CHARTER REVIEW COMMISSION
MEETING MINUTES

Thursday, August 28, 2025, | 5:30 PM
City Council Chambers- City Hall, 2nd Floor
815 Washington St, Reading, PA 19601

CALL TO ORDER

The meeting was called to order at 5:38pm by Mr. Ed Stock on Thursday, August 28, 2025.

I. Pledge of Allegiance

II. Roll Call

Members present: Adela Rodriguez, Carlos M. Rivera, Debra Bradford, Vilma Quinones, David Myers, Ann Sheehan, Jonathan Mejia, Tanya Melendez, Evelyn Morrison, Sheila Perez

Staff present: Ed Stock (Solicitor)

III. Public Comments

Mr. Francis Morrison presented his complaints of dysfunction.

IV. Opening Remarks

Pastor Morrison remarks centered on the understanding that the commission is a body that is of the people, for the people, and by the people. She requested that as they go through their work, review the charter, and initiate community engagement that they make sure that the community is well established, documented, and represented. Her hope is that within the process they can look at public hearings, surveys and are able to hear from the public as often as they can.

Ms. Melendez asked the question, are they bound to the Roberts Rules of Order for this body and if all have access to those rules. Mr. Stock response stated that he will review further in the meeting.

Ms. Sheehan asked if anyone had approached the Center for Excellence in Local Government to be a facilitator.
Mr. Stock responded that he is serving as the solicitor of this commission and does not know if other entities have been contacted. He also stated that he serves on the advisory board for that group and it may not be a bad idea to invite them in at some point.
Ms. Perez stated that she objects to having the Center for Excellence in Local Government as the facilitator or interacting with this review commission. In the 2013-2014 Home Rule Charter Review Commission most of the commissioners were either employees or members of the council. For this reason, she strongly objects.

Mr. Stock noted that any involvement from outside organizations or individuals will be up to the Charter Review members to decide.

V. Overview of Charter Review Commission Purpose & Scope

Mr. Stock reviewed the purpose and scope of the Charter Review Commission.

From the Charter: § 1203. Review of Charter. [Amended at the November 2014 General Election]

At least every five years, but no sooner than every three years, City Council and the Mayor shall appoint a Charter Review Commission composed of 11 members. To avoid conflict of interest, no elected City official or employee shall serve on the Charter Review Commission. Nothing herein shall preclude such officials from attending or participating in the actions of the Commission. Seven members of this Commission shall be appointed by City Council, and four members shall be appointed by the Mayor. All appointees shall be current residents and registered voters of the City. The Charter Review Commission shall review the current Charter, submit a report to the City Council, the Mayor, and the citizens of the City, within six months of its appointment, and recommend any proposed amendments to the Charter. City Council and the Mayor, by ordinance, shall place all proposed amendments on the ballot no later than the next municipal election. City Council shall provide appropriations for the reasonable expenses incurred by the Charter Review Commission.

Pastor Morrison asked the question, are they enabling any other review commissions to follow any agenda for any other commission? She stated the words of Mr. Stock that they are an independent group and work within their own parameters and do not have to be concerned with what another commission did or did not do.
Mr. Stock agreed that this is accurate, and they are not bound by the prior review commissions or any other city board/agency/ commission/group whatsoever. This Charter Review Commission is free to operate in their independent space within the parameters that section 1203 from the Charter provides.

VI. Election of Chair and Vice Chair

<u>Nominations for Position of Chair:</u>

- Ms. Adela Rodriguez was nominated by Mr. Rivera, seconded by Ms. Rodriguez
- Mr. David Myers was nominated by Ms. Sheehan, seconded by Ms. Bradford
- Pastor Evelyn Morrison was nominated by Ms. Perez, seconded by Ms. Bradford
- Ms. Tanya Melendez was nominated by Ms. Vilma Quinones, seconded by Mr. Myers

<u>Results, Position of Chair:</u>
Pastor Morrison- 4 votes
Ms. Melendez- 3 votes
Ms. Rodriguez- 2 votes
Mr. Myers- 1 vote

Pastor Morrison will serve as chair for the Charter Review Commission.

<u>Nominations for Position of Vice Chair:</u>

- Ms. Tanya Melendez was nominated by Mr. Myers, seconded by Ms. Quinones

- Ms. Sheila Perez was nominated by Pastor Morrison, seconded by Mr. Mejia

Results, Position of Vice Chair:
Ms. Perez- 5 votes
Ms. Melendez- 5 votes
Unanimously agreed by the Charter members for Ms. Melendez and Ms. Perez to serve as Co-Vice Chairs for the Charter Review Commission.

VII. Define Meeting Schedule

Discussion:
Mr. Rivera proposed that the Charter Review Commission meet twice a month.

Ms. Melendez proposed that the Charter Review Commission meet twice a month until the last two months they will meet more often. This way they will have all their reading and research completed and able to work on the details.

Ms. Perez reminded the group that there needs to be public hearings so the public can provide feedback on the proposals before final decisions are made to what referendums will be added to the ballot.

Pastor Morrison proposed meeting once a week to get things moving. The first item of business is to study the Charter, and she suggested reviewing the last 3-4 years of ballot questions for the thoroughness of the questions (or lack of).

A motion by Mr. Rivera and seconded by Ms. Rodriguez was made to meet twice a month on Thursdays at 5:30pm was made.

Motion amended by Mr. Rivera- Motion is to meet once a week for the next four weeks on Thursday at 5:30pm in City Hall. Approved unanimously

VIII. Discussion of Initial Priorities & Work Plan

Mr. Stock suggested that the first session be a review of the Charter.

Ms. Melendez asked about setting up the budget, specifically what are the normal expenses of the Charter Review Commission?
Mr. Stock suggested that he will help develop the budget and have a line item for the Charter Review Commission to vote on the budget as the budget has to be sent to council for approval. Expenses include the solicitor's fee, printing, stenographer for public hearings, recording secretary, translation, advertising of public meetings in the newspaper.
Ms. Melendez asked to see the last couple of budgets to use as a reference. Mr. Stock stated that he will work with the clerk's office to retrieve those budgets.

A motion by Ms. Tanya Melendez and seconded by Mr. David Myers was made to review the Home Rule Charter at the next meeting Approved unanimously

Mr. Stock advised the group that after the review of the Charter the next step is to think about what the group is going to do to advance their purpose. Therefore, members should brainstorm ideas and be prepared for the next step.

Ms. Sheehan asked for clarification related to the newspaper article about the Charter Board. Mr. Stock stated that it is a five-person board that is currently vacant and functions to provide advisory opinions and to handle complaints if there are allegations of someone violating the Home Rule Charter. That board is different from the Charter Review Commission.

Mr. Rivera referred to past minutes regarding secretary and treasurer positions and asked when the selection will happen for the two positions.
Mr. Stock stated that those positions can be added to the next meeting agenda.

Ms. Melendez suggested that for the sake of operations and organization the Charter Review Commission follow the latest version of Roberts Rules of Order.
Mr. Stock stated that he will add this item to the next agenda.

IX. Adjournment

A motion to adjourn was made by Mr. Ann Sheehan and seconded by Ms. Sheila Perez.
Approved unanimously.