

CHARTER REVIEW COMMISSION MINUTES

November 4, 2019

The Charter Review Commission met at 5:34 p.m. in the Municipal Building Multi-Purpose Room on the 4th day of November 2019, and notice and agenda of the meeting were posted in the Municipal Building at 201 West Gray and the Norman Public Library at 225 North Webster 48 hours prior to the beginning of the meeting.

Item 1. Call to Order and Roll Call.

PRESENT:

Mr. Trey Bates
Mr. Doug Cubberley, Vice-Chairman
Ms. Carol Dillingham
Mr. Jim Griffith
Mr. Greg Jungman
Mr. Kenneth McBride
Mr. Kevin Pipes
Mr. Richard Stawicki
Mr. Bob Thompson, Chairman
Mr. Bryan Vinyard
Ms. Shon Williamson-Jennings

ABSENT:

Ms. Aisha Ali
Mr. Jim Eller
Mr. Tom Hackelman

STAFF PRESENT:

Ms. Kathryn Walker, Interim City Attorney
Ms. Brenda Hall, City Clerk

Item 2. Consideration of approval of the Charter Review Commission meeting minutes of October 14, 2019.

Member Williamson-Jennings moved that the minutes be approved, which motion was duly seconded by Member Pipes, and the minutes were approved.

Items submitted for the record

1. Charter Revision Ad Hoc Committee minutes of October 14, 2019

and the question being upon approval of the minutes and upon the subsequent directive, a vote was taken with the following result:

Item 2, continued:

YEAS: Members Bates, Cubberley, Dillingham, Griffith, Jungman, McBride, Pipes, Stawicki, Vinyard, Williamson-Jennings, Chairman Thompson

NAYES: None

Chairman Thompson declared the motion carried and the minutes approved; and the filing thereof was directed.

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Item 3. Continued discussion and possible action of Article II, Sections 2, 5, 6, and 14, of the City Charter to consider whether the term of office for Councilmembers and the Mayor should be changed from two years to three years.

Ms. Walker said during the last meeting, Member Bates requested this issue be revised in order for Staff to prepare language for three year terms for elected officials, with odd-number ward elections continuing to occur together in the same year, even-numbered ward election occurring the next year together, and the Mayoral election occurring every third year as a standalone election. She said Staff prepared a chart. She said to achieve this without affecting current terms, the language is drafted to begin in 2023 as follows:

	Current Term	New Term
Odd Wards	July 2, 2019 – July 7, 2021 July 7, 2021 – 2023	2023 – 2026 (Tuesday following election results)
Even Wards	July 3, 2019 – July 7, 2020 July 7, 2020 – July 5, 2020 July 5, 2022 – 2024	2024 – 2027 (Tuesday following election results)
Mayor	July 2, 2019 – July 5, 2022	July 5, 2022 – 2025 (Tuesday following election results)

Item 3, continued:

Member Bates said the current timing sometimes does not allow a sitting Councilmember to run for Mayor without losing their seat, whereas other Councilmembers can run without giving up their seat. He is trying to make it more equitable for all Councilmembers. He said almost all elections for higher offices occur on even years and changing the terms would allow for better time management if running for a higher office. He said the Mayor has a leadership role that is different from the rest of Council, but when it comes down to their ability to be involved and understand the issues there is really no difference in decision making power. He would not want to shorten the Mayor's term, but adding one extra year to the term of the Councilmembers will give them more time to be involved and understand the issues they are voting on.

Member Stawicki said the Mayor does a lot more City activities outside of Council meetings than other members of Council, which means they are only equal in terms of their vote on Council. He suggested creating nine (9) wards which would be one-third of the Council each year being elected each year and the Mayor would not vote at the Council meetings.

Member Pipes said if the Mayor does not vote then a big chunk of accountability is gone.

Member McBride said he supports three year terms for each member of Council including the Mayor and Member Pipes agreed.

Member Dillingham said she was not excited about three year terms because of the loss of engagement with the voters. She said the City is known for its engagement with voters and complacency may creep in with a three year term. She said it is critical to stay in touch with constituents because the demographics do change and it is Council's responsibility to understand what voters are thinking and it puts more pressure on the Councilmember to make sure they have ward meetings or other types of communication. She said face to face communication is important and the best way to do that is keeping Councilmembers engaged is to keep the two year terms.

Member Williamson-Jennings agreed and said two year terms keep representatives accountable and engaged with constituents wants from their representatives.

Councilmember Stawicki asked if any other cities separate Mayor and Council elections as Ms. Walker said she would research that for the Committee.

Member Griffith and Member Jungman support two year terms for Councilmembers.

Member Cubberley said he supports three year terms because it takes time to build relationships and get things done. He said larger City issues can take over a year of Committee and/or Council discussion before making it to Council for a vote so an extra year can make a big difference. He said three years is really not that long and Councilmembers can always be responsive to constituents.

Item 3, continued:

Member Bates said there is an interesting dynamic in a Mayoral race that could potentially be heavily influenced by the fact that there are four wards up for election at the same time. He said by separating the Mayor and Council races it makes it very clear to the public what type of race will be taking place.

Chairman Thompson said issues the Council was working on when he was sworn in as a Councilmember were not the same issues candidates running for office were talking about in the ward races. He voted on issues Council had been discussing for a very long time that he was uneducated about. He said when Council turns over quickly it lacks consistency of knowledge. He said it takes time to get new Councilmembers “up to speed” and new Councilmembers may not agree with the direction current seated Councilmembers are going.

Member McBride moved that the proposal to change the term of office for Councilmembers and the Mayor from two to three years be approved, which motion was duly seconded by Member Cubberley,

Items submitted for the record

1. Proposed Article II, Section 2 – Mayor and Councilmember’s Term Expiration

and the question being upon approving the proposal to change the term of office for Councilmembers and the Mayor from two to three years a vote was taken with the following result:

YEAS: Members Bates, Cubberley, Griffith, McBride,
Pipes, Chairman Thompson

NAYES: Members Dillingham, Jungman, Stawicki,
Williamson-Jennings, Vinyard

Chairman Thompson declared the motion carried the proposal term of office for Councilmember and the Mayor from two to three years was approved.

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Item 4. Discussion of Article II, Section 11, to consider whether to allow partisan elections for municipal office.

Member Cubberley said City items are more issue focused than party focused.

Member Dillingham said it makes it so much easier to knock on a door, answer the phone, and answer an email when you are focusing on the issue and talking about the roads, water, stormwater, etc.

Member Pipes felt the City should stay status quo on this issue.

Item 4, continued:

Member McBride moved to decline the proposal to allow partisan elections for municipal office, which motion was duly seconded by Member Dillingham,

Items submitted for the record

1. Article II, Section 11 – Partisan Elections
2. Cities 101 - - Partisan and Non-Partisan Elections

and the question being upon declining the proposal to allow partisan elections for municipal office, a vote was taken with the following result:

YEAS:	Members Bates, Cubberley, Dillingham, Griffith, Jungman, McBride, Pipes, Stawicki, Vinyard, Williamson-Jennings, Chairman Thompson
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NAYES:	None
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Chairman Thompson declared the motion carried the proposal to allow partisan election for municipal office was declined.

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Item 5. Miscellaneous Discussion.

Ms. Brenda Hall, City Clerk, said future topics include Utility increases requiring a vote of the people; Residents Bill of Rights; revisit relationship between Norman Regional Hospital System and the City; and Tax Increment Finance District (TIF) requirement for a vote of the people if \$5 million or over; potential loopholes used to skirt the Open Meetings Act; review Council succession revisions; and review Executive Session restrictions and provide recommendations of appropriate limits of use.

Chairman Thompson asked member if the meetings should be limited to one item at a time and members felt several items could be discussed as long as there is consensus to move forward; however, larger issues might need more than one meeting.

Topics for the December meetings include the Citizen Bill of Rights and TIF.

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Item 6. ADJOURNMENT.

Chairman Thompson declared the meeting adjourned at 6:20 p.m.