



**CITY OF ST. FRANCIS
ST. FRANCIS MN
ANOKA COUNTY
CHARTER COMMISSION
Tuesday, March 10, 2025 at 5:30 PM**

MINUTES

1. Call to Order/Roll Call: The Charter Commission meeting was called to order at 5:30 pm by Malcolm Beck.

2. Roll Call: Present were Malcolm Beck, Sarah Udvig, Steve Kane, Gary Zimmerman, and Evan Feist, and Amy Faanes. Also present was City Clerk, Jenni Wida and City Administrator Kate Thunstrom.

3. Approve Minutes of January 31, 2024: There was general consensus to approve the January 31, 2024, Charter Commission Minutes. Consensus carried 5-0-1 (Kane).

4. Appointment of Chair and Vice Chair: Zimmerman nominated Malcolm Beck as Chair seconded by Feist. Beck asked if there were any other nominations three times. Called for a question to appoint Malcolm Beck as chair. Motion carried.

Zimmerman nominated Steve Kane as Vice Chair, seconded Faanes. Beck asked if there were any other nominations three times. Called for a question to appoint Steve Kane as the Vice Chair for the Charter Commission. Motion carried.

5. Agenda Items:

A. City Charter Amendment Consideration

City Administrator Thunstrom reviewed the Staff report concerning the consideration for a four year Mayor term and meeting with the League of Minnesota Cities to discuss dissolving the Charter Commission and becoming a statutory City.

Beck shared that he was on a committee that amended the Charter in the late 1990s and at that time he was in favor of either lengthening the Mayor's term to four years, or shortening the Council terms to two years for consistency. He added that this was on the ballot in 2014 and it failed. He said he would be more supportive of making the Mayor's term four years.

Kane noted that in 2014, the residents spoke very loudly against this.

Zimmerman said he agrees with Kane that the residents spoke clearly in the 2014 election about this. He shared that he called around to other cities and most cities in the area, other than Oak Grove, have two-year Mayor terms. He said if they do want to move this forward he would like it to go to a vote.

Udvig shared that the Council discussed this and the general consensus was that they are supportive of a four-year Mayor term; however, they would want it to go before the residents for a vote. She noted that during the 2014 election, it was not communicated clearly to the residents beforehand but the question was written very clearly on the ballot.

Faanes agreed that the Mayor's term should be the same length as the Council's terms. She noted that most other elected official's terms are four years. She shared her support for four-year Mayor terms. She said she voted in the 2014 election and does not remember a question about the Mayor's term being on the ballot. She shared that she had recently spoken to the Mayor of Corcoran whose city just switched Mayor terms for four years through a unanimous vote from their Charter Commission and Council. She noted that if they went this route, rather than through a vote by the residents, the residents would still have time to appeal this decision.

Thunstrom reviewed the different ways that this change could happen, either through a vote on an upcoming election, or a unanimous vote from the Charter Commission and Council. She added that there was a Councilmember who said they would not vote in favor of this to ensure it goes to a ballot for the residents to vote on. She explained that if they do want to put this on the ballot, they would use the Night to Unite and the newsletter leading up to it to start educating the residents on this.

Feist asked for the reasoning behind why they would want to go to a four year Mayor term. Thunstrom explained that this would not affect the current Mayor's term; however, extending the term would allow the Mayor to have more opportunity to learn, grow, and get things done as a two-year term goes by quickly.

Feist said he would like to see this go to the ballot. Kane agreed.

Thunstrom shared that Staff will bring this feedback to the Council and will start organizing what this will look like on the upcoming ballot.

Beck asked about the City's current population. Wida said it is just over 8,500 residents.

Kane shared that he does not think it is a bad idea to move to a statutory City. He noted that the Charter Commission has a hard time filling its vacancies at times.

Udvig stated she does not see a reason why they would not at least explore moving to a statutory City. She added that the Council has shown support for exploring this and said it may be a good idea to have a joint meeting to discuss this further.

Thunstrom explained the differences between a Charter City and a statutory City.

Beck shared that he has always wanted to make sure that the Charter does not encumber the City when trying to move forward on things and he does not think it has other than causing some slight delays. He noted the delays for ordinances allow more time for the public to review the decision.

Faanes shared that she would be interested in having a joint meeting with the League of Minnesota Cities to discuss this and find out more information about other cities that have made this change. She said the more information they have to make this decision, the better. She added that she likes having someone to go to as a Councilmember if there are any discrepancies or questions. She said she also likes having the Charter Members appointed by the judge. She

noted the Charter opens up transparency and gives residents more time to review something the Council is trying to pass.

Beck added that they have been a Charter City since St. Francis was incorporated.

Thunstrom shared that there are 108 Charter cities out of the 854 cities in the State.

Beck shared that he sees the Charter as something that is constantly evolving to keep up with the times.

Thunstrom explained that if not everyone agrees with dissolving the Charter, then it would have to go to a ballot and if they do not have this discussion in time they may have to wait until 2028. She said they will really need to watch the timing with this.

Faanes asked when the League of Minnesota Cities would be able to meet with them on this. Thunstrom said they could try to get them out in April or May for a meeting.

Beck noted that some of the Charter changes that they have done have been passed with the full consensus of the Charter Commission and the Council.

Thunstrom shared that with all of the presence on social media, there are faster ways to be transparent and communicate with residents rather than having to have an ordinance published for 30 days, which can slow projects down in the weather-sensitive climate they are in. She said that they need to restructure this regardless.

The Charter Commission consensus was to hold a joint meeting with the League of Minnesota Cities to discuss moving from a Charter City to a statutory City.

6. Adjournment: Motion by Udvig, second by Kane to adjourn the annual Charter Commission meeting adjourned at 6:16 pm. Motion carried.

Submitted by,

Jenni Wida, Deputy Administrator/City Clerk