

CHARTER REVIEW BOARD MINUTES

JUNE 23, 2009

Meeting called to order on 23 June 2009 at: 6:30 pm

In Attendance:

Gary McKinley
Alan Seymour
Mike Rose
Ed Pleasant
Rosalyn DeGood
John Popio
Becky Wever
Alicia Adams

Visitors:

Dan Fogt
John Gore
Mr. and Mrs. Henke
Berbee
Steve Stolte
Chris Schmenk
Mary Beth Merklin
Mark Reams
Ken Kraus

Journalists

Ryan Horns

Absent

Martin Pratt

Approval of Minutes

The minutes from the last meeting stand as presented.

General Report

Chairman Ed Pleasant called the meeting to order and reviewed for the attending public the rules of stating opinions. Guests have five minutes to voice their ideas regarding the pros and cons of the proposed change to the form of government. Afterwards, everyone was welcome to stay for the rest of the meeting.

Ken Kraus spoke first by saying he has been involved with the Marysville government since 1974 and felt the Charter Review Board didn't have enough time to get it on the ballot. He felt it should be up to the Marysville City Council to establish a special committee. Time should also be taken to evaluate and education the population so they can make the informed choice when voting on it.

Steve Stolte spoke next and said he echoed what Ken brought up. In the past, he said the old charter to amend the government was a knee jerk reaction. He personally favors the council/manager city form of government, but again, the devil is in the details of the construct and duties of such a setup.

Mark Reams addressed the Charter Review Board by saying he is not in favor of change just for the sake of change. He agrees that there are many details to work out with such a change and at this point in time, doesn't see such a move necessary. Since he serves on City Council, he felt

that previous mayor transitions have gone well and cited examples of big cities that have the mayors, such as New York City, etc. With the proposed change in government, it would be like getting seven different directions from seven different people.

John Gore stood up and spoke, saying he has been in politics awhile – this being the 3rd charter review committee he has seen – and said Mark Reams and himself do not see through the same set of glasses in regards to the ease of previous mayoral transitions. He agreed that this was something that needed to be done correctly, details and all. He has no problems pushing the recommendation for change to the city government on to city council, but he doesn't want it to be put on the back burner like in the past. He agreed that big cities do indeed have mayors, but the mayors go out and raise the money while the city manager and department heads run the actual business.

Mary Beth Merklin next addressed the board by saying she is neither pro nor con regarding the change. She was however, interested in a well-run city. She realized that a city often takes on the personality of the leader. She is also concerned about how much of a final say the city manager has on issues and what to do if there is a bad city manager.

Mayor Chris Schmenk next spoke. She said she would love to see another group formed to take a harder look at the issue. A formal committee and thoughtful process would be ideal. She outlined the pros of having a council/city manager format: continuity of process; one less layer of government; and less politics. As to the issue of having seven different directions from seven different bosses, the current administration truly has more than one boss since it has to work in agreement with council. She also pointed out that cities who have mayors have fulltime mayors, unlike Marysville. As far as the change for the sake of change, she said it's always best to consider a change for the better when there's no personality conflict involved.

Henke Berbee stood and began his five minutes by referring to an editorial in the Marysville Journal Tribune from May 15, 2009, wondering what it was like in the room back then regarding politics and government. He said what makes Union County unique is the fact that we have so many elected officials. Elected officials will work with the public, and it is not so with the city administrator, because he has to protect the city. Look at the aspect of the council/mayor form: the voters get what they vote. Mr. Berbee said he went to 21 different websites to research this process and he found that other cities have requirements for positions. That gives voters a chance to identify good, experienced, people. That kind of requirement could be written in the charter.

--Concludes Public Hearing--

Chairman Ed Pleasant asked for general comments from the Charter Review Board members.

Gary McKinley asked in reference to section 12.05.01 of the City Charter about council accepting recommendations and the wording that surrounds that section.

John Gore said there are a number of language issues that need to be cleaned up with the help of Tim Aslaner.

Chairman Ed Pleasant said the interpretation is such that we would make recommendations for the council and they would approve them (or not).

John Gore said as council we will abide by whatever decision we get out of the law director.

Becky Wever asked if the recommendations of the Charter Review Board automatically go on the ballot?

Chairman Ed Pleasant said dependent on Tim Aslaner, council would either form an investigative committee or go forward. There have been several different recommendations to further explore the topic.

Gary McKinley said maybe we should not recommend charter change but form a study committee instead.

Alan Seymour said it presents a neutral position to recommend that.

John Gore said there are several ways for this issue to come up. Citizen petition is just one of the ways. The community needs to be educated on this matter. We need to take it to an informed voter constituency.

Ken Kraus (visitor) asked what the effect would be if we don't vote on the change.

Gary McKinley said we don't have to make a recommendation on the city government but make suggestions and comments to City Council.

Chairman Ed Pleasant said there is a concern of so many items being on the ballot that the public would just pick and choose. Council can determine what it is the weightiest.

John Gore said in any case, we would have to follow the law director's advice.

Becky Wever said she was concerned about this 'do-nothing' approach. She didn't want it to look to the public like the Charter Review Board just shrugged the issue off.

Mike Rose said it is really important to education the public on this matter. How many voters would just blindly pick and choose without really knowing what they are doing?

Alan Seymour said there is a lot of value to this as far as operating efficiency.

Gary McKinley asked if council looks into it, then what happens? Do we wait for the next Charter Review Board to see action?

John Gore said that has not been the practice in the past.

Chairman Ed Pleasant said do we have a consensus? Let's sign the certification of completion and make sure to mark the day for July 9 at 7:00 pm for the City Council Meeting where the recommendations will be presented. Thank you everybody for all your hard work.

END