).

Mr. DeGenova suggested adding in the Charter, having mandated Omnibus meetings. This may help the communication problem.

Mr. DeGenova stated that the Council and the Mayor are both on the same side of the budget. This is why the City Council ratifies City contracts. The School Department is on the other side and you have three branches of government – Executive, Mayor; Legislative, City Council and School Committee. They would have to be kept separate.

Mr. Canaan questioned if there would be a problem if the Mayor and City Council sat in in negotiations. Mr. Stycos stated that he supposes they could, but the practical matter is there are a lot of meetings. The Mayor and Council President could be allowed to attend for briefings on status of negotiations. That may fit into the Omnibus idea. Mr. Stycos stated that he agrees that there has been a failure on the School side years ago of communication lacking and exuberant expenditures. Maybe an Omnibus meeting between the School Committee and the City Council would help this matter.

Chair suggested that the Committee take Mr. Jackvony's proposals piece meal. Mr. DeGenova opposed to taking these proposals as piece meal.

Mr. DeGenova stated that the first order of business should be whether a separate section of the Charter should be dedicated to education. His proposal is dedicate Chapter 16, which is vacant, to "Education" and leave "Parks and Recreation" in Chapter 11 and incorporate a brand new Chapter.

On motion by Mr. Jackvony, seconded by Mr. Notarianni, it was voted to create a new Chapter 16, entitled "Education". Motion passed unanimously.

On motion by Mr. Jackvony, seconded by Mr. Notarianni, it was voted to move Section 2.04 of Chapter ~~*14~~ *2 to new Chapter 16.01. Motion passed unanimously.

Mr. Jackvony motioned to amend new Section 16.01 to reflect changes as stated in his proposal. Mr. Canaan seconded the motion.

On motion by Mr. DeGenova, seconded by Mr. Mattiucci, it was voted to amend line three of the second paragraph to add after "city wide appointment", "non-voting".

Under Discussion:

Chair opposed because what will happen is all elected members will potentially shun these people as non-elected people. By them not having a vote, they may lose interest.

Mr. DeGenova stated that appointed members should not be treated equal. They are not elected. Adding "non voting" would address communication and open dialogue issues.

Mr. Parente agreed that they are not elected, but the Mayor is elected.

Mr. Jackvony stated that there is precedent in the Charter, which is the School Buildings Committee, made up of Council people and members of the public, who are voting members.

Mr. Carrera suggested making the Mayor and Council President ex-officio members of the School Committee rather than having two members appointed by the Mayor and Council President.

Roll call was taken on motion to amend this section to add “non-voting” and motion failed on a tie vote. The following being recorded as voting “aye”: Mr. Mattiucci, Mr. Carrera, Mr. DeGenova, Ms. Scripsack and Mr. Notarianni -5. The following being recorded as voting “nay”: Chairman Mulcahy, Mr. Jackvony, Mr. Parente; Mr. Canaan and Mr. Donahue -5.

Roll call was taken on Mr. Jackvony’s amendment as presented to Section 16.01. Motion failed on a tie vote. The following being recorded as voting “aye”: Mr. Jackvony, Mr. Parente, Chairman Mulcahy, Mr. Canaan, and Mr. Donahue -5. The following being recorded as voting “nay”: Mr. Mattiucci, Mr. Carrera, Mr. DeGenova, Ms. Scripsack and Mr. Notarianni -5.

The meeting adjourned at 9:00 P.M.

Respectfully submitted,

Rosalba Zanni
Assistant City Clerk/Clerk of Committees

*Minutes amended 1/13/2010