

City of Reading
2013 Charter Review Commission

October 2, 2013

Alvernia University, Upland Center, Room 103
540 Upland Avenue, Reading, PA 19611

The meeting of the 2013 Charter Review Commission was held on Wednesday, October 2, 2013 at Alvernia University, Upland Center, Room 103, 540 Upland Avenue, Reading, PA 19611.

The meeting was called to order at 6:10 p.m. by Chairperson Rosemary Frank-Vitale.

Members of the Commission present were: Rosemary Frank-Vitale, Ann Sheehan, Randy Corcoran, David M. Cituk, John Slifko, Marcia Goodman-Hinnershitz, and Frank B. Denbowski. Members not present were: Thomas Anewalt, Carl E. Geffken, Michael H. Reese, Vaughn D. Spencer. Eron Lloyd, City Administration and Paul Janssen, Charter Review Commission Facilitator.

Minutes – Upon Motion of Mr. Cituk and seconded by Mr. Corcoran the minutes of September 18, 2013 were unanimously approved.

Public Comments/Visitors – Mr. Earnest Schlegel of Penn Street, Reading spoke regarding the need for conflict resolution in the Charter before and during the Charter Board process to avoid litigation and expense. He also noted that there should be a provision for a citizen review of the charter more than every ten years to insure regular consideration for amendments to the charter on the ballot as needed. Mr. Slifko noted that Charter Review Commission was reviewing the potential for leaving a number of recommendations in an annotated format for the City Council and the Mayor to consider. He noted that the Commission will issue of the formal report in January which may include the additional recommendations for consideration following the 2014 primary. Ms. Goodman-Hinnershitz noted her continued support for a conflict resolution process.

Bills Payable List for October 18, 2013 – Mr. Cituk reported that there were no bills for consideration at this time. He further reported that to date the Commission had paid \$300.00 for Ms. Lewis's Secretarial minutes (3) preparation and an additional \$134.45 for two ads for Commission Meetings for a total Commission expense of \$434.45 to dat. At this time Ms. Goodman-Hinnershitz noted that she needed to leave the meeting and Mr. Jones arrived.

Discussion on securing public input. Commission members noted their desire to receive additional public input and this was the first of six meetings to be held in each council ward. There was extended discussion regarding the commitment by the Commission to try to receive more citizen input. Tonight was the first of six meetings to be held in each Council Ward. The Commission had extensive discussion regarding publicizing the meetings in the Reading Eagle, Loose Ends, BCTV, City Web Site, and the potential inclusion in the City water bill. Mr. Anewalt arrived during the discussion. Upon motion of Mr. Corcoran and seconded by Mr. Slifko a budget of \$1200.00 was moved to advertise the meetings. Mr. Denbowski and Mr. Cituk both felt that a good ad campaign could be designed; however it required a \$2000.00 budget. Both Mr. Corcoran and Mr. Slifko accepted the friendly recommendation and formally

amended their motion and second to include a \$2000.00 budget. Messrs. Denbowski, Lloyd, and Janssen will work to develop an ad and campaign for the four meetings commencing on October 16, 2013.

Continued discussion on the proposed FAQ's and Abbreviated FAQ's. Mr. Janssen noted that Mr. Slifko had presented the FAQ's prior to the previous meeting. The FAQ's were three pages. Mr. Janssen distributed a two page (simply abbreviated and smaller font) version for ease of copying and distribution. Mr. Slifko concurred on the shorter version for copying purposes; however, Mr. Janssen noted that the full version should be placed on the website and available for citizen review. The Commission concurred.

Janssen then distributed a list of the formal documents and minutes collected and distributed to date to the Commission which includes 16 documents and approximately 325 pages to date. The list will form the appendix of documents the Commission considered through deliberations. In addition Mr. Janssen distributed a list of the formal issues he had copied from the minutes to date. Using the City Administration and the City Council submission along with the top five Charter Board topics for opinions, the Charter Review Commission has formally received 33 recommended issues for consideration with the dual solicitors (Administration and City Council) the only issue submitted by both City Administration and City Council.

Review and discuss the proposed survey to be distributed to identified parties. Mr. Janssen circulated the draft of the survey to be sent to groups who have interacted with the City. The survey is very simple with four questions. Mr. Janssen noted that the Commission had already discussed sending the survey to the NAACP, The League of Women Voters, Centro Hispano, Board of Realtors, Greater Reading Economic Partnership, Greater Reading Chamber of Commerce and Industry. Members of the Commission voiced support for using the current format of the survey. Mr. Janssen thanked Chairperson Frank-Vitali for her valued input in the revisions to the current form. Mr. Janssen asked members of the Commission to email or post on Podio any additional groups who should receive the survey.

New Business - Chairperson Frank Vitali noted that was 7:30 PM and there were many issues submitted now before the Commission and yet they had not yet begun to discuss issues amongst the members themselves. She inquired as to whether the members wanted to start tonight. Following a brief delay Mr. Janssen stated that he would start the discussion with comments about Charter Section 1203 and 1204. Mr. Janssen noted that the language in the Charter states that the recommendations of the Commission Section 1203, "All proposed amendments shall be placed on the ballot no later than the next municipal election". And Section 1204 Amendments ... The Charter shall be amended by: (d) "Proposed amendments by a Charter Review Commission being placed on the ballot in accordance with section 1203 of this Chapter". However, the Charter Review Commission in 2003 recommended two changes to the Charter and they failed to be placed on the ballot until a citizen petition forced the placement on the ballot. Mr. Janssen raised the concern that the Commission is completing a lot of work and if the City Council or the Mayor fails to pass an ordinance requiring listing of the referendum for the County Board of Elections, the recommendations may not be placed on the ballot. Mr. Janssen

raised this as an example of the inconsistent language and practice of the Charter execution. There was extended dialogue regarding agreement or disagreement with the clause. Mr. Janssen agreed to write a letter on behalf of the Commission to the Charter Board and the Board of Elections, requesting an advisory opinion from the Charter Board and a position from the Board of elections as to whether they would accept a recommendation from the Charter Review Commission in compliance with the Charter for the City of Reading.

There were no further citizen comments. Upon Motion of Mr. Corcoran and seconded by Mr. Reese, and with unanimous approval the meeting was adjourned at 8:02 PM

Respectfully Submitted,

Paul Janssen, Facilitator